

21 August 2009

Ref: HD/Scrutiny/Sep09
Contact: Hilary Dineen
Telephone: 01462 474353
Email: hilary.dineen@north-herts.gov.uk

To: The Members of the Scrutiny Committee of the North Hertfordshire District Council

(Councillors L.W. Oliver (Chairman); R.L. Shakespeare-Smith (Vice-Chairman); Mrs A.G. Ashley, David Billing, John Bishop, S. Bloxham, Melissa Davey, S.K. Jarvis, Lorna Kercher, Marilyn Kirkland, H.M. Marshall, Alan Millard, Elliot Needham and Michael Paterson).

[Substitutes: Councillors Judi Billing, John Booth, Tom Brindley, P.C.W. Burt, Lee Downie, Sal Jarvis and David Kearns]

You are invited to attend a

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

to be held in

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

on

TUESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2009

at

7.30 p.m.

[Note: A Pre-Meeting For Members Of The Committee Will Take Place At 7.00pm In Committee Room 3]

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA
PART I

ITEM	PAGE
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES – 16 JUNE 2009 To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 June 2009.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether the item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable. At the time of publication 1 presentation is expected from: Colin Dunham - Communication	-
5. URGENT/GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS The Chairman to report on any urgent or general exception items which required his agreement. At the time of printing the agenda, the Chairman had not agreed any urgent or general exception items.	-
6. CALLED-IN ITEMS To consider any matters referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to a call-in of a decision. At the time of printing the agenda, no items of business had been called-in.	-
7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest can speak on the item, but must leave the room before the debate and vote.	-
8. QUESTIONS To receive and respond to any questions either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.	1

ITEM	PAGE
<p>9. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – THE DRAFT FORWARD PLAN: 1 OCTOBER 2009 – 31 DECEMBER 2009 To note items on the Council's Forward Plan and to give consideration to any items set out in the Plan prior to a decision being made.</p>	3
<p>10. PRESENTATION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH To receive a presentation by Councillor Bernard Lovewell on the issues surrounding the housing element of his Portfolio.</p>	11
<p>11. PUBLICITY FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS REPORT OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER This Report was under preparation at the time of publication, it will be made available as soon as possible.</p>	13 [To Follow]
<p>12. REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES OF SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUPS REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER To consider outcomes of previous Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups and consider areas of contribution to future groups.</p>	15
<p>13. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2009/2010 REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR To consider the issues that the Scrutiny Committee plans to review at future meetings and the activities of its sub-groups.</p>	19

The dates of the Scrutiny Committee Meetings for the Civic Year 2009 – 2010 will be:

13 October 2009

8 December 2009

19 January 2010

23 March 2010

<p style="text-align: center;">SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 SEPTEMBER 2009</p>
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<p>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</p>	<p>AGENDA ITEM No.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p>
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TITLE OF REPORT: QUESTIONS

To receive and respond to any questions either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.

At the time of publication of the Agenda no formal questions had been received by Committee Services.

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***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF REPORT: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – THE DRAFT FORWARD PLAN: 1 OCTOBER 2009 – 31 DECEMBER 2009

To note items listed on the Council's Forward Plan and to give consideration to any items set out in the Plan prior to a decision being made.

The Forward Plan is attached, together with the list of Pending Items.

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 1 October 2009

The Forward Plan contains brief details of Key Decisions that the Council is likely to take over the next four month period. You will also find details of contacts who can provide further information and hear your views. **Please note that the dates of some of the decisions may change from month to month, please check with Committee Services on 01462 474403 before deciding to attend a meeting.**

