

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 16
JANUARY 2024, AT 7.00 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, A Daar, S Hopewell
and T Hoskin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Barfoot	- Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Paul Thomas-Jones	- Service Manager – Environmental Health

282 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors P Boylan and N Cox. It was noted that Councillors A Holt and S Watson were substituting for Councillors Boylan and Cox.

283 MINUTES - 30 NOVEMBER 2023

The Minutes of the meeting were submitted. Councillor Nicholls suggested that there should be an amendment to delete the following from paragraph 29 of Minute 240 (Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract Service Design). She suggested that the paragraph should be replaced as follows:

Delete "She expressed a concern about a 30% reduction in litter bins outside of town centres".

Replace with "She said that a resident had expressed a concern about a 30% reduction in litter bins outside of town centres". This amendment was supported.

Councillor Buckmaster proposed and Councillor Watson seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023, as amended, 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 30 November 2023, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

284 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements.

285 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

286 DRAFT - THRIVING TOGETHER 2024 - 2027 - A NEW HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN FOR EAST HERTS

The Executive Member for Wellbeing submitted a report in respect of Thriving Together 2024 – 2027, which was the new health and wellbeing plan for East Herts. She set out the background to the paper and summarised the draft work that had already begun in respect of the Health and Wellbeing Plan, including the work of partners in wider health and wellbeing services and ways to include residents.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that a helpful approach for residents would be to have this document as a broad mission statement and then have an action plan as a live document which would be monitored and updated on a more regular basis. She said that the Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer had run a survey for residents that had been broadly advertised and a good number of responses had been received.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing summarised the broadly positive feedback and said that respondents had been given the option to receive further updates or to become part of a wider community group. She said that the report summarised some of the suggested changes and there had been a small focus group prior to Christmas with a few of the residents who had expressed an interest in being more involved.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that a number of further edits had been made following the focus group and she welcomed any comments or questions from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Buckmaster acknowledged the amount of work and expertise that had gone into the report. He emphasised the importance of the document being easily understood and that there should be an associated “live” action plan document. He talked about ensuring enough flexibility so that various agencies and communities were able to engage with the plan.

Councillor Buckmaster said that the council should make sure that there was a measurable baseline. He referred to the social and community benefits deriving from council services such as Hertford Theatre and the leisure centres. He talked about the council’s cultural strategy and taking culture to the community if residents were unable to attend a theatre. He referred to the previous Forever Active programme from a few years ago and said that every councillor had a part to

play in ensuring that the council reached out to as many people as possible.

Councillor Nicholls said that this work was important in tackling loneliness and issues related to mental and physical health in local communities. She referred in particular, to pre-empting the need for adult care as a way of tackling the consequences of neglecting mental and physical health. She welcomed the inclusion of arts and creativity in the health and wellbeing plan and talked about the provision of services in rural communities.

Councillor Carter mentioned that she had noticed that respondents were perhaps weighted to the older age group, and she felt that this should be looked at going forward in the next stage of the process.

In reply to a question from Councillor Andrews regarding when the detailed action plan flowing from the Thriving Together document would be drawn up, the Executive Member for Wellbeing said that the action plan drafting process had commenced. She talked about the timelines for achieving actions and emphasised the importance of ensuring there were defined measures in the new Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Councillor Buckmaster said that there had been some public health funding that had come into the council which had helped with the work of healthy hubs in signposting. He stressed the importance of investing in prevention in respect of ill health such as type 2 diabetes and obesity. He referred to the importance of

funding coming down to county and district councils from the health system as this would save the health service money.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing made a number of comments in response to the thoughts expressed by the Committee. In particular, in response to Councillor Carter's observation about the need to engagement with young people, the Executive Member told members that while the council had relatively few direct links with young people, Officers would work through partners, notably Active in the Community (a sports development agency funded by the council), the Defra-funded Breathe Clean project with schools and as part of the council-funded diversionary activities for young people during school holidays.

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded, a motion that the revised Thriving Together health and wellbeing plan for 2024 - 2027, had been considered, with any comments provided to the Executive Member for Wellbeing for consideration prior to presentation of the plan to the Executive.

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

RESOLVED – having considered the revised Thriving Together health and wellbeing plan for 2024 - 2027, our comments be provided to the Executive Member for Wellbeing for consideration prior to presentation of the plan to the Executive.

287 EAST HERTS AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report that presented to members the final draft version of the Air Quality Action Plan for East Hertfordshire following public and stakeholder consultation. He commented on the linkages between improving air quality and improving health outcomes.

