

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
27 SEPTEMBER 2016, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor P Moore (Chairman)
Councillors I Devonshire, J Goodeve,
H Drake, D Oldridge, M Pope, P Ruffles,
C Snowdon and N Symonds

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, E Buckmaster, L Haysey
and G Jones

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Bennett	- Manager of Housing Services
Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Ben Cannell	- Front of House Manager
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Jess Khanom	- Head of Operations
Emma Parlow	- Marketing and Audience Development Manager
Claire Pullen	- Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Grants)
Rhys Thomas	- Arts and Entertainment Programme Director

372 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor P Phillips.

373 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

374 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that she had attended an excellent course on scrutiny recently and had heard a number of different ideas. She thanked the Leader for putting her name forward for the course. She said that the course highlighted how forward looking East Herts was and how fortunate the Council was to have its dedicated Officers. The Chairman stated that East Herts was the only Council to offer a Membership Development programme. She urged Members to contact the Leader on any course they were interested in.

The Chairman referred to the World Mental Health Event on 9 October 2016 which was being held at Hertford Theatre and encouraged her colleagues to attend.

The Chairman welcomed two new Heads of Service, Jess Khanom and Jonathan Geall to the meeting. She also welcomed Ben Cannell, Emma Parlow and Rhys Thomas from Hertford Theatre.

375 HERTFORD THEATRE - ANNUAL REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2015/16

The Head of Operations submitted the sixth annual report for Hertford Theatre.

The Arts and Entertainment Programme Director introduced the report and drew Members' attention to a number of key events which had occurred during the year which had brought in large audiences. These included a Charity Comedy Gala

for Breast Cancer which, after costs had been paid, enabled a £6,000 donation to be made to the charity. He also referred to the event “an interview with Michael Morporgo” which had attracted large audiences.

The Programme Director personally thanked the cohort of volunteers and referred to an email he had just received from one individual who had expressed thanks for the experience gained in volunteering at the theatre and the positive impact it was having on her life. The Programme Director referred to training offered to young people and “Carousel Placements”, whereby young people were moved from department to department over the course of a week, to learn how the theatre worked. He summarised other courses aimed at providing work experience which culminated in a “worthy credit” on an applicant’s Curriculum Vitae. The Programme Director said that other programmes were being developed including a focus on access, equality and diversity. He personally thanked his team for working so hard to deliver a strong and dynamic theatre.

The Front of House Manager explained the strong community role of the theatre and the important role played by the volunteers.

The Marketing and Audience Development Manager referred to events which had drawn in the public and how the theatre’s Christmas decorations provided a strong draw, especially to schools. She referred to the ongoing positive feedback from schools and of work progressing in relation to “relaxed” screenings.

Councillor N Symonds thanked the Officers for the success of the theatre. In response to a question, the Programme Director confirmed that carers were given a concessionary ticket at a reduced price. He explained the arrangements for the use of interpreters on stage.

In response to a query from Councillor P Ruffles regarding extending the catchment area and maintaining the morale of volunteers. The Programme Director explained the principles around growing the audience locally before it could be

extended. He stated that the theatre was currently looking at increasing the catchment area along the A10 and in Bishop's Stortford. He referred to the work being developed which would appeal to a number of age groups, including first showings in relation to the cinema and using local buildings as satellite art galleries. Councillor M Pope suggested the Southern Maltings in Ware as a possible venue for an art gallery.

In response to a query from Councillor I Devonshire regarding future costs which the theatre might incur, the Programme Director referred to roof problems which had been given an interim remedy.

Councillor C Snowdon referred to a drop in the figures for the hire of the studios. The Programme Director explained that Hertford Regional College now had their own building and had moved their courses, but that they still maintained a close working relationship. The Programme Director stated that in response to a query regarding suppliers, the theatre always tried to find local suppliers.

Councillor D Oldridge congratulated Officers on the success story. In response to a question, the Programme Director explained that the team was trying to increase the geography and demographics of the age range using various approaches. Councillor H Drake referred to the success of the Shoreditch Picture House which offered patrons a chance to enjoy a drink while watching a movie and the steps it had taken to encourage family attendance.