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
Interim Green Space Management Strategy 10/07		Cabinet	20 Oct 2009	Portfolio Holders – Leisure & E-Government and Waste & Recycling	Meetings	NHDC Green Space Management Strategy	TBA	Cllr Ian Knighton Cllr Lynda Needham steve.geach@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474553
Consideration of Feasibility Study to Convert Hitchin Town Hall to a Museum 09/09		Cabinet	20 Oct 2009	Area Committees; Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum; Facility Working Group; Museum Project Board	Facility Working Group Meetings; Area Committees; Written Communication; Media Releases	Feasibility Study Brief; Feasibility Study	c.£3.5M Capital Revenue TBA	Cllr Tricia Gibbs John.robinson@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474224
Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers – The Wynd area, Letchworth GC TC 12/08		Council (via Cabinet)	20 Oct 2009	Portfolio Holder Letchworth Area Committee	Meetings	Relevant planning application /indemnity agreement	Cost neutral	Cllr Tom Brindley david.scholes@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474836
Corporate Business Planning - Efficiency & Investment Proposals 2010/11 03/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	20 Oct 2009	Budget Holders; HoSG CMT	Meetings	Budget papers	£19.3M net annual budget 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474297
Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) 05/08	Scrutiny Committee (TBC)	Council (via Cabinet)	20 Oct 2009	Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members	Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release	Submission DPD	TBA	Cllr Tom Brindley andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
Submission Development Policies DPD 05/08	Scrutiny Committee (TBC)	Council (via Cabinet)	20 Oct 2009	Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members	Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release	Submission DPD	TBA	Cllr Tom Brindley andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317
Building Control Policy 12/08	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	20 Oct 2009	Portfolio Holder Customer Liaison Panel	Meetings		TBA	Cllr Tom Brindley ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 476370
Preferred Options Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) 02/08	Scrutiny Committee (TBC)	Cabinet	15 Dec 2009	Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members	Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release	Preferred Options DPD	TBA	Cllr Tom Brindley andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317
Setting of Council Tax Base for 2010/2011 06/09		Cabinet	15 Dec 2009	Portfolio Holder	Meeting	Council Tax Base calculation	N/A	Cllr Terry Hone Howard.crompton@north-herts.gov.uk
Award Hitchin and Royston Leisure Management Contracts 06/09	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	15 Dec 2009	Portfolio Holder	Meetings	Leisure Management contracts	TBA	Cllr Ian Knighton Steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474211
2 nd Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2009/10 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	15 Dec 2009	Budget Holders; HoSG CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£19.3M net annual budget 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470
2 nd Quarter Capital Monitoring 2009/10 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	15 Dec 2009	Budget Holders; HoSG CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£8.9M programme 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470
Corporate Business Planning 2010/11 and Draft Budget 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	15 Dec 2009	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£19.3M net estimated annual budget 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone Norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474297
Corporate Business Planning 2010/11 Budget Setting 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Council (via Cabinet)	26 Jan 2010	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£19.3M net estimated annual budget 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone Cllr Claire Strong norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474297

SCRUTINY (01.09.09)

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
Capital Programme 2010/11 onwards 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	26 Jan 2010	Budget Holders; CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£8.9M estimated programme 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470
SNAP - Preferred Options for Development 08/09		Cabinet	26 Jan 2010	Informal Member Steering Group, Portfolio Holder	Meetings	SNAP Preferred Options Consultation document	Costs (shared with SBC) within existing budgets	Cllr. Tom Brindley john.ironside@north-herts.gov.uk 01462-474626

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PENDING ITEMS

Decision required and date first appearing on Plan	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Main Consultees	Method of Consultation	Relevant Documents	Costs or Savings	Portfolio Holder and Contact Officer
Royston Leisure Centre - Drainage 02/09		Cabinet	TBA	Royston Area Committee & Portfolio Holder	Meeting	Consultant's Report	Excess of £100,000	Cllr Ian Knighton steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474211
Allocation Procedure LAA(1) Performance Reward Grant 03/09	PARC	Cabinet	TBA	LSP Members	LSP Meetings		Neutral cost or saving to NHDC, but approx. £750K income to District via LSP	Cllr John Smith liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474230
3 rd Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2009/10 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	16 Feb 2010	Budget Holders; HoSG CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£19.3M net annual budget 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470
3 rd Quarter Capital Monitoring 2009/10 06/09	Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub)	Cabinet	16 Feb 2010	Budget Holders; HoSG CMT	Meetings	Budget Papers	£8.9M programme 2009/10	Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

PRESENTATION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR BERNARD LOVEWELL, THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Councillor Lovewell will give an oral presentation which will focus on the housing element of his Portfolio.

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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 11
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TITLE: PUBLICITY FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF STRATEGY AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks to explore the issue of publicity for Council meetings and its impact on public attendance and to make suggestions as to how this might be improved.

2. FORWARD PLAN

2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Scrutiny Committee of 16 June heard a presentation from a member of the public, Mr Colin Dunham, who made the case that Council meetings generally received little publicity. This should be improved in order to increase public participation in the democratic process. Mr Dunham also commented on the conduct of meetings, and has made a number of suggestions with the object of helping members of the public to follow the proceedings.

