

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 12
SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors E Buckmaster, R Carter,
N Clements, N Cox, C Horner,
G McAndrew, S Nicholls, C Redfern,
M Swainston, J Thomas and G Williams

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Daar, B Deering and T Hoskin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Simon Barfoot | - Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer |
| Lorraine Blackburn | - Scrutiny Officer |
| James Ellis | - Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer |
| Jonathan Geall | - Head of Housing and Health |
| Peter Mannings | - Democratic Services Officer |
| Katie Mogan | - Democratic Services Manager |
| Claire Spendley | - Environmental Health |

Paul Thomas-Jones - Practitioner
(Environment
Team Manager)
- Service Manager –
Environmental
Health

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Bibby - Hertfordshire County
Council
Police Sergeant - Hertfordshire
Miller Constabulary

126 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Boylan. It was noted that Councillor Williamson was substituting for Councillor Boylan.

127 MINUTES - 21 MARCH AND 20 JUNE 2023

Councillor G Williamson proposed and Councillor Buckmaster seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meetings held on 21 March and 20 June 2023 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 meetings held on 21 March and 20 June 2023, be

confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

128 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Hertfordshire County Councillor Phil Bibby and Police Sergeant Miller (Hertfordshire Constabulary) to the meeting.

129 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

130 PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report that considered the issue of pedestrian safety in Hertford Castle Ward, and in particular, focussed on a number of concerns that had been raised by Councillor Carter.

Councillor Carter set out the reasons for submitting this matter for scrutiny. She referred to specific evidence from Hertford Castle Ward and the evidence encouraging people to walk as well as residents feeling safe whilst walking and cycling.

Councillor Carter put several questions to Hertfordshire County Councillor Phil Bibby in respect of travel policy and whether equality was given to pedestrians and cyclists and how this was reflected in budgets, whether there was any specific funding for new projects and was funding ring-fenced for pedestrians and pavement repairs. She commented

that it was easier to get a pothole filled than to fix a pavement considered to be too narrow.

County Councillor Bibby talked about the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) policy and the cyclist and pedestrian first approach. He summarised the process for budgeting for road and footway repairs and repairs to cycleways. Councillor Bibby set out the size guidelines worked to in respect of site surveys and repairs to defects to roads, cycleways and footways.

Councillor Carter commented that many motorists were driving too fast and that many communities e.g. Hornsmill, would like to see a 20mph introduced into the area. County Councillor Bibby said that schools featured strongly in the criteria for 20-mph speed limits. He commented on the significant capital costs of setting up a 20-mph zones in potentially 500 areas in the County in terms of the traffic calming measures that were required to force motorists to drive more slowly. He explained the needs intervention policy which ensured that surfaces were reviewed regularly,

Councillor Buckmaster touched on road conditions and Hertfordshire County Council speed and volume studies. He also mentioned public engagement and the response rates to statutory consultation. He talked about initiatives to make walking a more attractive option such as cutting back weeds to prevent the narrowing of footways.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the problems associated with pavement parking forcing some pedestrians out onto the road when negotiating

parked vehicles. He talked about school drop off and pick times and advisory 20-mph speed limits. He explained the process involved in supporting a request for a 20mph and the need for open consultation.

Councillor Redfern expressed her concerns in respect of pavement parking. County Councillor Bibby said that enforcement against pavement parking only displaced the problem to other locations. He also talked about the weight of evidence required in terms of accident statistics before action could be taken to enforce a lower speed limit.

Police Sergeant Miller talked about enforcement of speeds using speed camera traps and traffic speed boards. He said that the police did what they could and there was a balancing exercise of demand versus available resources.

Councillor McAndrew addressed the Committee at length in respect of Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and the policing of 20-mph zones and the consultation process. Councillor McAndrew explained how the introduction of a LCWIP would help support the council in securing Government Grants. He also referred to the issues caused by the introduction of traffic calming measures and people travelling at speed over humps.

