

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
30 January 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Monday 30 January 2017 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors S.Johnston (Chairman)  
J.Cragg (Vice-Chairman)

H.Beckett, H.Bower (substituting for N.Taylor),  
J.Broach, N.Chapman, K.Holman, H.Quenet, L.Sparks,  
J.Weston

ALSO PRESENT: H.Bromley (Executive Member – Environment)  
(Excluded for Minute 48)  
R.Trigg (Executive Member – Governance, Community  
Safety, Police and Crime Commissioner  
and Corporate Policy)  
(Excluded for Minute 48)  
Contract Manager, Serco (R.Guy)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: B.Robbins (Tenants' Panel Representative)  
J.Corson (Tenants' Panel Representative)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning & Governance) (N.Long)  
Executive Director (Resources Environment & Cultural Services) (Ka Ng)  
Head of Environment (D.Reyner)  
Head of Public Health and Protection (J.Harding)  
Community and Environment Services Manager (K.Roberts)  
Governance Services Manager (G.Seal)  
Licensing Team Leader (K.Payne)  
Waste Services Officer (C.Nicholls)  
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

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36. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N.Taylor and J.Armstrong-Bridges (Tenants' Panel Representative).

37. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS:

The following substitution of a Committee Member had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22.

Councillor H.Bower for Councillor N.Taylor.

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38. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39. ACTIONS UPDATE:

The report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) identified actions agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on 14 November 2016 and their current status.

RESOLVED:

That there were no actions to be reported be noted.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS:

Councillor S.Johnston declared non-pecuniary interests in items on the Agenda as appropriate by virtue of being a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

Councillor J.Broach declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda Item 12 – Update on Operation Reprise and Operation Balsam by virtue of his involvement with the University through his employment there.

Councillor N.Chapman declared a non-pecuniary in agenda Item 12 – Update on Operation Reprise and Operation Balsam by virtue of his involvement with the University as a student.

41. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS:

The Chairman reported that a question from Cathy Roe had been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 31. In accordance with Council Procedure Rules a period of fifteen minutes was allowed.

Question submitted by Cathy Roe:-

“What impact will the introduction of a subscription service for garden waste, and the direction of food waste to the black residual bins, have on the environment, that is

1. Volume of waste going to landfill (or to incineration)
2. Climate change
3. Amount of fly-tipping (of garden waste, and of residual waste because of over-full residual waste bins) in the Welwyn Hatfield District”

The Chairman thanked Ms Roe for her question and read the following answer:-

“We know that the majority of food waste is still disposed of through the black (residual) bins. In particular the latest survey data for the Borough indicated that

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over 65% of food waste is being put into the black waste bins. We do not anticipate there to be a significant increase on the amount of waste disposed of through landfill as the Council will be promoting food waste reduction and home composting. They are recognised as the preferred methods for residents to minimise and manage any food waste generated as these have the smallest environmental impact. Garden waste should not be put in the refuse bin.

The impact on climate change will be negligible.

Over half of Councils in the UK are charging for garden waste collections and there is no evidence to indicate a rise in fly-tipping or pollution. However, we would like to remind all our residents that fly-tipping is illegal and we will take enforcement action against those who do not responsibly manage their garden waste or any other type of waste they produce.”

42. GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION REPORT:

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) setting out how the collection of garden waste would operate following the Council’s decision on 9 January 2017 to introduce a charge for the service. It was proposed that the scheme would be introduced at the start of the next financial year.

Members noted that the Frequently Asked Questions detailed in the report would be continually reviewed and updated throughout the implementation and roll-out of the service.

During the discussion which ensued, Members raised a number of questions and made the following comments regarding the charge for the collection of garden waste:-

- Would there be a reduction of the charge for students, which formed a high proportion of the population in Hatfield?
- A very high performance indicator e.g. 100% should be set.
- Hertfordshire County Council mentioned by implication that Welwyn Hatfield was the only local authority which had announced that food waste should be placed into the black bins and this would continue until 2020. This could be considered to be environmentally irresponsible. Alternative schemes such as anaerobic digesters should be investigated, considered and implemented.
- Members expressed disappointment that the charge for the collection of garden waste had been introduced.

Officers responded as follows:-

- The charge of £35.00 per annum had been set following the consultation exercise with residents of the Borough and as it had been considered to be at a level which was affordable to all households. The national average

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was just over £40.00 per annum. Concessionary rates would not be introduced.

- The Council, with a charge of £35.00, would only be partly offsetting the full cost of providing the collection service.
- The collection of garden waste was open to the student population and the charge of £35.00 would apply.
- Alternative schemes, to minimise the amount of food waste being placed into the black bins, such as home composting, were being considered. Advice would be regularly provided to the residents of the Borough.
- Key performance indicators were currently very stretching and would be revised to take account of changes to services.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the details of how the collection of garden waste would operate following the Council's decision on 9 January 2017 to introduce a charge for the service be noted.
- (2) That the Frequently Asked Questions would be continually reviewed and updated throughout the implementation and roll-out of the scheme be noted.
- (3) That it be noted there would be a post implementation review of the operation of the collection of garden waste carried out and reported to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six to nine months following its introduction in April 2017.

