

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 18
SEPTEMBER 2018, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Allen (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, S Bull, M Casey,
G Cutting, B Deering, I Devonshire,
H Drake, Mrs D Hollebon, J Jones,
M Stevenson, N Symonds and K Warnell

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, S Bell, G Jones and
S Rutland-Barsby

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Claire Carter	- Service Manager - Community Wellbeing and Partnerships
Andrew Figgis	- Economic Development Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Chris Smith	- Business Engagement

Ben Wood

Manager
- Head of
Communications, Strategy
and Policy

193 EXECUTIVE MEMBER – PRESENTATION

The Executive Member for Development Management and Council Support gave a presentation summarising the results of the Mystery Shopping exercise which had been carried out towards the end of last year. The Executive Member provided an overview of the feedback received.

Councillor N Symonds thanked the Executive Member for her presentation and queried whether the mystery shopping was done before the need to refer to the requirements of the GDPR. It was her view that the dialogue on phone message was too long and that other Councils included an option to opt out by pressing the keypad.

Councillor M Stevenson queried whether the customer services staff taking calls, were permanent and whether training had been given. The Executive Member explained that it was a mixture of staff.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy explained that the point of the exercise was to deliberately ask complicated questions to establish where weaknesses lay and to make sure everyone was equipped to answer questions. He added that the feedback had been very helpful and overall, the results had been positive, but that further work was needed in relation to a uniform and more professional approach.

In response to a query from Councillor B Deering, the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy explained that over the years, there had been a move from a federated customer service model dealing with service specific questions, to a central customer services approach.

In response to a comment by Councillor G Cutting on call monitoring, the Head explained that it was possible to cut in and listen in on calls but that the Council did not record. Councillor N Symonds explained that it should be borne in mind that answering Council Tax benefits calls could take longer to answer. Councillor J Jones hoped that customer services did not read from a crib sheet and spoke of the need to maintain a friendly approach.

The Chairman, on behalf of Members, thanked the Executive Member of Development Management and Council Support for her presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

194 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor P Moore. It was noted that Councillor K Warnell was substituting on behalf of Councillor P Moore.

195 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor M Allen and seconded by Councillor M Casey that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 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 10 July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

196 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor S Bell, the new Member for Watton at Stone to the meeting.

The Chairman referred to a number of housekeeping issues in relation to the fire alarm, exits, the need to silence mobile devices and the unisex toilets outside of the Council Chamber.

The Chairman also reminded Members of the need to move and second recommendations.

197 DRAFT COMMUNITY TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2018 - 2021

The Head of Housing and Health submitted a Draft Community Transport Strategy report covering the period 2018 – 21. He explained that community transport was an element of Council activities and played a key part of the Council's approach to health and wellbeing in the district, particularly to vulnerable residents. The Services Manager, Community Wellbeing and Partnerships provided an overview of the proposed vision for community transport.

Councillor J Jones welcomed the approach, especially in Buntingford, which he said had poor bus services to the town and outlying villages. Councillor J Jones referred to some voluntary services which struggled to get volunteers especially from younger people.

Councillor S Bull commented that car ownership was lower in Buntingford and that it was in desperate need of

improved transport in the town and villages. He referred to the difficulties people faced to get to clinics and the need for the Council to get behind community transport. Councillor I Devonshire said that it was not just about transport in rural areas in the daytime, as it was needed in the evening.

Councillor G Cutting applauded the approach adding that high car ownership in an area did not necessarily reflect high incomes but could be out of necessity, as family members might work out of the district or work difficult shift patterns. Councillor N Symonds concurred with this viewpoint. She said that Silverleys Ward had the highest car ownership in Bishop's Stortford.

Councillor M Stevenson and the Committee Chairman sought and were provided with clarification in relation to a query about funding the initiative from the viewpoint of start-up funding and over time. Councillor M Casey felt that the budget figures needed more detail, especially in relation to service costs and users.

The Head of Housing and Health explained that what was before Members was an action plan and accepted that it needed more detail. He explained that, initially, the initiative would be funded from capital, some schemes might qualify for match funding and the possibility of using some Section 106 monies.

