

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
5 April 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 5 April 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, J.Broach, N.Chapman, K.Holman,
H.Quenet, L.Sparks, N.Taylor, J.Weston

ALSO PRESENT: B.Sarson (Executive Member, Business, Partnerships
and Public Health)

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

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)
Risk and Resilience Manager (A.Cremer)
Team Leader (Public Health and Protection) (J.Hollingsworth)
Senior Performance and Strategy Officer (G.Crawford)
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

The Chairman expressed her thanks to the Committee for their hard work and dedication throughout the year

51. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52. ACTIONS UPDATE:

The report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) identified actions agreed, if any, at the meeting of the Committee held on 30 January 2017 and their current status.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted there were no actions to be reported.

53. 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.

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54. CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) updated Members on the work carried out by the Council to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, fulfilling some of the Council's commitment to sustainability.

The following points were raised and addressed during the discussion which ensued.

It was noted that a map or graph detailing the results of the modelling of Housing Condition in the Borough was not currently available to Members for information about their particular Ward. Members were asked to contact either the Healthy Homes Adviser or Team Leader, Public Health and Protection for details.

Members noted that not all fuel poverty was located within the deprived areas of the Borough. A number of residents were asset rich but cash poor and there were pockets of fuel poverty in the outlying villages. Those persons on very low incomes were also affected. Poor quality housing exposed residents to greater risk of related health problems.

Following reference from a Member regarding a resident who had found ways to keep warm at minimal cost, Officers advised that such methods must be safe and appropriate.

Members noted that care workers may obtain, share and use appropriate information and knowledge from a wide variety of sources to advise those residents who were experiencing fuel poverty on how to raise their core temperature without incurring additional cost. All professionals who visited residents at home recognised the need to make every visit count. The advice given to residents must, however, be safe.

Following a description of an initiative whereby a group of residents in a location came together and approached energy companies in order to obtain the best possible rate for fuel, Officers advised that this was similar to a countywide initiative which was being looked into by Officers. The initiative, as well as reducing energy poverty, brought a number of other benefits as it helped and informed vulnerable groups. Information regarding the initiatives as described by Members, would be welcomed and shared across the Local Authorities.

With regards to the Green Travel Plan mentioned in the report, Members noted that, whilst targets had not been set and results were not currently measured, the notable benefits to the scheme were:-

- Bicycles were cost neutral.
- Pool cars would save money as staff would not be paid mileage for their journeys and members of the public would be able to hire them at certain times.

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- Staff who had signed up to the Employee Travel Club, arranged with the Arriva bus company, saved a significant amount of money each year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the work undertaken by the Public Health and Protection Service be noted.
- (2) That future updates on climate change would be received annually.

55. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2017/18:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) sought approval and adoption of the Council's Food and Safety Service Plan for 2017/18.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the performance against the previous Food Safety Service Plan be noted.
- (2) That the Food Safety Service Plan for 2017/18, as set out in Appendix A of the Officers report, be noted.
- (3) That the Food Safety Service Plan be recommended to Cabinet for adoption by the Council.

56. FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME - COST RECOVERY:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) advised the Committee of the change in the Food Standards Agency charging policy and proposed that the Council introduced a cost recovery fee for Food Hygiene Rating Scheme re-inspections/re-visits.

Members then watched a short film of a restaurant owner who had agreed to be interviewed about his experiences when dealing with Environmental Health Officers following a routine food hygiene inspection.

Members noted that a high food hygiene score was seen as a selling point for businesses.

Members expressed surprise that food businesses were not required by-law to display their current food hygiene rating and that it was possible to continue to trade when the business had scored zero.

A Member commented that businesses often operated under different names which then made it difficult for customers to identify the food hygiene score awarded to those establishments from the internet and other sources. It was the view of Members that, for clarity, a detailed food rating guide would be helpful.

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A Member commented that because the majority of the businesses inspected across the Borough had been in Hatfield, it appeared that Hatfield had been targeted. Officers advised that the law allowed for food establishments to be inspected in a variety of ways and times. There were a number of different sanctions which could be applied depending on the level of risk.

Officers advised that residents should always be encouraged to report their concerns about a food service establishment to the Council. All food poisoning symptoms should be reported to the doctor, who would then report it to the Council, particular concerns would be followed up separately in more detail.

Members went on to note that Officers focussed on those establishments which had poor hygiene scores and provided help and support to address these issues by working closely with the owner/operative.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the change in the Food Standards Agency charging policy be noted and the proposal to introduce a cost recovery fee for Food Hygiene Rating Scheme re-inspections/re-visits be agreed.
- (2) That delegated authority be given to Head of Public Health and Protection, Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business, Partnerships and Public Health, that a suitable fee be determined giving regard to the Food Standards Agency's guidance and in consultation with the Council's Finance team.
- (3) That the Cabinet be recommended that the changes be introduced and to refer to the Council that they be adopted and the budget book adjusted accordingly.

57. HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN:

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) setting out the Council's Health and Safety Service Plan for 2017/18. The service plan outlined the Council's commitment to the national strategy and the arrangements which were in place to deliver proactive and reactive interventions.

The Committee extended their thanks and appreciation to all the health and safety team.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council's Health and Safety Service Plan for 2017/18 be noted.

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- (2) That the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2017/18 be referred to Cabinet for recommendation for adoption by the Council.

58. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT:

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) setting out the performance indicator data for quarter three for 2016/17, along with comparative information.

During the discussion of the report Members raised the following questions which would be referred to the relevant Officer for response by email:-

Performance Indicator 16 - Percentage of household waste collected and sent for reuse, recycling and composting

As an observation rather than a question – it was expected that there would be a sustainable garden waste service and that this performance indicator would underperform due to the changes recently introduced.

The Chairman stated that the impact of the changes in the garden waste services was not fully known at this stage and assured the Committee that the service would be monitored properly.

Performance Indicator 18 - The percentage of residents either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with street cleansing

Was there any particular reason why satisfaction for street cleansing had decreased in quarter three?

Performance Indicator 29 - Process hackney carriage and private hire licences (e.g. taxis and minicabs, drivers and operators) within the stated timescales

Members queried the rationale behind having a performance indicator with a target of 100%, as other indicators would be more critical/relevant to licencing?

Members were advised that Officers had to report on prescribed indicators. Being able to see that the performance indicator was at 100% gave the reassurance that there were no concerns regarding the service delivery and would keep users safe.

RESOLVED:

That the performance indicator data for quarter three for 2016/17, together with the comparative information be noted.

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59. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The pro-forma, which set out the Committee's overview work programme, had been updated since the last meeting to enable the 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.

60. COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18:

Members noted that the work of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the Review of Trees was nearing completion and that the final report would be considered by the Cabinet in June 2017.

Members also noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 25 April 2017.

Meeting ended at 8.50pm
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