

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
25 September 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 25 September 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

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

H.Beckett, M.Birleson, H.Bower (substituting for
J.Beckerman), J.Broach, N.Chapman, M.Cowan,
P.Mabbott (substituting for K.Holman), N.Taylor,
J.Weston

ALSO PRESENT: H.Bromley (Executive Member, Environment)
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Business, Partnerships
and Public Health)
R.Trigg (Executive Member, Governance, Community
Safety, Police and Crime Commissioner
and Corporate Property)

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

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance)
(N.Long)
Head of Planning (C.Haigh)
Head of Head of Public Health and Protection (J.Harding)
Policy and Communications Manager (T.Burn)
Landscape and Ecology Manager (A.MacDonald)
Environmental Health Team Leader (J.Hollingsworth)
Economic Development Officer (L.Devayya)
Environmental Health Officer (K.Riahi)
Environmental Health Technical Officer (T.Vincent)
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

15. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

The following substitutions of Committee Members had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22:

Councillor H.Bower for J.Beckerman
Councillor P.Mabbott for K.Holman

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16. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.Beckerman and K.Holman.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. ACTIONS UPDATE

The status of actions agreed at the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20 July 2017 in the report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

Members queried when the schedule of how the on-going deep cleaning programme would be monitored and reported to the Committee.

The Chairman suggested that sufficient time must be allowed to enable the implementation and monitoring of the cleaning programme. Should Members be dissatisfied with the cleanliness following a clean then the matter ought to be raised at the next meeting.

19. ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) updating Members on the work which had been carried out by the Public Health and Protection Team in relation to the Environmental Permitting of relevant installations within Welwyn Hatfield.

Members noted that Local Authorities had to regulate certain premises and activities, for example vehicle spraying, petrol stations and dry cleaners. The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 provided the legal framework for the work detailed in the report. The interventions carried out by the Team ensured that pollution from these establishments was reduced or eliminated which ultimately helped to improve air quality in the Borough.

Members also noted that, where it was necessary to do so, a draft permit would be issued to the business until the matter had been addressed to the Officer's satisfaction.

RESOLVED:

That the actions taken by the Public Health and Protection Team in relation to the Environmental Permitting and the future programme of work, together with the report, be noted.

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20. AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) and presentation providing the Committee with an update on the status of the air quality within the Borough and outlining the Council's monitoring programme in respect of the pollutants referred to in the presentation. The report also detailed the duties of the Council should an Air Quality Action area be declared.

In response to concerns raised by Members regarding the traffic pollution around Hatfield Business Park, Officers advised that the Council was a member of the Air Quality Services for Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Group. The Group, which included representatives from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), planning and highways, considered and monitored potential health issues across the two counties. HCC was keen to assist and was proactive rather than reactive.

The Head of Planning advised that HCC was currently undertaking a Transport Strategy for the whole of Hertfordshire, which included the area around Hatfield. Other mechanisms for measuring the environment in that area were also being considered.

Officers confirmed that the more vulnerable residents, particularly those with health problems, were taken into account in the monitoring process. Members noted that the limit set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was safe although not the ideal. The Government received evidence and statistics obtained from the air quality monitoring carried out across the Borough. Consultation with the Council took place on various issues such as the proposed developments set out in the Local Plan.

Some Members concurred with the view expressed that radical action would be required to significantly reduce traffic to make sizable changes to air quality within the Borough.

In response to a query regarding the air text alert which was no longer available within the Borough, Members were advised that this had been operated by a group of local GPs who had ceased to do so.

In summary, the Chairman stated that the Council was proactive with regards to monitoring the air quality in the Borough and that the information gathered would be used to inform the planning process and to improve the lives of the residents of the Borough for the future.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current status of the air quality within Welwyn Hatfield be noted.
- (2) That the potential action required if the Council was required to declare an Air Quality Action Area be noted.

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21. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) and accompanying presentation providing the Committee with the performance indicator data collected for those services that fell within its remit. It also provided quarter one and annual data for 2017/18, along with comparative information.

The Chairman referred to 'Performance Indicator – 20 - Percentage of residents either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with street cleansing' and asked Members to note that the Council had been proactive in instigating the deep cleaning programme following the last meeting of this Committee.

In response to questions from Members in relation to the following queries relating to the performance indicators set out below those Officers present undertook to obtain responses from the relevant service area and to ensure their circulation to all Members.

Performance Indicator – 18

Percentage of household waste collected and sent for reuse, recycling and composting

Why was the target down to 42%?

Performance Indicator – 19

The cleaner local streets survey rating based on amount of litter and detritus

What were the implications of this for the Council when set against the benchmark set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)?

The Chairman referred to Performance Indicator – 25 - Percentage of all minor and other planning applications processed and decided on within eight weeks. The indicator, which measured the percentage of planning applications dealt with in a timely manner, showed a result of 87% against the target of 65%. The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Planning Department for their hard work in achieving this result.

RESOLVED:

That the report which provided performance indicator data for those services that fell within the remit of the Committee including quarter one and annual data for 2017/18, along with comparative information be noted.

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22. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) reviewing the success of the function of Economic Development within the Council which had the purpose of providing additional support to local businesses, business representatives and others. The report also provided a reminder to Members of the future vision and objectives together with the intended actions of the function.

Members noted the significant increase in the activity and the positive impact of the intervention and interaction with businesses following the introduction of the Economic Development Strategy and the Action Plan. Particularly networking events, a continually growing database of local employers and businesses and interaction with local businesses at Business Development Forums to learn of current and future business needs. A greater awareness of the Small Business Grants was being developed across the businesses.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on the Economic Development Activity of the Council be noted.
- (2) That the Committee endorse and support the successful Economic Development Activity currently undertaken by the Council and the actions planned for the future.

23. DRAFT TREES AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) setting out the methods and policies which dictate how the Council managed its trees and woodlands. Members noted that this was the third revision of the strategy and would update the adopted strategy from 2013.

Members also noted that the strategy would be added to the Council's online consultation system which would make it easier and more attractive for people to comment.

In response to concerns raised, Officers reassured Members that the draft strategy contained all the recommendations made by the Tree Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Any further comments or suggestions could be made via the Council's online consultation system.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Draft Tree and Woodland Strategy be approved for public consultation.

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- (2) That all Members of the Committee, including those involved with the Tree Scrutiny Sub-Committee, could make comment and contribute to the public consultation.
- (3) That the final results of the consultation be brought back for consideration by the Committee before being referred to the Cabinet.

24. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Committee received the revised overview work programme for 2017/18, which suggested that the item on Eat Out Eat Well be considered at the November meeting. This would enable Officers time to gather information and evidence on its implementation and effectiveness.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme and proposed amendment, to move the Eat Out Eat Well item to the November 2017 meeting, be noted and agreed.

Meeting ended at 9.00pm
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