Councillor H Drake referred to the social isolation people suffered, particularly young people in villages who might not have parents to take them places. The Head of Housing and Health explained that the strategy aimed to enable partners to come forward with ideas which could work in the locality including town and parishes.

Councillor S Bull sought and was provided with clarification on how the strategy would be disseminated to communities.

Councillor K Warnell suggested that more work should be done with schools and the congestion caused by school runs. The Head of Housing and Health confirmed that there were ongoing discussions with the County Council regarding school transport.

The Head of Housing and Health confirmed that the proposal could be managed from existing staff resources.

The Committee Chairman thanked Officers for their summary.

It was moved by Councillor M Allen and seconded by Councillor J Jones that that the recommendations as detailed, be supported. After being put the meeting and a vote taken, the recommendations were declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the contents of the draft Community Transport Strategy be supported and Members' provide comments to the Head of Housing and Health; and

(B) the draft Community Transport Strategy be recommended to Council for approval and adoption.

198 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION: UPDATE 2016/17 TO 2019/21

The Executive Member for Economic Development submitted a report on the progress made in supporting the Council's economic vision. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy provided an overview of the themes

and actions to be progressed. He explained the impact of Brexit and the unknown challenges to be faced in supporting businesses, the need to diversify and expand on progress so far.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy provided an overview of the success of "Launch Pad" and plans to expand the initiative into Hertford and Ware areas and the challenges in finding suitable accommodation.

The Business Engagement Manager acknowledged that ongoing use of Charrington's House would eventually be affected by other local development projects (such as Old River Lane) and that Officers were actively looking more for commercial space in Bishop's Stortford. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy referred to the increasing loss of commercial space to residential and how this was being achieved.

Councillor N Symonds sought and was provided with clarification on the criteria and application process for those seeking a place at Launch Pad.

Members acknowledged the success of Launch Pad and supported its vision to expand and search for alternative premises in other towns in the District.

Councillor B Deering supported Officers' attempts to maintain employment space. He referred to the fact that as the Council did not have to pay rent, Launch Pad effectively created a value from "dead" rental space. He endorsed the approach to find suitable premises to expand in Hertford and Ware and urged Officers to work with planning colleagues.

In response to a query from Councillor M Stevenson and widening types of business supported, the Business Engagement Manager explained that the space was designed to support a range of people.

Councillor H Drake supported the view that the scope should be widened and referred to the numbers commuting from Bishop's Stortford and the need to challenge developers when they sought a change of use from commercial to residential on the basis of "no demand".

The possibility of using Northgate End and Old River Lane proposals in Bishop's Stortford as part of the Launch Pad expansion was debated.

Councillor S Bell referred to multi-national companies moving out from London to Cambridge and Stansted Airport and queried the possibility of "piggy-backing" onto these expansion ideas along the M11 corridor. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy acknowledged this and said that Officers needed to investigate this further.

Councillor K Warnell commented that 4.5m people commuted from Bishop's Stortford station a year and spoke of the need to try and capture and accommodate some of these commuters.

The Committee Chairman queried whether it was possible to trademark the name "Launch Pad". He thanked Officers for the work done in relation to:

- the Eastern Plateau Rural Development Programme (RDP) and the success in being allocated an additional grant;

- Digital innovation and investment in broadband for rural areas;
- supporting Business Improvement in Bishop's Stortford; and
- Hertfordshire's Visitor economy success.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy referred to the challenges of broadband provision in rural areas and the fact that some areas were not viable to operators. He referred to the fact that Officers were in the process of considering a bid to be a test case for 5G provision alongside others in the Digital Innovation Zone.

It was moved by Councillor M Allen and seconded by Councillor B Deering that the progress made in terms of the Council's Economic Development Vision be supported. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the recommendation was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the progress made in terms of the Council's Economic Development Vision be supported.

199 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report setting out the draft Work Programme. The Democratic Services Officer explained that the programme had been amended in the light of suggestions made at the last meeting.,

It was moved by Councillor Mrs D Hollebon and seconded by Councillor D Abbott that the recommendation, as detailed, be supported. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the recommendation was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that the work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chairman

Date