3.2 That meeting resolved:

- (1) *That the Communications Manager be requested to investigate the current methods of advertising Council meetings and ways to improve public awareness, particularly to those members of the public without access to a computer;*
- (2) *That the Communications Manager be requested to present his findings to the Scrutiny Committee meeting due to be held on 1 September 2009.*

3.3 What we know

3.3.1 This is essentially an issue of community engagement. We have some relevant statistical data from The Place Survey (Sept-Dec 2008) which revealed the following:

- 24.8% of residents feel they can influence local decision making, national average 28.9%, therefore N Herts is WORSE than average (National indicator 4).
- 23.0% wanted more say in local decision making, national average 26.6%, therefore N Herts is BETTER than average (supplementary question)
- 16.3% of residents have some form of civic participation, national average 14.0%, therefore N Herts is BETTER than average (National Indicator 3)

3.3.2 Public attendance at meetings is one method by which people get involved and receive information about the Council. However it never has been a very popular method. People get their information by a variety of other means, and want to continue getting their information via those other means, so the issue should be viewed in this wider context. We develop this theme further in 4.7 below.

3.4 **What we do now**

3.4.1 All the principal meetings – Full Council, Cabinet, PARC, Scrutiny, Area Committees and Planning Control, with dates, times and venues – are published quarterly in advance in *Outlook* magazine, which is distributed to all households.

3.4.2 The Forward Plan, published monthly on a rolling basis, contains the dates of Full Council and Cabinet and gives a good idea of forthcoming agendas, subject to late changes. The Forward Plan is available on the website, at libraries and at our offices

3.4.3 Community Development have tended in recent years to pay for advertising forthcoming Area Committee meetings in the local press when the meeting is preceded by an “open forum/town talk” which allows relatively unrestricted public participation. Surgeries such as those held in Hitchin and Royston are also supported by a press advertisement.

3.4.4 The full calendar is also published on the website. It is estimated about 81% of residents have access to the internet. Mr Dunham’s concern was for those who do not.

3.4.5 Members will be aware from their own experience that attendance levels vary widely, depending on the level of local interest or concern with particular items on the agenda.

3.5 **Do others do more than NHDC?**

3.5.1 We have asked other Hertfordshire authorities whether they do more or less than NHDC in publicising Council meetings. All replied that they rely on their websites and the usual notices in libraries and offices.

3.5.2 Those councils which did a little more than this included **Stevenage**, which for the last two years has been taking out half page adverts in the local press prior to Full Council meetings, and achieves an average attendance of about 20 at full council meetings. **Hertsmere** does not publicise its meetings but does webcast its Council and cabinet meetings. **Three Rivers** offer taxis and light refreshments, which they find to be effective for pensioner forums, though they do not support formal council meetings in this way.

3.5.3 **Watford** Borough Council used to spend money not only on press advertising but also on local area committee newsletters, specifically to promote area committees. These did not succeed in improving attendance and have recently been abandoned as not cost effective.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 Mr Dunham listed a number of shortcomings of each of our present means of advising of meetings. The truth is that no single method is perfect, though each can play a part. In terms of numbers of residents reached, our own *Outlook* magazine is the most effective. We know it reaches 86% of households and is well read. In the last 18 months we have increased the number of meetings listed in *Outlook* (previously we only listed Area Committees) and the current issue carries a message, specifically at Mr Dunham's request, about the Forward Plan.
- 4.2 *Outlook* is only produced quarterly, so supplementary publicity in the local press nearer the time of the meeting is always advantageous.
- 4.3 It is not the case that our publicity favours those who have access to the internet. We still promote on an equal basis the traditional means of publicity listed in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3. What is true is that those with a home internet connection (about 78% of households in the latest District Wide Survey) have the advantage in that access to the information is readily at hand. North Herts is also a commuting area, and those who work away from the District can view the website at a time convenient to themselves.
- 4.4 However, it is the experience of all Councils that residents will attend meetings where their interests are most closely affected. For example, irrespective of the publicity given to a meeting, there will always be large turnouts for controversial planning applications.
- 4.5 Members will also be familiar with the phenomenon of members of the public only attending meetings for that part in which they are involved and not waiting to hear the other business. This is also the case where an Area Committee is preceded by a less formal "town talk" or "forum" – often only a minority stay for the formal proceedings.
- 4.6 Members may wish to question whether public attendance at formal council meetings is necessarily a barometer of good community engagement. Council meetings and their supporting papers are inevitably specialised and esoteric, and the public cannot take part in the debates. Given that we have a number of less formal two way channels of communication with residents – such as the Area Committee forums, public consultation events, surgeries and roadshows – it may be that there are alternative ways of deepening the relationship with residents. The measure of this is the extent to which local people feel they can influence decisions, see 3.3 above.
- 4.7 Even these alternative means of community engagement, though no doubt important, are minority interests compared to the principal means by which residents obtain their information about the Council. These are *Outlook* magazine (73%), local newspapers (73%), leaflets (37%) and the website (16%). The remaining sources are in single figures. Appendix A is an extract from the 2008 District Wide Survey showing residents' actual and preferred means of obtaining information about the Council. Appendix B shows the same data over time. In this context we believe it would not represent good value for money to devote resources to increasing attendance at Council meetings.
- 4.8 There is, however, some scope for improving the advertising of meetings at the local press at little or no cost to the Council. This can be achieved by combining some of the current advertisements for individual meetings with those for area surgeries, into one list of forthcoming meetings. We are asking the Head of Community Development and the Democratic Services Manager, who both currently place these advertisements, to investigate this possibility.

