

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 17
APRIL 2018, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Allen (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, M Casey, G Cutting,
B Deering, I Devonshire, H Drake,
J Goodeve, Mrs D Hollebon, P Moore,
M Stevenson and N Symonds

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, L Haysey, T Page and
P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Fiona Corcoran	- Scrutiny Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Su Tarran	- Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service
Helen Standen	- Director
David Thorogood	- Environmental Co-Ordinator
John Williams	- Electoral

Services
Officer

426 MINUTES

It was moved by the Committee Chairman and seconded by Councillor M Casey, that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

427 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that in the interests of greater visibility and transparency of decision making, recommendations needed to be formally moved and seconded, before voting by a show of hands in relation to items such as the Minutes, the Work Programme and any changes to report recommendations other than those for information (such as presentations and updates).

428 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Although not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI), Councillor Mrs D Hollebbon commented that she wished to speak as a Ward Member in relation to the agenda item on Community Governance Review for Bishop's Stortford. She stated that she represented Bishop's Stortford South which included a part of the Parish of Thorley.

429 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council provided Members with a summary of her role and functions. She said that as Leader, it was she who was publically answerable should anything go wrong.

The Leader explained that she met monthly with Portfolio Holders, who in turn liaised closely with Heads of Service. The Leader explained the important role of working with partners in the development of Master Planning initiatives and the District Plan to ensure a co-ordinated approach to meet future housing provision targets and infrastructure needs.

The Leader explained that Gilston was part of a growing town, (Gilston Harlow Garden Town Board) and referred to the funding the Council had received to set up appropriate structures. It was noted that 16,000 homes would be built in the wider area, as part of the first tranche.

The Leader provided a summary of the organisations she was involved with. She stressed the need for a co-ordinated approach to influence future opportunities for East Herts. This would help support an over-arching structure for the area moving forward into 2023 to achieve a target of 100,000 new homes in Hertfordshire.

The Leader said that she was continually surprised at how much paper she needed to read and understand. She added that the Council needed to make sure that it continued with forward momentum in order to ensure that homes were built of good quality and design.

Members received the presentation and thanked the

Leader for her summary.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

430 PRESENTATION ON COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2019-20

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service gave a presentation on a proposed scheme for Council Tax Support for 2019-20. She explained that following changes in regulations in 2013, it was for individual Local Authorities to arrange their own Council Tax Support arrangements for working age customers. Council Tax support schemes for pensions continued to be determined by Central Government.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service explained that the cost of Council Tax Support was borne by the tax base and that the precepts for 2018/19 were:

- HCC 76.98%
- Police 9.56%
- EHC 9.57%
- Parish 3.89%

It was noted that the administrative costs to process applications was borne 100% by the Council but that it received a grant of £109,576 from Central Government towards these administration costs.

The new Universal Credit (UC) scheme was explained and would be introduced in this area from October 2018. The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service explained why this would increase administrative costs and the problems this would cause in terms of uncertainty in relation to customers' council tax obligations and the

Council's ability to collect the liability. She explained a possible approach to address this issue in order to protect the vulnerable and to give people certainty about what they had to pay. It was noted that data modelling was programmed to start shortly and in advance of the introduction of UC in October 2018. The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service stressed the need to protect the vulnerable during this change of process.

It was noted that consultation would be carried out on the scheme with council taxpayers.

The Committee Chairman sought and was provided with assurances that the scheme would have adequate safeguards.

Councillor M Casey asked why there was not a national scheme if there were so many challenges with having local schemes. The Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service acknowledged this and explained that the deregulation for working age customers was a Central Government decision.

In response to a query by Councillor H Drake, the Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service explained "non-dependant disregards" in relation to 18 year olds living at home.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked the Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service for her detailed presentation and the proactive steps proposed to support vulnerable people at risk.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

431 NIGHT TIME ECONOMY AND PUBLIC HEALTH: IMPACT OF ALCOHOL USE

The Head of Housing and Health submitted a report on alcohol use and the impact on the night time economy and public health. The Head of Housing and Health provided a summary of the report.

In response to a query by the Committee Chairman, the Head of Housing and Health explained how the consultation process had been extended and to whom, adding that it had gone beyond statutory partners. Councillor B Deering hoped that this would also include local Parish Clerks.