Councillor J Goodeve referred to the older demographics of the patrons and the need to ensure social inclusion by offering reduced tickets to lower income families. Councillor M Pope sought and was provided with clarification on the final net annual expenditure position in terms of the high variance.

Councillor A Alder referred to the absence of disabled parking spaces. The Programme Director explained the link with Wetherspoons and frequent deliveries by heavy vehicles. He stated that the theatre did offer a "meet and greet" arrangement whereby a team member could meet an

individual, show them to a seat to await a carer parking the car.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked the theatre team for their excellent report.

The Committee received the report, as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the annual report for Hertford Theatre for the year 2015/16 be reviewed; and

(B) the cohort of volunteers be congratulated and thanked for their contribution to the success of the venue.

376 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR NETWORK HOMES AND CIRCLE HOUSING SOUTH ANGLIA HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS: HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER - RESIDUAL UNDERTAKINGS

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing submitted a report on the progress made by the two housing associations on the three undertakings that remained following the end of the Delivery of Promises Programme in 2007 and following the large scale voluntary transfer in 2002. The report also reviewed the performance of both associations' repairs services. The Housing Services Manager provided a summary of the report drawing Members' attention to the percentage of repairs completed by each and the progress made with regard to aids and adaptations.

Councillor P Ruffles expressed concern that the performance target figures provided for Network Homes were not as transparent as those submitted by Circle Housing South Anglia and that these should have been extracted to provide local data statistics. The Housing Services Manager stated that they had asked for local figures but had been advised that they were only able to monitor corporately. It was suggested that Network Homes be asked to provide meaningful local repair figures and that their targets be amended to mirror those of the targets set by Circle Housing South Anglia. This was supported.

Councillor Ruffles referred to the difficulties in acting on behalf of residents because of the Data Protection Act. A number of options to address this were discussed.

In response to a query by Councillor C Snowden regarding housing benefit, the Housing Services Manager explained why housing benefit was paid to the tenant and when it could be paid to the landlord directly.

In response to a query by the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support regarding interaction with the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), the Head of Housing and Health explained the role of the HIA with regard to adaptations and funding and how tenants would benefit from the new service.

In response to a query from Councillor M Pope regarding the underspends in aids and adaptations, the Housing Services Manager explained the lack of demand, the referral service for jobs under £500 and the reduced demand for Disabled Facilities Grants. The Head of Housing and Health explained the Council's resources had not been used but that last year it had helped Circle Housing South Anglia with a particularly large adaptation.

In response to a query regarding preserved Right to Buy, the Housing Services Manager explained the low figures and that the reducing number of tenants eligible and the high costs of housing in the District still meant that many people could not afford to buy these properties despite the discount.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing referred to the phased move by Circle Housing South Anglia from Charringtons House in Bishop's Stortford.

The Committee received the report, as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) performance by both Network Homes and Circle Housing South Anglia Housing Association in 2015/16 on the three remaining stock transfer undertakings be noted; and

(B) Network Homes be asked to provide meaningful local repair figures and that their targets be amended to mirror those of the targets set by Circle Housing South Anglia.

377 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report seeking agreement to the draft work programme for 2016/17 as detailed within Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted.

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the report on the "Markets" function which had been transferred to the new Head of Operations following the restructure. It was noted that this report would be presented for Members' consideration in June 2017. It was suggested that, as this left only one report, an update on a Leisure Facilities Strategy, which it was felt, could be circulated on the Members' Information Bulletin, the meeting on 22 November 2016 be cancelled. This was supported.

The Chairman referred to the suggested Crime and Disorder topic (Town Centre Night Time Economy) for the meeting on 28 March 2017. This was supported.

Members received the report, as now amended.

RESOLVED – that (A) the work programme as now amended, be approved; and

(B) the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 November 2016 be cancelled.

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm

Chairman
Date