

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE WAYTEMORE ROOM, THE
CAUSEWAY, BISHOP'S STORTFORD ON
MONDAY 21 MARCH 2011, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Woodward (Chairman)
Councillors S A Bull, E Buckmaster and
A D Dodd

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Brian Simmonds	- Head of Community Safety

627 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors P R Ballam, D Hone, G. Lawrence, V Shaw and J J Taylor. It was noted that Councillor S A Bull was substituting for Councillor P R Ballam.

628 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2011 were submitted.

In respect of Minute 526 – Annual Review of the Leisure Contract – Presentation by SLM, the Chairman queried whether Councillor P R Ballam had been provided with a report from SLM concerning the delivery of a leaflet detailing the leisure facilities in South Cambridgeshire and not East Herts. The Head of Community and Customer Services undertook to provide a written response to Councillor P R Ballam if necessary.

In respect of Minute 527 – East Herts Housing Strategy Action Plan: Update, Members queried whether a summary of the Registered Social Landlords audit of occupation of their properties had been finalised. Officers undertook to investigate the matter and provide a written response.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

629 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the recent sad loss of Councillor J Hedley. The Chairman, on behalf of Members, offered his sincere condolences to his family.

The Chairman stated that this was his last meeting for the Civic Year. He expressed his appreciation to all Members for their diligence and support and to Officers who had presented their reports to the Committee. He offered his specific thanks to the Scrutiny Officer and the Committee Secretary for their support in guiding his Chairmanship. In response, Councillor A D Dodd thanked Councillor C Woodward for his Chairmanship.

630 HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL

Councillor D M Hone, Chairman of the Health Engagement Panel submitted her apologies following a recent accident. In her absence, the Chairman read out a written update from her. It was noted that Hertfordshire

County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee which would have been held on 6 April 2011, had been cancelled. The Chairman, on behalf of Members wished her a speedy recovery.

The Minutes of the Health Engagement Panel held on 14 February 2011 were received.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Minutes of the Health Engagement Panel held on 14 February 2011 be received; and

(B) the update provided from the Chairman of the Health Engagement Panel be noted.

631 “EVERYONE MATTERS” - A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR EAST HERTS

The Head of Community and Customer Services submitted a report updating Members about “Everyone Matters” – A Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for East Herts 2009 – 2024 together with an Action/Delivery Plan.

It was noted that the Action Plan contained 72 activities/projects within key themes which were set out in the Essential Reference Paper, attached to the report now submitted. Members’ comments were sought on the proposed Action Plan which would be submitted to the Local Strategic Partnership Board, for further consideration.

The Director of Customer and Community Services reminded Members that the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) was a partnership document, which had brought positive benefits to the people in East Herts.

The Chairman referred Members to the Action Plan. Members made the following comments:

- Reduce levels of acquisitive crime in the district

though joint working with partners and engagement with the community:

Councillors A D Dodd and S A Bull referred to the important role of public meetings like Community Voice in engaging with the public. Councillor E Buckmaster stated that the Sawbridgeworth Community Voice was well supported.

- Furniture Re-Use Project:

Councillor A D Dodd stated that a lot of furniture was not acceptable because it might not comply with fire regulations and it was important for the scheme to avoid getting 'overloaded' with items it could not use.

- Village Hall Broadband Project:

Councillor E Buckmaster referred to a scheme operated by Swindon Council. He undertook to provide the Director of Customer and Community Services with the information.

- Apprenticeship opportunities:

The Chairman queried the Council's role in providing apprenticeship opportunities. The Director advised that the Council already had a trainee Personal Assistant, and an apprentice would shortly be commencing employment at Hertford Theatre. The Director stated that the Council had written to its main contractors advising them of the benefits of using apprentices. The Chairman asked whether it would be possible to establish whether these third parties had taken advantage of the Apprenticeship Scheme. The Director of Customer and Community Services undertook to investigate and advise Members.

- Broxbourne Health Shuttle:

The Chairman referred to the Broxbourne Health Shuttle and the need to think about a similar scheme in other

areas and referred to the use of a mini bus around Bishop's Stortford so that residents could access hospitals. It was acknowledged that some areas were not commercially viable to some mini-bus providers and that the community should step in to fill this gap.

- Learning Partnership Target aimed at residents in Sele and Havers Estates:

The Chairman referred to the need to obtain up to date ward profiles. The Scrutiny Officer advised that this was in hand and new ward profiles would be part of the information pack for every councillor elected in May.

- Working with Jobcentre Plus and their Contractors:

The Director of Customer and Community Services advised Members that the Jobcentre had been offered the use of office space in Charringtons House, but had not taken this up.

- Working with HCC to promote modal shift through better signage of cycle and walking routes:

Councillor A D Dodd raised concerns about the Sustrans decision to have a cycle route through from Harlow to Bishop's Stortford which was not then actioned as part of the route was considered inappropriate. Councillor A D Dodd also expressed his concern regarding the excessive amount of old street signs and unused posts and that this clutter should be reduced. The Chairman agreed that this was something which needed to be considered with its Partners.

- Pursue offer from NHS and HCC for a co-funded officer to co-ordinate on transport arrangements to hospitals, etc:

Councillor S A Bull referred to the fact that many people were not advised of what help they could secure to and from hospitals. He said that some GP's offered transport

services to patients but some did not and that there needed to be consistency in the way eligibility was applied.