The Head of Housing and Health referred to a recent gathering of door staff which had been arranged by the Police to raise the issue of child exploitation issues and stated that there was scope to raise issues of public concern via Licensing Committee. He referred to new measures to alert Members and Parish Clerks about applications affecting their Wards and the positive feedback from the Police.

The Committee Chairman, on behalf of Members thanked the Head of Housing and Health for his presentation. The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the views of Hertfordshire County Council’s Public Health team on the impact of alcohol misuse on public health be noted;

(B) Members’ view on how the Council and Public Health colleagues can work together to mitigate these impacts be passed to the Head of Housing and

Health for consideration; and

(C) Members' views on key aspects of the draft Position Statement on "Licensing Decision Making relating to the Nigh Time Economy" set out in Essential Reference Paper "B" of the report submitted, be provided to the Head of Housing and Health for consideration.

432 CLIMATE CHANGE - UPDATE FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor B Deering, the Chairman of the Climate Change Task and Finish group submitted an update on the work undertaken so far and proposed potential key strategy areas. Councillor B Deering commented that it had been an interesting exercise, covering a wide range of themes and which had had excellent input from both Members and Officers. He referred to a number of outstanding issues and further discussions which the Group wished to undertake particularly in relation to renewable energy investment opportunities including battery storage. Councillor B Deering also referred to the need for the Council to be seen to be leading the climate change agenda locally and to get the message out to the business community and residents, aided by some form of hosted gathering.

The Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator referred to Government imposed targets to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency. It was noted that in 2009, the Council's established target was a 25% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 and this currently stood at 17%. Councillor N Symonds raised the issue of trying to get

Housing Associations to install solar panels. It was noted that solar panel installations had been funded in the past through national schemes and that now such funding was less readily available. The current priorities for energy efficient development relate to a hierarchy of energy reduction, building fabric improvements and use of alternative energy.

The Committee Chairman sought and was provided with clarification on energy reduction targets and whether this was an issue across the EU platform or globally. The Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator referred to the number of private rented properties which had an energy efficiency rating of "F" or below and the targets to bring as many homes to the level of code "C". It was noted that a significant minority of homes in East Hertfordshire required significant energy efficiency improvements. The Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator explained why. He also explained how CO2 emissions at a District level were calculated.

Councillor G Cutting sought and was provided with clarification in relation to an application by Wickham Hall to house a battery bank and questioned why insulating (thermal) glass rather than solar panels, was not being promoted on new homes. This was explained by Officers.

It was moved by Councillor M Deering and seconded by Councillor Mrs D Hollebon, that the recommendations, as detailed, be supported. After being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, the recommendations were CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) further meetings of the Task and Finish Group continue in order to complete its review of climate change activity within the District;

(B) the Group prepare a draft strategy for discussion at Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2018;

(C) Officers facilitate the establishment of a forum that meets periodically to enable local environmental groups and other interested organisations to co-ordinate climate change activities and undertake joint working with the Council;

(D) Officers ensure opportunities continue to be explored for carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures to be reflected within relevant policy areas such as planning policy; and

(E) Officers develop a draft communication strategy to effectively promote climate change resilience activities, energy efficiency and carbon reduction, demonstrating the community leadership role of the authority.

433 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW : BISHOP'S STORTFORD

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report on the responses received during the initial consultation for a Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council, including the town boundary. The Electoral Services Officer provided a summary of the report.

Councillor I Devonshire read out a summary of parishioners' concerns to the proposal in the Rural Ward of

Thorley Parish. The summary challenged the legality of the proposal, the need for cohesive community governance, the proposed development in Bishop's Stortford South and the impact this would have on Thorley Parish Council.

Councillor Devonshire said that 114 respondents opposed the boundary change and 8 were in favour. A petition signed by 960 people calling for "no change" to the current boundary between Thorley Village and Bishop's Stortford had also been submitted. He challenged the need for change.

The Electoral Services Officer referred to the viability of Thorley Parish Council if change was made and outlined the statutory provisions, including the need to make a determination within 12 months of the review starting. He referred Members to the options as detailed in the report, adding that the Council could decide to take no action at this stage, adding that in that case, any changes would not be made in time for the May 2019 elections.