Councillor Clements asked about the limit of achieving change in terms of the constraints on what Councils and authorities were trying to achieve. County Councillor Bibby said that the chief constraint was funding. He confirmed that an LCWIP was needed to

attract Government funding and said that a big barrier at consultation was the viewpoint from the public of “not in my backyard”. He confirmed that the LCWIP was needed to attract Government funding. He said that a better approach was to take the public on the journey of the changes rather than imposing changes. Councillor Buckmaster added that it was easier to put measures in place in new growth areas to encourage people to walk to schools and shops. Other areas were a challenge.

Councillor Clements sought clarification on the approach of clearing footpaths in winter months. HCC Bibby explained the County Council’s priorities and explained the limitations.

Councillor Carter asked what powers the police had to enforce against pavement parking. Sergeant Miller explained what constituted an obstruction said that some tickets were being issued for pavement parking as well as letters being sent to the registered keepers. He explained that the fines issued were not to some people, much of a deterrent.

County Councillor Bibby explained that enforcement of double yellow lines and traffic regulation orders would not prevent 100% of illegal parking or vehicles obstructing the footway. He confirmed to Councillor Carter that there were strict criteria for the siting of fixed speed cameras and resources had to be directed to where it would make the most difference.

The Chairman, Councillor Andrews, referred to the need to educate people in respect of road safety.

Councillor Nicholls commented on perceptions of speed and agreed with the need to educate parents regarding acceptable driving behaviour near schools.

Councillor Carter said that more work needed to be done to encourage walking over the use of the private motor car. Police Sergeant Miller explained the role of the Police in schools to educate children.

The Chairman said he would encourage all schools to have travel plans and thanked County Councillor Bibby and Police Sergeant Miller for attending. Councillor Andrews proposed and Councillor Carter seconded, a motion that the issue of Pedestrian Safety to brought back to Members following discussions between the Chairman and Vice Chairman on a way forward. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the issue of pedestrian safety be brought back to Members following discussion between the Chairman and Vice Chairman on a way forward.

131 AIR QUALITY IN EAST HERTS

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report that updated Members on the following issues in respect of air quality in East Herts:

- the latest air quality figures for the three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in East Hertfordshire
- progress on producing the new Air Quality Action Plan to submit to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- progress on the council's DEFRA-funded active travel project that started in April 2023.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability talked about the progress on the active travel project and improvements in air quality during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that air quality had begun to deteriorate as vehicle traffic volumes had steadily increased.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that cars were producing fewer emissions but there were a lot more cars on the road. He said that tackling air quality was a shared problem that required shared solutions. There was a general discussion and debate in respect of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Councillor Buckmaster explained that monitoring was a role for public health and that Hertfordshire County Council had a substantial report coming out soon.

Councillor Horner commented on the importance of behaviour change and Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP). Following a question from Councillor McAndrew, the Head of Housing and Health provided an update in respect of the latest work of the

breathe easy group. He was concerned about the information contained in the appendices.

Councillor McAndrew commented that there was an expectation that Members would be considering at this meeting an Air Quality Action Plan but that instead Members were being presented with a scoping document and he was disappointed with this considering the work which had already been done on this including a declaration of a climate emergency. He explained the need for Officers to develop the document to carry out the work, of the need for resources and manpower to carry out the functions given in the climate change emergency.

Councillor McAndrew sought assurances that the council had engaged with businesses, people walking and cycling.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability responded to the points made by Councillor McAndrew. He explained what consultations had been carried out and were in the pipeline and referred in particular to some of the more complex issues. He commented on the timescale for public consultation and the scoping document.

The Head of Housing and Health explained that what was before Members was not the final document and that more work was needed with the results being reported to Executive in October.

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor Redfern seconded, a motion that the Air Quality Management

Area data in respect of pollution increases be acknowledged and a further report be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that that the Air Quality Management Area data in respect of pollution increases be acknowledged and a further report be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024 for due consideration.