43. ENVIRONMENT SERVICES SECOND QUARTER 2016/17:

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) combining Environment Services information and Serco's customer satisfaction performance for Quarter Two for 2016/17.

Members referred to a number of the Performance Indicators contained in the report and received the following responses from Officers:-

**Performance Indicator 4.1.1 Refuse Collection and litter left behind after collections.**

This issue had been actioned. All crews, through the supervisors, had been alerted to the problem and had been issued with a shovel and broom to clear up any dropped litter after the lorry has moved on.

**Performance indicator 6 - Resident Complaints**

Residents did not always feel they received the service they had paid for as lorries could not access certain roads due to parked cars or other obstructions.

The Chairman stated that all Members were concerned about uncollected refuse or litter. Residents would often use social media to highlight any problems but would not report it directly to the Council's contact centre. Although social media was monitored by Officers it was not for the purpose of identifying and reporting such matters. This was for residents to do so, should they consider there to be a problem or an issue that they felt should be dealt with by the Council.

All Members were encouraged to report any problems through the Council's call centre rather than to individual Officers or Departments.

Officers drew Member's attention to **paragraph 5 - Missed Bins, Figure 4: Summary of Missed Bins** which indicated the number of customer reported missed bins of 374 per 100,000 was well inside the target.

Serco's Contract Manager advised that, following the problems experienced a year ago, all vehicles had been checked, overhauled and serviced. Crews were regularly reminded that it was their responsibility to check and report any faults or problems experienced with the vehicle on which they were working. The reports were then actioned by the vehicle workshops.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report on the combined Environment Services information and Serco's customer satisfaction performance for Quarter Two for 2016/17 be noted.

44. **EAT OUT EAT WELL HEALTHY EATING AWARD:**

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) setting out information regarding the "Eat Out, Eat Well" initiative, a healthy eating award, which the Public Health and Protection Team were planning to deliver with the Borough's compliant food businesses.

The Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework identified six priorities to help build communities that promoted good physical and mental health. One of the priorities was the long term vision that Welwyn Hatfield would become a "Healthy Food" Borough. As a result the Council would have a clear approach to healthy and safe food provision across the Borough, taking into account food safety, supply, support to businesses together with enforcement when necessary, thereby enabling people to make informed healthy choices.

Members welcomed and supported the introduction of the healthy eating award and initiative which was designed to promote healthier food choices. The intervention would support the public in being able to make informed lifestyle choices with the ultimate aim of improving the health and wellbeing of the residents.

In response to questions raised by Members, Officers advised that:-

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- Funding of £10,000 for the “Eat Out, Eat Well” initiative had been received from the Public Health Board via Hertfordshire County Council. The initiative where the Council brought into a product and certificates could be awarded.
- The initiative was a pilot scheme, which would be conducted on public sites but not in the Council offices. It would be rolled out to the wider business community, starting with Council venues, such as Finesse and Campus West.
- The budget would support Officers to visit and work with businesses on the food choices offered to their customers.
- Officers planned to meet and engage with businesses supporting them to offer healthier food options.
- Although it was a difficult initiative to evaluate, Officers intended to do so by identifying, where possible, the impact on lifestyle changes and long term health improvements.
- In practice, businesses would be issued with a comprehensive tool kit.
- Publication documents would be available and circulated to Members.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed introduction of the “Eat Out, Eat Well” initiative and healthy eating award be noted.
- (2) That a report and presentation which evaluated the impact the “Eat Out, Eat Well” initiative and healthy eating award had had in the Borough be brought to a future meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (3) That when the initiative was publicised an email be sent to all Members informing of the details.

45. PEST CONTROL UPDATE:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) setting out information relating to the pest control service provided by the Council appointed contractor, SDK Environmental Ltd (“Dial a Pest”). The extent of pest control treatments and activities during the period March 2016 to November 2016 were highlighted.

Members were also provided with information on the levels of pest control enforcement action undertaken by the council’s Public Health and Protection Service during the same period.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the pest control service provided by the Council appointed contractor, SDK Environmental Ltd (“Dial a Pest”) together with the performance of the contractor be noted.

(2) That future update reports be provided annually.

46. UPDATE ON OPERATION REPRISE AND OPERATION BALSAM:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) updating Members on the work carried out by the Environmental Health Team. This was in relation to out of hours noise work, provided by three distinct services Operation Reprise; Operation Balsam and Specific Investigations. The report contained a summary of statistics for Reprise and Balsam.

Members welcomed the ongoing work of Operation Reprise; Operation Balsam and Specific Investigations.