- 4.9 It is the opinion of the Communications Manager that any extra expenditure on increasing attendance will meet diminishing returns. This is the experience of other authorities e.g. Watford where such expenditure has actually been reduced. However we will continue to explore with those officers involved, particularly the Democratic Services and Community Development functions, cost-free means of making Council meetings more engaging.
- 4.10 Mr Dunham's expressed a number of views on how meetings should be conducted to improve accessibility for the public. These are properly a matter for the Democratic Services Manager and are being discussed with him.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Committee state that they are able to question Officers about service performance whether generally, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects.
- 5.2 The Committee will be aware that there is a distinction between duties that the Council is required to comply with and does comply with, so far as public participation and notice of meetings and agendas is concerned, and powers where it has discretion whether to undertake more than it is legally required to do. In this regard section 2 Local Government Act 2000 entitles the Council to do anything that is intended to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its community. In addition section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 authorises the Council to incur expenditure which in its opinion is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, its area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

Cost effective solutions, utilising pre-existing publicity routes will incur little, if any, additional budget pressure. This is especially important in times of budgetary constraint

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no HR and equalities implications

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

Views have been sought from other District and Borough Councils in Hertfordshire

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Scrutiny Committee note the report
- 9.2 That the Head of Community Development and the Democratic Services Manager be requested to examine economies of scale in press advertising of meetings.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the Council gives adequate advice to all its residents of forthcoming Council meetings and that extra steps are taken to make meetings more accessible.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

See 4.8 – 4.9

12. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Extract from District Wide Survey –Sources of Information about the Council

Appendix B – Extract from District Wide Survey –Sources of Information about the Council over time

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

Roger Harrison Communications Manager
01462 474552
Roger.harrison@north-herts.gov.uk

Andy Cavanagh
Head of Financial Services
01462 474341
Andrew.cavanagh@north-herts.gov.uk

Kerry Shorrocks
Head of Human Resources
01462 474224
Kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk

Katie White
Senior Lawyer
01462 474315
Katie.white@north-herts.gov.uk

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The District Wide survey 2008 contained information on the readership of *Outlook* magazine, and residents' preferred sources of information about the Council.

The Place Survey 2008 asked questions on the extent to which people want to be more involved in local decision making.