132 COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY AND PRIORITIES 2023/24

The Executive Member for Communities submitted a report that set out the updated priorities for 2023/24, with a slightly reworded policy in respect of the community grants policy. The Executive Member explained that this matter would be reported to Council on 18 October 2023.

The Executive Member for Communities talked about updates to community grants and reductions in 2022/23. She said that the previous maximum grant limit of £5,000 would be replaced with a grant range of £500 to £3,000. She stated that this range would enable the council to still make a significant number of grants.

Members were advised that other projects from community groups would be eligible for grants from the council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. These two extra funding programmes would be entitled to

cultural activities and environmental sustainability grants, which together totalled another £40,000.

The Executive Member for Communities talked about reductions in community grant funding and said that the community grants policy would be amended to reflect the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Williamson commented on how many smaller grants could be given out and whether some organisations might no longer qualify for smaller grants where they might previously have been awarded a grant of £300.

Councillor Clements commented on priorities and providing support to those who needed mental health support with gaining employment. He referred to supporting people with gaining CV writing skills and helping people into work.

Councillor McAndrew said that the Stansted Airport Consultative Committee had a grants funding programme, and this did include applications from town and parish councils. Councillor McAndrew asked a question in respect of grant funding and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer referred to the work of the Healthy Hubs and other return to work schemes. A question was asked in relation to Town and Parish Council precepts in terms of whether there was a list of the amounts that related to the precepts.

The Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer said a list was produced by Benefits and Revenues. He referred to alterations that had been made to the scoring assessment process.

The Chairman commented on how the revised policy might impact on Town and Parish councils in terms of compatibility given that they could precept or set a precept themselves. The Chairman asked Members to send any further comments to the Executive Member for Communities as the matter would be presented to council on 18 October 2023.

Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Clements seconded, a motion that the revised Community Grants Policy, including the priorities for 2023/24 be considered, and comments be passed to the Executive Member for Communities prior to presentation to the Executive for onward recommendation to Council for approval.

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

RESOLVED – that the revised Community Grants Policy including the priorities for 2023/24 be considered, and comments be passed to the Executive Member for Communities prior to presentation to the Executive for onward recommendation to Council for approval.

The Scrutiny Officer submitted the work programme report and explained that the work programme of items had been drafted following topics suggested at a July Workshop when Members were asked to put forward ideas for scrutiny which Members could review for the 2023/24 civic year.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that clarification had been sought from Heads of Service on some of the topics and responses had been forwarded to Members on 31 August. She said that it was now for Members to take a view on the topics and decide how these should be scrutinised and to determine the reporting timeframe for each topic.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the items listed in the work programme and agreed the following timescales for topics:

Social Housing Providers – Scrutiny Officer to seek information from Head of Housing and Health then approach Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to seek information on the questions posed. Information will be fed back to Members prior to January 2024 when Members will be asked to decide next steps. January 2024

Access to parks for disabled children – site visit in 2024 to gather evidence. Scrutiny Officer to liaise with key officer and advice Members.

Climate Change – Target Carbon Neutrality – January 2024 – Summary Bulletin to be circulated on the questions posed.

UK Share Prosperity Money – Overview and Scrutiny noted that an all Member Briefing was planned for 7 December when Members would be provided with a summary of all sources of funding. This could again be considered in the context of the Work Programme in January 2024.

Digital exclusion – The issue of literacy was discussed and Members sought further information from HCC.
March 2024

IT and Digital Innovation (Cyber Security) – March 2024
– Summary Information Bulletin

Smart Devices and improvement to Council services – Scrutiny Officer to approach Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) Dr Howe (whose area is digital innovation and, smart devices and social change).

Policing – financial support given to PCSO provision, financial breakdowns. Scrutiny Officer to contact HAPTC for information - March 2024.

Councillor Clements proposed and Councillor Cox seconded, a motion that, subject to the above timescales, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1 for 2023-24 be agreed. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above timescales, the work programme in Appendix 1 for 2023-24 be agreed.

134 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 10.20 pm

Chairman

Date