

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 8
NOVEMBER 2022, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)
Councillors M Brady, A Curtis, I Devonshire,
H Drake, J Frecknall, M Goldspink,
D Hollebon, I Kemp, S Rutland-Barsby,
D Snowdon, N Symonds and C Wilson

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors G Cutting, J Goodeve and
P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Scrutiny Officer
Lindsey Creed	- Communications and Digital Media Manager
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Karen Page	- The Service Manager (Development

	Management and Enforcement)
Sara Saunders	- Head of Planning and Building Control
Tyron Suddes	- Information Governance and Data Protection Manager
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

198 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

199 MINUTES - 20 SEPTEMBER 2022

Councillor Goldspink proposed and Councillor Symonds seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2022 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 September 2022, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

200 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no chairman's announcements.

201 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

202 DATA PROTECTION POLICY

The Executive Member for Corporate Services submitted a report that presented the newly drafted East Herts District Council Data Protection Policy. He invited Members to ask any questions they might have prior to the policy being submitted to the Executive for adoption.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members asked some pre submitted and supplementary questions. The Executive Member for Corporate Services and the Information Governance and Data Protection Manager responded to these questions.

Councillor Devonshire proposed and Councillor Snowdon seconded, a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered the Data Protection Policy and recommend to the Executive that the policy be adopted.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Executive that the Data and Protection Policy be adopted.

203 SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES POLICY

The Executive Member for Corporate Services submitted a report that presented the newly drafted East Herts District Council Surveillance Technologies Policy. He invited questions from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Goldspink expressed her thanks to Officers for their hard work on this report and on the previous report in respect of Data Protection. Councillor Symonds asked if Officers had any say or input into where police CCTV cameras were located.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that the council subscribed to the CCTV camera partnership. The Information Governance and Data Protection Manager advised that the council worked collaboratively with the police. He said that it was up to the police as the separate data controller and organisation to decide where CCTV surveillance cameras were located.

Councillor Rutland-Barsby proposed and Councillor Hollebon seconded, a motion that the Surveillance Technology Policy be adopted.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Executive that the Surveillance Technology Policy be adopted.

204 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth submitted a report that set out the current position with planning applications. She said that the report explained the current challenges and actions being taken to improve the service and the steps being taken to address the backlog of planning applications and improve communications.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth set out the numbers of applications being dealt with each year and said that significant and specialist resources were being allocated to the planning work associated with the allocated sites since the publication of the District Plan.

Members were advised that the volume of applications had increased significantly in the last two years in line with an identified national trend across the country. The Executive Member for Planning and Growth referred to a national shortage of planners and a high turnover of staff. She also referred to significant delays in responses from statutory consultees due to resource and recruitment challenges, which had also delayed planning decision making.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that steps were being taken to address the backlog and speed up decision making in general. She said that

further interventions to speed up this process were summarised in the report.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members asked some pre submitted and supplementary questions. The Executive Member for Planning and Growth and the Head of Planning and Building Control responded to these questions.

Councillor Snowdon asked if there were any organisations that could assist the council with other specific pieces or work relating to planning policy or the final details of section 106 agreements. The Head of Planning of Building Control said that there were a range of planning professionals that covered a whole range of planning services and functions. She said that the focus was development management and the resource within the planning policy team was stable. She emphasised the importance of planning officers being able to successfully negotiate the Section 106 agreements and the heads of terms on planning applications.

Councillor Curtis asked if the council had implemented any of the measures detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the report. The Head of Planning and Building Control said that a template had been devised and was being used by planning officers. Councillor Curtis said that the suggested changes and interventions should be implemented right away.

Members asked questions in respect of career graded posts and whether the salaries being paid were sufficiently competitive. The Head of Planning and

Building Control and the Executive Member for Planning and Growth confirmed that research had been carried out on the issue of salaries and also what the council could offer to Officers to develop their careers at East Herts and within Hertfordshire.

Councillor Wyllie asked if there were any improvements that Officers could request of Hertfordshire Highways to improve the East Herts planning process. The Service Manager (Development Management) said that there were regular meetings with Hertfordshire Highways. She said that early advice and intervention from Highways assisted officers in determining planning applications and the council did encourage applicants to engage with the pre application service offered by the Highway Authority.

Councillor Curtis proposed and Councillor Goldspink seconded, a motion that Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered the content of the report and have provided observations to the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered the content of the report and have provided observations to the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services submitted a report inviting Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review progress against various elements of the East Herts Corporate Plan and the four "SEED" priorities.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members asked some pre submitted and supplementary questions. The Executive Member for Corporate Services and the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy responded to these questions.

Councillor Snowdon asked if email sign up could be used to encourage a wider circulation of the Network newsletter. He asked if the existing account set ups for business rates and council tax could include a sign-up option for Network. The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that good progress was being made with signing people up to the weekly newsletter. He undertook to mention this suggestion to officers.

Councillor Drake referred to paragraph 2.11 of the report and the increasing popularity of the call back option. She asked what could be done to further promote this facility and asked if there could be an option whereby people could leave a name, number and brief message for the council. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that the call back option was working well. He said that some extra comms work could be done to raise awareness and the new telephony system would allow messages to be left for the council.

Councillor Symonds said that not all people were able to use digital services. She said that she was pleased to read that the council would support individuals who were not comfortable with or were unable to use digital services. She also commented on the problem of getting paperwork between Wallfields and Charringtons House via scanner or mobile phones.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that he would speak to officers in a review meeting next week and he would seek to get some answers to this ongoing issue. Councillor Goldspink expressed her concern over the target of answering 75 percent of calls within 10 minutes, which was a long time to wait. The Executive Member referred to plans for a new telephony system from 2023 and he mentioned that a new starter was about to start work with customer services.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy and the Communications and Digital Media Manager provided some figures in respect of call volumes, Facebook followers and website hits following comments and a question from Councillor Kemp.

Councillor Snowdon proposed and Councillor Kemp seconded, a motion that the comments and suggestions be referred to the Executive.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Overview and Scrutiny Committee refer the comments and suggestions to the Executive.

206 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the draft work programme which was attached to the report as an appendix. She reminded Members of the scrutiny proposal form and invited the Committee to let her know of any training items in advance of the induction training planned for May 2023 for the cohort of Members.

The Scrutiny Officer referred to suggestions that Members had made in respect of the work programme going forward. Councillor Wilson spoke about Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and the potential for improvements in the use of section 106 monies.

Councillor Wyllie commented on whether Hertfordshire County Councillors could attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members commented on concerns regarding parking standards in terms of whether parking was adequate on new developments. Councillor Wyllie emphasised that come May 2023 it would be the new Councillors on the Committee to shape the work programme.

It was proposed by Councillor Hollebon and seconded by Councillor Devonshire that the Committee Work Programme be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the main agenda items for the next meeting be agreed; and

(B) the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be approved.

207 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman

Date