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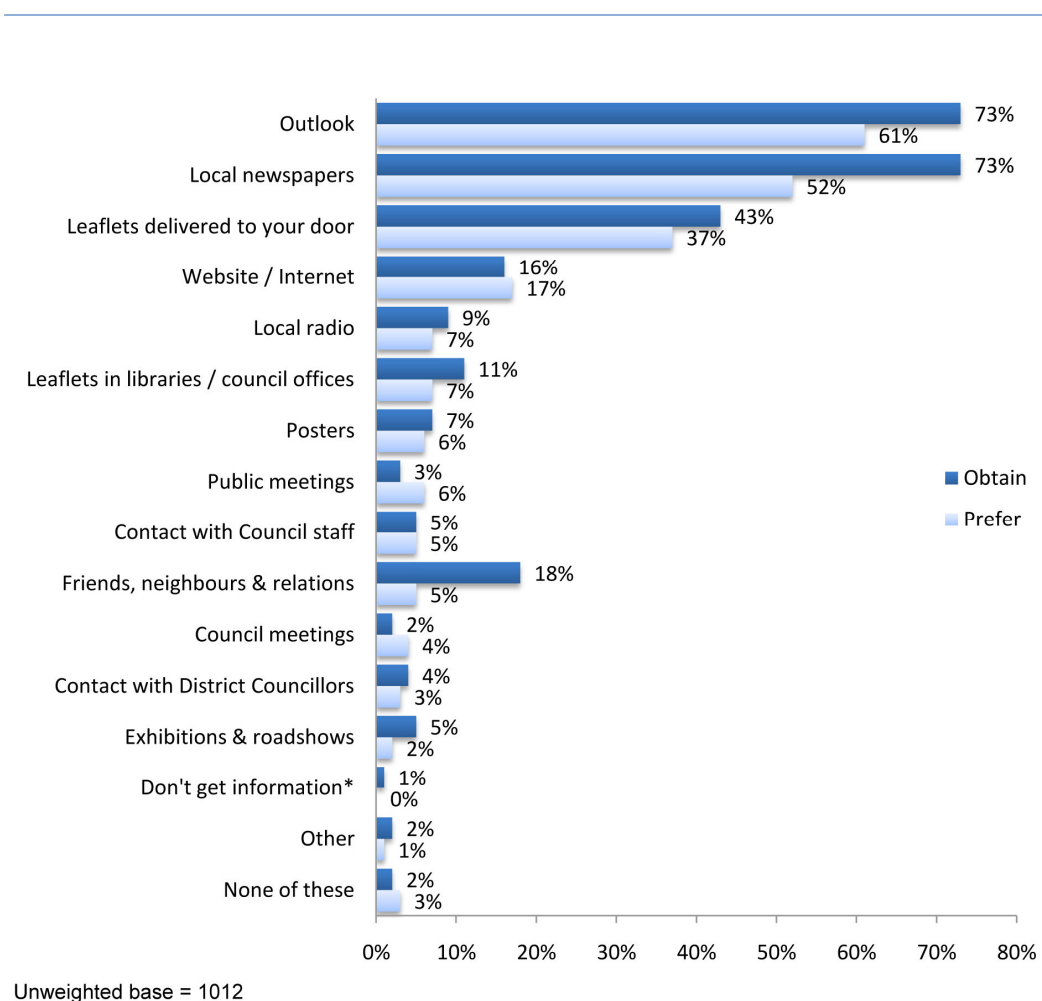
Appendix A

Extract from North Hertfordshire Districtwide Survey 2008

8.4 Sources of information about the Council

Residents obtain most of their information about the Council equally from *Outlook* and local newspapers, and these methods are also their preferred sources for such information. Leaflets are also an important source of information.

Figure 63 : Q24/Q25 Current and preferred sources of information about the Council – prompted (all respondents)