Members were referred to the data regarding air quality within the three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that since September, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for East Herts had been produced and this could be seen at Appendix A.

A public and stakeholder consultation exercise had been undertaken and the analysis of this consultation was attached at Appendix B. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that within the three AQMAs, the main contributing factor was vehicles and diesel cars were the main source of air pollution.

Members were advised that the action plan needed to be an active and evolving document throughout the next five years. There had been a 6-week consultation period which was in line with the DEFRA code of practice and there had been 189 responses of which 182 had been from the public and seven from statutory consultees.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that several changes had been made following the consultation responses. He said that the Council had tempered the language which was used in the AQAP regarding Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) from exploring implementation to exploring the potential pros and cons of this.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability concluded that the draft AQAP focussed on making best use of the council's limited resources and tried to target the actions which could have the most significant impact on the three AQMAs. He said that the council would continue to work with key partners to undertake as wide a range of activities as was possible to improve air quality. Members were reminded that lots of the options for controlling and influencing air quality lay outside of the control of the council.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to the complexity of the issue of air quality. He commented on the statutory duties of East Herts Council regarding monitoring and action plans and Hertfordshire County Council in terms of the public health focus.

Councillor Buckmaster said that discussions between the two councils should continue and there was a Hertfordshire County Council seminar in Stevenage planned for 29 February, which was for county and district members to attend. He said that this was nearly fully subscribed but was a good forum to have. He emphasised the importance of common branding in terms of joined up thinking.

Councillor Buckmaster said that jointly across the county and the district, members and officers should consider what the vital outcomes were in terms of output. He talked about getting people to change behaviours in terms of anti-idling and wood burning stoves. He said that county council members had access to budgets for interventions to try to influence behaviour.

Councillor Buckmaster said that there should be a forum where all members could work together and there were also Section 106 agreements from housing developments which provided funding sources. He talked about the available funding being used to make it easier for people to walk to school by introducing drop kerbs and pedestrian crossings in the right places.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability emphasised the importance of measurement in terms of the cause and effect of initiatives. He said that the action plan had to include a heightened level of measurement. He talked about the option of having real time air quality measurement for Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Sawbridgeworth.

Councillor Clements commented that there had been no responses from local MPs in the area. He referred to the importance of public behaviour and talked about the need for action from central government and the local MPs to raise the profile of issues such as moving away from diesel vehicles.

Councillor Horner emphasised the importance of overcoming scepticism from the public and getting them to embrace and buy into the action plan and the agenda in respect of air quality. He talked about “on demand” public transport and school travel plans in AQMA areas. He referred to the matrix of journeys through the Hockerill junction to schools across the whole of Bishop’s Stortford.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability talked about the importance of joined up thinking to ensure the best possible outcomes. He said that this would go some way to help reduce the scepticism or cynicism.

Councillor Nicholls talked about reductions in pollution following the introduction of road safety measures such as default 20 mph speed limits. She referred to measures introduced in Edinburgh, London, Paris and Wales.

Councillor McAndrew said that another good thing to include would be the secondment of an officer to Uttlesford District Council to assist them with their Taxi Licensing Policy. He talked about the work being undertaken with the 10 district councils in Hertfordshire regarding taxi licensing policies resembling the policies in place at East Herts.

Councillor Buckmaster said that whilst NOx levels were coming down to 2030 as more people used electric vehicles, particulates and carbon emissions would not change. He said that the action plan would have to adapt over time due to the difficulties in measurement.

He made the point about the stress caused by congestion and the emphasis on the huge difference that could be made by getting rid of diesel cars and diesel commercial vehicles.

Councillor McAndrew talked about the inclusion of numbers of electric vehicles in the report and he said the new legislation regarding electric vehicles should also be in the report. Councillor Andrews talked about the impact of HGVs and drastic action that might need to be taken regarding how towns in East Herts would cope with them.

Councillor Watson commented on whether there would be sufficient monitoring of PM2.5 pollution and also monitoring of different traffic flows and changes to traffic patterns which might cause new areas of concern. Councillor Andrews talked about the importance of raising awareness of the need for behaviour change in the public domain about air quality as part of the action plan.

Councillor Carter asked if real time pollution data could also be included on information made available to the public in respect of air quality. She asked for and was given some clarity regarding the pollution figures for the West Street/Gascoyne Way junction in Hertford.