In response to a query by Councillor M Stevenson about the dissemination of information to residents, the Electoral Services Officer referred Members to the extensive leafletting of affected homes and community groups. Councillor M Casey commented that most of the objections referred to the development at Bishop's Stortford South rather than a change from a Category 3 village to a town. He made the point that regardless of residence, people would use the facilities of Bishop's Stortford.

The consultation process and those consulted were debated.

Councillor Mrs Hollebon commented that as an elected

Member, she represented all residents. She said that it appeared that a large number of responses submitted may have been instigated by a small number of residents and that many responses were not about the proposal, but other things they feared. Councillor Mrs Hollebon stated that while she appreciated what Thorley villagers were saying, she felt that they had missed the point that they used Bishop's Stortford facilities and Southern Country Park and it made sense to tidy up actual borders. Councillor M Stevenson referred to the strong feeling objectors had to keeping their own identity.

Councillor H Drake commented that from the responses received, very few lived in the area and that a large number were opposed to a boundary change. She suggested that there should be a budget for the publication of leaflets for the right residents on the right issues.

Councillor M Casey stated that as a resident, he was consulted on the issue and also received other information opposing a change and relating to planning issues. He stated that people should not be ignored.

On the issue of re-consultation, the Electoral Services Officer said that there would be a second round of consultation after Council had considered the proposal. Councillor B Deering had concerns about this approach, and said it might suggest that an initial decision had been taken.

The Committee Chairman queried the precepts of Bishop's Stortford Town Council (£67.69) and Thorley Parish Council (£8.97) and how this might affect the Bishop's Stortford precept. He reminded Members that Bishop's Stortford

Town Council had made this request because it felt that it was bringing benefit to the people. He acknowledged the fact that changes to Thorley Parish could mean the demise of the Parish Council.

Councillor G Cutting said that he struggled with the concept and had not yet reached a conclusion. He referred to decisions which the Planning Inspectorate might make in relation to Bishop's Stortford South on Green Belt countryside and residents' perceptions about the development of Whittington Way. Councillor Cutting said that there appeared to be confusion between the Parish boundary and its link with Whittington Way.

The Committee Chairman drew Members' attention to the options, as detailed. He stated that from the comments submitted it appeared that Members felt that the Parish needed to retain its own identity, whichever option was pursued.

The Committee supported the submission of Members' comments to the Executive as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that (A) the responses received to the initial consultation on the Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council be received; and

(B) Members' comments as now detailed, be forwarded to the Executive for its consideration as part of the Community Governance Review.

434 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW : BUNTINGFORD

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring

Officer submitted a report on the responses received during the initial consultation for a Community Governance Review (CGR) of Buntingford Town Council, including the town boundary. The Electoral Services Officer provided a summary of the report.

Councillor M Casey referred to the “natural barrier” of a ring road around Area “B” and asked Officers to ensure a level of consistency during the CGR process. He sought and was provided with clarification about Area “A”.

Councillor M Stevenson commented that Cottered was a deprived area and queried the use by Buntingford of Section 106 monies and the potential windfall this brings to Buntingford Town Council in relation to Area “A” development.

The Committee supported the submission of Members’ comments to the Executive as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that (A) the responses received to the initial consultation on the Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council be received; and

(B) Members’ comments as now detailed, be forwarded to the Executive for its consideration as part of the Community Governance Review.

435 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW : EASTWICK AND GILSTON

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report on the responses received during the initial consultation for a Community

Governance review of Eastwick and Gilston Parish Council. The Electoral Services Officer provided a summary of the report.

The Committee received the responses and supported forwarding them to the Executive .

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that the responses received to the initial consultation on the Community Governance Review of Eastwick and Gilston Parish Council be received.

436 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Chairman of Scrutiny Committee submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme. The Scrutiny Officer provided a summary of the programme and referred to the positive feedback she had received in relation to presentations by Executive Members. She asked Members to contact her with any future suggestions.

It was moved by Councillor M Allen and seconded by Councillor Mrs D Hollebon that the draft work programme, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, the recommendation was CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the draft Work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as now detailed, be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.24 pm

Chairman

Date