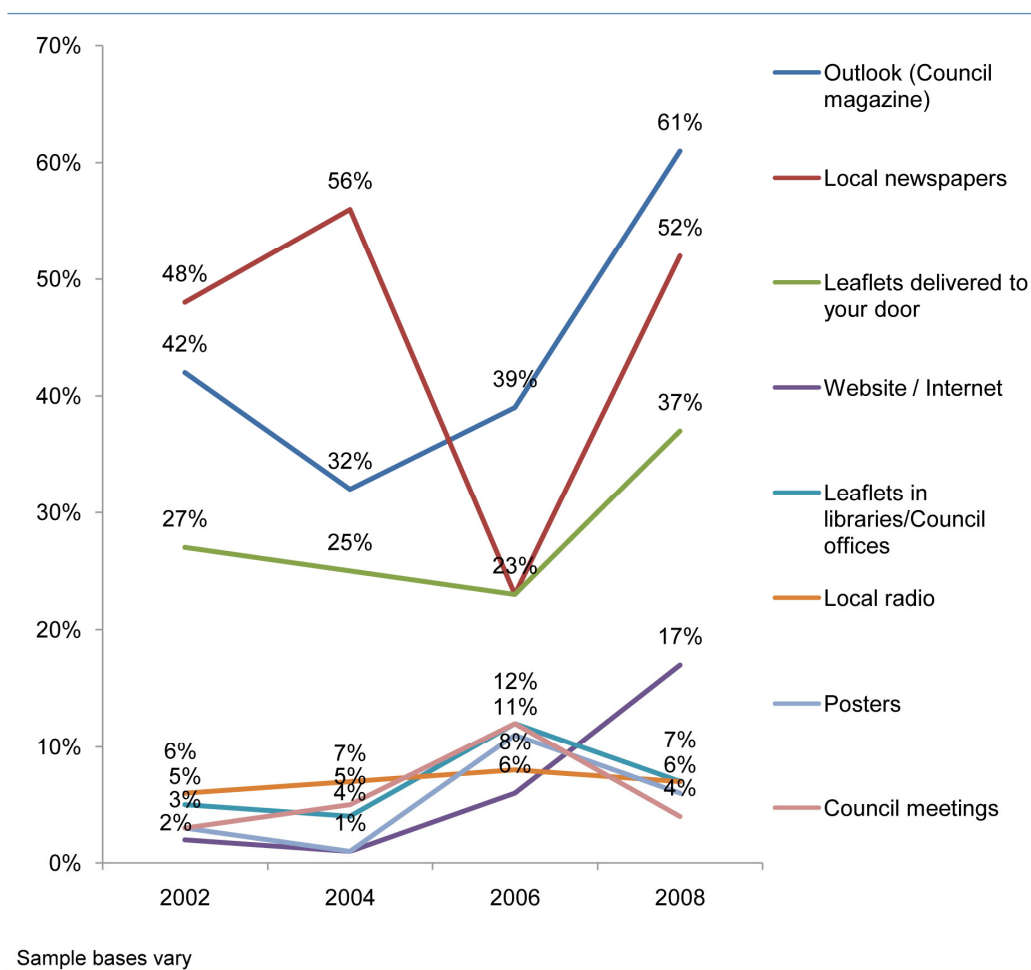
Appendix B

Extract from North Hertfordshire Districtwide Survey 2008

Sources of information about the Council over time

Trends over time show that *Outlook* magazine is increasing in popularity, particularly since 2006. Local newspapers have also increased in popularity, as have leaflets through the door and the Internet. Other preferred sources have declined since 2006.

Figure 64 : Q25 Preferred sources of information about the Council – prompted over time (all respondents)



TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES OF SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report examines the outcomes of Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups over the past three years and suggests areas which members and officers may wish to consider when contributing to task and finish groups in future.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. THE PROCESS

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee undertakes two or three topics a year for detailed investigation. The process typically involves:
- Selection of topics;
 - Scope;
 - Conduct of the group;
 - Dialogue with officers and portfolio holder;
 - Consideration of the report by CMT and Cabinet;
 - Implementation
- 3.2 Topics are suggested typically by members then reviewed by officers who comment on their suitability and whether a review can be accommodated within existing workloads. Once a topic is selected, group leaders nominate members to take part and a review is conducted typically over a period of 6 months or so, although this period may be shorter or longer. There are also administrative tasks at the beginning and (especially) at the end of the process which can prolong it by 3 – 4 months.
- 3.3 The process has a number of benefits, including educating members about topics and raising the profile of a subject area. The main outcome, however, is the group's report which makes a number of recommendations.
- 3.4 The group's report is considered by Cabinet, supported by the advice of CMT, and recommendations are accepted, noted, rejected or deferred by Cabinet. Once recommendations have been accepted, an action plan is drawn up and the Committee receives a report six months later explaining what action has been taken.

4. REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 A good recommendation is difficult to define but may contain a number of important elements. It should:

- say clearly what changes are required;
- be topical;
- be soundly based in evidence;
- be consistent with the Council's priorities;
- be accepted by Cabinet;
- be followed through by officers; and
- add value.

4.2 Using this definition, the acid test is whether something happens which leads to a positive change. The outcomes of recent task and finish groups are set out in the table below. It has proved difficult to look at the success of recommendations without reviewing the task and finish group process.