Councillor Thomas asked about what more could be done beyond involving trading standards to ensure compliance in respect of the burning of domestic fuels. He also commented on buses moving up Welwyn Road with vehicle exhaust being emitted at head height of children using the pavement.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability talked about the work taking place in respect of the regulations regarding the burning of solid fuels. He referred to the 'Clear the Air' campaign. Councillor Buckmaster said that particulates from fossil fuel burning at home was far greater than the emissions from transport. He referred to 24 January 2024 as being a clean air night.

Councillor Swainston asked if there was any data from the NHS in respect of respiratory illness that could be incorporated into the action plan as a way of getting more people engaged. Councillor Williams mentioned the exploration of on street bike parking being expanded for people coming to work in town centres.

The Head of Housing and Health confirmed, following an enquiry from Councillor Holt, that the action plan would always be looked at and refined and updated online. Councillor Buckmaster commented on housing growth and the impact in terms of HGVs and extensive road works. He referred to the M11 roadworks and housing developments in the Gilston area and Ware north and east and other housing development in Hertford.

Councillor McAndrew made a number of observations in respect of Appendix I and the need for what he believed could be more ambitious timelines, in respect of the following:

- Exploring emissions-based parking charges
- Explore last mile delivery,

- Install additional anti idling guidance,
- Review effectiveness of travel plans for schools and businesses,
- Continued adherence to sustainability SPD and air quality neutral policies. Parking SPD and District Plan review,
- Create sustainable design and construction codes,
- Support expansion of Herts Lynx,
- Potential implementation on foot streets in central Hertford,
- Develop personalised travel planning for residents,
- Active travel campaign (working with schools and businesses),
- Create East Herts Council workplace travel plans for staff,

Councillor McAndrew mentioned that HCCSP (Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership) had two 2 relevant strategic action plans regarding behaviour change and sustainable transport.

Councillor Andrews talked about ensuring that policies were not anti-car as people would always need cars. He talked about the importance of challenging perceptions and educating people in the use of hybrid vehicles. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the focus would not be anti-car and the focus would be on ensuring that opportunities to not use cars were taken.

Councillor Nicholls said that people were on board with the messages in respect of seeing less traffic in their area. She said that she believed one of the worst

places for pollution was inside the vehicle. She mentioned the importance of roadside messaging and behaviour change.

Councillor Andrews mentioned the importance of latching on to messages being put out by organisations to encourage deliveries being brought together. He referred to the collection of goods from central locations such as lockers at supermarkets.

Councillor McAndrew emphasised the importance of adequate resources being made available to move this action plan forwards.

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor McAndrew seconded, a motion that Overview and Scrutiny have considered the draft Air Quality Action Plan and Members' comments be passed to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for consideration, prior to presentation of the Air Quality Action Plan to the Executive.

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

RESOLVED – having considered the draft Air Quality Action Plan, Members' comments be passed to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for consideration, prior to presentation of the Air Quality Action Plan to the Executive.

The Democratic Services Officer submitted the work programme report and sought Members' comments on items for inclusion in the draft work programme of proposed scrutiny topics.

Members were advised that the report set out what had happened pre-Christmas in terms of updates on the work programme. It was noted that the Executive had suggested that Overview and Scrutiny Committee might wish to review the Anti-Racism Charter.

The Democratic Services Officer said that, pending further information from the Head of Housing and Health in terms of a reporting update, this had been provisionally booked in for the 5 March meeting.

Members were reminded that the March meeting had quite a few topics scheduled so the Committee might want to re-consider the topics for that meeting. The Democratic Services Officer reminded Members that as the Committee dates for 2024/25 had now been agreed, Members were invited to consider what scrutiny topics they might wish to review and include on the work programme.

The Democratic Services Officer said that that any proposals for scrutiny should be completed using the proposal form available in the TEAMS area. Members views were sought on the work programme and whether they wished to make any changes, in particular whether a bulletin was required in respect of the East Herts Markets and the Anti-Racism Charter.

Members were also asked if they wanted to delay the consideration of the Development Management and Community Forums to 2025.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services asked for clarity from Members as to whether they wished to receive bulletin updates in respect of the Anti-Racism Charter and the East Herts Markets. Members confirmed that they would like a bulletin on both of these topics. The Committee also said that they would like the Development Management and Community Forums topic delayed until mid-2025.

Councillor Woollcombe proposed and Councillor Watson seconded, a motion that, subject to the above changes, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1 (programme of proposed scrutiny topics) as amended, be agreed. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above changes the work programme in Appendix 1 (programme of proposed scrutiny topics) as amended, be agreed.

289 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.56 pm

Chairman

Date