Members raised a number of points and received the following responses:-

- There was a slight downward trend in the number of cases dealt with by Operation Reprise. Officers were keen to understand why this was the case. Suggested reasons was whether it had been as a result of direct publicity or that the message had been passed on by word of mouth and residents were more aware of the services.
- Anyone experiencing noise disturbance should use the Council's emergency telephone number 0800 111 4484, which was also included in Life Magazine.
- The initiatives could be accessed in other ways, such as ringing 101 where the call would be put directly through to the emergency contact services at the Council offices.
- Additional work was being undertaken to promote the initiatives across the Borough such as the use of websites together with increased working with the University and neighbours in the surrounding areas. Officers were also looking at how the initiatives could be further promoted.

Members made the following additional points:-

- The initiatives covered residential areas other than just those surrounding the University.
- Those experiencing obstructive neighbours could also access the service.
- A bigger problem was the noise experienced by elderly people.
- The noise service provided someone for them to talk to and to express how they felt to someone who would listen.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Members express their gratitude to the Officers who were prepared to support the service and to attend incidents, which had had a positive impact on the residents of the Borough.

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- (2) That the night noise service and related work provided by Public Health and Protection through Operation Reprise and Operation Balsam be noted.
- (3) That the night noise service provided by Public Health and Protection through Operation Reprise and Operation Balsam continued to be supported.
- (4) That a reminder be sent to all Members on the initiatives and how to access the emergency contact service, including the Housing Trust emergency number 0800 111 4484.

47. CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL STREET TRADING CONSENT:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) asking Members to consider legalising street trading in certain areas of Hatfield Town Centre. This would enable the Town Centre Manager to invite traders to attend appropriate events to enhance the ambience, increase footfall and benefit businesses in Hatfield. It would be necessary for the Council to change the designation of these areas from “prohibited streets” to “consent streets”.

Members expressed the view that it was useful to have control of the type of stalls trading in Hatfield to ensure a wider selection of products and services. It was also considered it to be a positive step for Hatfield Town Centre.

It was noted that Hatfield Town Council was working towards putting more events on in Hatfield.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Members welcome and support legalising street trading in certain areas of Hatfield Town Centre.
- (2) That street trading in the areas of Hatfield Town Centre as detailed in the report be agreed and recommended to the Council for adoption.
- (3) That the areas marked with a red boundary on the location map at appendix A in the report which were currently “prohibited streets” for the purpose of street trading be designated as “consent streets”.
- (4) That the suggested fees for the consents above be £20-£25 per trader per day with an annual maximum payable for the entire consent of £1,155 per annum to Public Health and Protection.
- (5) That the street trading consent conditions include those items related to food safety as set out in section 6 of the report.

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- (6) That Hatfield Town Council be invited to work together with the Council to promote the events taking in place in Hatfield Town Centre.
- (7) That a report on the implementation of legalising the street trading in certain areas of Hatfield be brought back to a future meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

48. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17:

The pro-forma which set out the Committee's overview work programme had been updated since the last meeting to enable forward planning of items to be considered to take place. Items which the Committee agreed it would like to consider would be scheduled into the work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as submitted be approved.

49. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC:

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for item 22 (Minute 50 refers) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and Paragraphs 1 (Personal Information) and 5 (legal and professional privilege) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

50. HACKNEY CARRIAGE OFFICE ENFORCEMENT ACTION 2015/16:

Exempt report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) providing Members with a summary of the work undertaken by the Hackney Carriage team during the past year.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked the Hackney Carriage team, who, for a small team did a fantastic job, particularly in regard to the blind users of hackney carriages in the Borough.

Concerns raised by Members and Co-opted Members were addressed by Officers as follows:-

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- Those operators and drivers who were not willing or able to provide a duty of care to the more vulnerable users of the services were to be discouraged from operating or working within the Borough.
- Safeguarding and duty of care awareness training were required for all drivers and operators.
- Positive feedback had been received regarding the child sexual exploitation (CSE) training provided for operators and drivers.
- Every driver and operator were expected to attend training. Those that had not were being contacted to ascertain the reasons they had not done so.
- Hackney Carriage Committee decisions on misdemeanours and penalties were based on the evidence which was presented to Members.
- The Hackney Carriage Committee received legal advice on each case and each case was decided on an individual basis.
- A Liaison Guide Dog Team test purchased the hackney carriages operating in the Borough.
- Any experience that a passenger felt to be uncomfortable or inappropriate should be reported to the Hackney Carriage Officer.
- Hackney Carriage drivers should offer reasonable assistance wherever possible and appropriate without hesitation or the need for a passenger to request help. If this was not the case the matter should be reported to the Hackney Carriage Officer. Reports made by passengers of concerns regarding drivers needed to be accompanied by the hackney carriage license plate number.
- Lack of evidence would result in the Police taking no further action (NFA). However the Hackney Carriage Office would continue to monitor any driver who had been reported and they would be kept under close scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

That the work carried out by the team to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the public who use hackney carriage or private hire vehicles be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.55pm  
ML