- Develop “Friends of” groups to help manage our principal parks and open spaces:

Councillor A D Dodd referred to Pishiobury Park and the fact that the local Sawbridgeworth Scouts’ group were unable to find a base. He suggested that the southern end of the park could offer a suitable base for the Scouts to establish a hut. Councillor E Buckmaster advised that the Scouts were currently negotiating with a landowner and that they may no longer be looking for a base. The Chairman suggested that Officers make contact with Southern Country Park to see what could be done.

- Develop a Sports and Active Recreation Facilities Strategy and audit in partnership with Sport England:

The Chairman advised that this had been completed in other places and the East of England had liked it so much they intended to use the arrangement throughout England. Members supported its inclusion of this issue on the Community Scrutiny work programme for the June 2011 meeting.

The Director of Customer and Community Services reminded Members of the financial constraints placed on the Council in terms of reduced Government funding and how this would impact on the provision of its services.

Members received the report and asked that their comments be forwarded to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board, where appropriate.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and that Members’ comments be forwarded to the Local Strategic Partnership Board.

CRIME

The Head of Licensing and Community Safety submitted a report about crime and the perception of crime in East Herts. It was noted that whilst crime and antisocial behaviour problems were relatively low in East Herts, the fear of crime was relatively high. Members were advised that crime detection in the District was 36.02% set against a national crime detection figure of 22%.

The report and supporting Essential Reference Papers provided data on main crime types broken down into areas and how East Herts' compared with similar group areas. The report also provided background information on four crime types which had not reduced this year relating to vehicle crime, robbery, serious acquisitive crime and burglary (sheds and theft of lead, etc).

The Head of Licensing and Community Safety explained the difficulties in data capture which was mostly attributable to how individual partner, e.g. the Police, Housing Associations collated information on their own systems.

Members were provided with clarification on the statistics as presented. Councillor A D Dodd referred to the positive news in relation to anti-social behaviour, which he attributed to the contribution of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Street Pastors.

The issue of Police meetings was considered. The Chairman said that there needed to be better liaison by the Police with the Council about when these meetings were held. He referred to the fact that the Council published all its meetings well in advance.

In relation to the perception of crime, the Chairman queried whether there was an opportunity to raise concerns and work with local residents. The Head of Licensing and Community Safety suggested that one such medium was through IT. He said that young

people's knowledge of IT was extensive and that residents could benefit from being given further information.

The Head of Licensing and Community Safety suggested that the partnership should be congratulated for their work and their achievements. Key issues which needed to be addressed involved the funding of CCTV cameras, PCSOs and their effectiveness.

The Chairman referred to five crimes recently in Bishop's Stortford which might have been deterred if CCTV had been deployed. In terms of the cost, the Head of Licensing and Community Safety said that he anticipated that the cost of CCTV would reduce rapidly. Whilst he supported their use, he added that these needed to be placed in the right areas and that these should not be used to replace personnel.

Members referred to the excellent role of PCSOs in tackling anti-social behaviour and providing a physical presence. It was suggested that Parish Councils might have a role to play in providing partial funding for PCSOs.

The Head of Licensing and Community Safety advised that the Partnership had achieved excellent results and that crime statistics showed that overall crime continued to be reducing making which contributed to the District being recognised as the sixth best place to live in the country by the Halifax 'Quality of Life' survey published in December 2010. He stated that this was the message which needed to be communicated to the public more effectively.

The Chairman welcomed the good news and that the statistics were moving in a positive direction. He urged Members to become more involved from a safety viewpoint in liaising with residents. He also recommended that Members should take advantage of the "Ride Along" scheme offered by the Police.

Members agreed that CCTV funding be included as part of the Community Safety Review and that Officers should explore other sources for funding PCSO's within the community e.g. by approaches to Parish Councils.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) CCTV funding be included as part of the Community Safety Review and that officers explore other sources for funding PCSOs within the community, e.g. by approaches to Parish Councils.

633 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK (DECEMBER 2010 TO JANUARY 2011)

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted an exception report on the performance of key indicators relation to Community Scrutiny Committee for the period December 2010 – January 2011.

The Chairman referred to performance indicator NI181 (Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit for new claims and change events) and queried whether these targets were being met by staff having to work a significant amount of overtime and weekend working. The Director of Customer and Community Services undertook to seek clarification and write to Members.

The Chairman referred to performance indicator EHP12 (Net cost/subsidy per visit) and whether this related to visits or swims. The Director of Customer and Community Services confirmed that this was an historical figure and that there was a need to revisit the figures. He undertook to do this.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

634 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Members to review the work programme of Community Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Officer drew attention to the new meeting dates and that civic calendars detailing this information would be circulated shortly.

It was noted that the work programme for the 21 June 2011 meeting would be amended by the inclusion of the Sports and Active Recreation Facilities Strategy report.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that an article had been published in The Link magazine drawing attention to scrutiny and how the public can get involved. Any scrutiny topics which might come in from the public would be brought to the attention of the committee at the first meeting in the new civic year.

The Committee supported the work programme, as amended.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as amended, be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chairman
Date