Table showing outcome of recommendations made 2006-2009

Topic	No of recommendations	Outcome
CCTV	11 (draft)	
Economic Development & Town Centres	11	9 accepted, 2 deferred
Sheltered Housing	4	3 accepted, 1 rejected
Social Inclusion	0*	
Cadwell Lane Environmental and Safety Issues	18	18 accepted or noted
Partnership Working with Parishes & Town Councils	36	25 accepted, 4 deferred 7 referred to other authorities for action
Community Safety	0**	
Affordable Housing Provision	5	4 accepted, 1 deferred

*TFG abandoned due to absence of key officers

**TFG cancelled without meeting due to absence of key officers

Recommendations which are accepted

4.3 The majority of recommendations have been accepted by Cabinet, albeit some of these with caveats. The question arises as to whether acceptance of the recommendations leads to effective action. Here the situation is less clear, and on closer examination it can sometimes be difficult to see what has changed as a result of the recommendation being made. This may be because:

- Recommendations are vague eg “the Portfolio Holder should review the arrangements for.....”;
- Outcomes are fuzzy eg “the Cabinet should seek to influence.....”;
- No real change is recommended eg “funding should continue for.....”
- The Council has no power to act eg “Herts CC should consider.....”.

Recommendations which are rejected or deferred

4.4 Some recommendations have been rejected or deferred by Cabinet, perhaps for reasons of resources or conflicts with policy or philosophy. In such cases, it might be helpful to consider whether:

- Officers and the Portfolio Holder have been sufficiently engaged in the process;
- Events have moved on over the course of the review;
- The evidence base is strong enough and opposing points of view properly considered.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Task and finish groups hope to enhance the effectiveness of the Council. There appears to be a number of underlying factors, many inter-related and some more justifiable than others, which may lead to recommendations not being implemented in practice:

- Reviews lack momentum, often taking 6-9 months to deliver a report
- Officers and/or Portfolio Holder not sufficiently involved/engaged
- Recommendations cost money, which may not be available
- Members develop the report in isolation from officers
- Misunderstandings/disputed facts
- Old fashioned, inflexible process, majority of work done at DCO meetings
- Review fatigue
- Scope too broad, or not followed
- Lack of pre-planning
- Shortage of member and officer time
- Lack of follow up from Cabinet process
- Responsibility shared with other authorities
- Vague explanations of implementation

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members are asked to consider and comment on the report. The Scrutiny Officer will collate any comments and suggestions for improvements so that task and finish groups can retain momentum and focus; and bring a revised paper back to the next meeting for consideration.

7. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To enable the Scrutiny Committee to plan and carry out its workload efficiently and effectively.

8. CONTACT OFFICERS

8.1 Norma Atlay
Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance
Scrutiny Lead Director
01462 474297
norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk

8.2 Brendan Sullivan
Scrutiny Officer
North Hertfordshire District Council
01462 474612
brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

9. APPENDICES

9.1 None

TITLE OF REPORT: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report presents the policies and topics that the Scrutiny Committee plans to scrutinise and updates members on the work of the scrutiny sub groups.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2009/10

13 Oct 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Report of the CCTV Task and Finish Group▪ Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD)▪ Submission Development Policies DPD▪ Building Control Policy▪ Health Scrutiny – Cllr David Miller▪ Improving Task and Finish Groups
8 Dec 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cllr F. John Smith, Leader of the Council▪ Preferred Options Land Allocations DPD▪ Award Hitchin & Royston Leisure Management Contracts (TBC)
19 Jan 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cllr Ian Knighton, Leisure & E-Government Portfolio Holder
23 Mar 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cllr Claire Strong, Policy & Green Issues Portfolio Holder (TBC)▪ Annual Report
To be arranged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Council's new office accommodation

4. SUB-GROUPS

- 4.1 The CCTV Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has concluded its investigations and its report will be considered by the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in October.
- 4.2 Nominations have been received by group leaders for the Trade Waste Provision Task and Finish Group. A meeting will take place shortly between officers and the chairman to agree the scope and to discuss the arrangements for the review.
- 4.3 Members chose facilities for teenagers as a third task and finish group at their meeting. A draft scoping document is attached at appendix A.
- 4.4 The Finance Sub-group will meet after the Scrutiny Committee on 7 September because of the bank holiday. Along with its usual agenda, it will also consider a report on the Council's Play Services which could not be prepared in time for the Scrutiny Committee. Members will receive a report at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the Scrutiny work programme for 2009/10.

6. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 To enable the Scrutiny Committee to plan and carry out its workload efficiently and effectively.

7. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 7.1 Norma Atlay
Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services
Scrutiny Lead Director
01462 474297
norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk
- 7.2 Brendan Sullivan
Scrutiny Officer
North Hertfordshire District Council
01462 474612
brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Scoping Document for Review of Facilities for Teenagers

**North Hertfordshire District Council
FACILITIES FOR TEENAGERS
Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

DRAFT SCOPE

To Follow

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