

13 February 2009

Ref: HD/Scrutiny/Feb09
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To: The Members of the Scrutiny Committee of the North Hertfordshire District Council

(Councillors L.W. Oliver (Chairman); R.L. Shakespeare-Smith (Vice-Chairman); David Billing, John Bishop, S. Bloxham, P.C.W. Burt, Paul Clark, Sal Jarvis, Lorna Kercher, H.M. Marshall, Alan Millard, M.R.M. Muir, Elliot Needham and Michael Paterson).

[Substitutes: Councillors Judi Billing, John Booth, Lee Downie, S.K. Jarvis, David Kearns and Paul Marment]

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, 24 MARCH 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 – 20 JANUARY 2009 To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 20 January 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. At the time of printing the agenda, no requests to speak had been received. Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable. | - |
| 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 APRIL 2009 – 30 JUNE 2009 <i>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.</i></p> | 5 |
| <p>10. PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR DAVID MILLER <i>To receive a presentation by Councillor David Miller on the issues surrounding health scrutiny.</i></p> | 11 |
| <p>11. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2009/2010 REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR <i>To consider the issues that the Scrutiny Committee plans to review at future meetings and the activities of its sub-groups.</i></p> | 13 |
| <p>12. SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON SHELTERED HOUSING <i>To receive an oral report From Councillor Bernard Lovewell - Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health regarding the report of the Task and Finish Group on Sheltered Housing.</i></p> | 21 |
| <p>13. SCRUTINY FINANCE SUB-GROUP REPORT OF THE LEAD SCRUTINY DIRECTOR <i>To receive recommendations from the Finance Sub-Group in relation to financial reports considered at its meeting held on 19 January 2009.</i></p> | 23 [Report to be tabled] |
| <p>14. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT <i>This report was under preparation at the time the agenda went to print and will be published as soon as possible.</i></p> | 25 [Report to follow] |

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

16 June 2009

1 September 2009

13 October 2009

8 December 2009

19 January 2010

23 March 2010

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TITLE OF REPORT: QUESTIONS

The following question had been submitted by Councillor David Billing at the Scrutiny Committee meeting which was held on 20 January 2009:

(A) CADWELL LANE CROSSROADS

“What is the total likely available funding from all plausible sources, including Planning Obligations, which could be devoted to improving safety at the Cadwell Lane Hitchin crossroads by providing a pedestrian phase at the traffic lights? What would be the approximate cost, if it were decided to improve safety despite possible reduced traffic capacity?”

The Head of Planning and Building Control has provided the following response:

“Developer funding:

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) holds £26,623 from Unit 4, Bilton Road development specifically for the Cadwell Lane junction
HCC is due £46,000 from land at 134-150 Grove Road 'towards off-site sustainable transport measures'
NHDC holds £20,792 from a Unilateral Undertaking for 5-6 Bilton Road for 'sustainable transport'
HCC is due £10,000 from land at 20-34 Grove Road 'to mitigate impact in vicinity of site' - this is at the other end of Grove Road so probably not appropriate.

The Hitchin Urban Transport Plan (UTP) work is assessing the potential for a new access road to the employment area which will free up capacity for a pedestrian phase in the lights at this junction. Until this work and Plan is complete it is unlikely that HCC will commit any funds towards design/implementation for a scheme at this junction.

NHDC holds GAF funding for delivering infrastructure that will enable growth. Unless a scheme at this junction satisfies this basic criteria it is unlikely NHDC will commit any GAF funding. In addition NHDC would want the Hitchin UTP work to conclude to help advise on where GAF money should be spent (in conjunction with the emerging LDF land allocations).”

(B) PARKING RESTRICTIONS

“In how many locations in the district are parking restrictions unenforceable due to defective traffic regulation orders and what steps are being taken to address this issue?”

The Head of Planning & Building Control has supplied the following response:

"There are a relatively limited number of locations in the District where it is not possible to enforce parking restrictions. At any one point in time it is not possible to accurately quantify this as traffic regulation orders work in tandem with the lines and signs that delimit restrictions. For example lines deteriorate over time and signs become damaged by vehicles and vandalism. Equally Hertfordshire County Council make new Orders continually to restrict parking in certain locations. Many of the highway lines have been repainted in the past 18 months and a substantial number of signs have been replaced. Work is continuing in 2009 to identify and rectify such locations. A significant amount of work has already been undertaken on the formulation of a new consolidated Order for the District with Hertfordshire County Council."

The following questions have been submitted by Councillor David Billing:

(C) HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY & CHURCHGATE PLANNING BRIEF

“What amounts of money have so far been spent on buying services to underpin the various aspects of implementing the Hitchin Town Centre strategy and Churchgate Planning Brief, and what further amounts are budgeted for in getting to the stage of having selected a preferred bidder?”

The Head of Financial Services has provided the following response:

“As reported to the Hitchin Town Centre Working Party, the position relating to costs incurred to date, total £489K, these are summarised as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Consultancy support & advice | £296K |
| Landlord functions | £121K |
| Planning authority functions | £ 72K |
| Total | £489K |

This covers the period from 2002/03 to February 2009, these are exclusive of internal staff resources incurred by the Council.

The total costs estimated to be incurred up to developer selection stage is £600K. It is standard practice that some pre-development costs are recovered by agreement from the selected developer. Although at this early stage in the selection process it cannot be predicted with any accuracy, the Council can expect to recover at least £200K of the above costs.

(D) NHDC CLIMATE STRATEGY GROUP

“What actions have been taken since the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting, to hold meetings of the small group on producing the NHDC Climate Change Strategy - as agreed at with the Executive Member, at the Scrutiny Committee?”

The Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance has provided the following response:

'Since the last meeting of scrutiny, at which this outline document was discussed, officers have held a meeting with the relevant portfolio holders (of policy and green issues, and environment) to review the draft document taking account of any initial comments from scrutiny members. Revisions, not only with regard to those comments, but also with regard to updating data or new emissions targets placed on us which must be included, formatting of tables of evidence etc, have been made by officers, and the redrafted document is now ready for discussion by the working group. The first meeting of that all party group will take place on Monday 23rd March, at 1800 hours, after which we hope to make any other agreed amendments to the draft and then continue its progress through the normal committee cycle as agreed, and laid out in the Forward Plan.'

(E) NHDC “3Cs” POLICY

“How is data treated under the NHDC "3Cs" policy, to document and count and respond to complaints and queries which come via councillors? What are the numbers of these over the last 3 years?”

The Head of Strategy and Customer Services has provided the following response:

“The current NHDC 3Cs policy provides a formal route for members of the public to make comments, compliments or complaints about Council services.

From time to time members of the public contact their local councillor, via a number of methods, to request advice or assistance in resolving a problem.

The councillor will then undertake some or all of the following actions in order to resolve the issue:

- Answer it straight away based on their own knowledge of the situation
- Refer to an officer for a response
- Refer to a Head of Service for a response
- Refer to the Customer Service Manager for a response
- Refer to a Director for a response

This could take place via the telephone, e-mail or face-to-face.

A judgement call is then required by whoever is dealing with the matter / supporting the Councillor, as to if the issue should be recorded on the 3Cs system. If the answer is thought to be ‘yes’ it is passed to the CSC for formal recording, but dealt with by the relevant service.

This judgment call requires the person dealing with the matter to assess if the comment/compliment/complaint meets the criteria as defined by the current 3Cs policy.

It is currently not possible to identify 3Cs specifically raised by a councillor and subsequently recorded on the system i.e there is no separate 'source' category.

However because of the number of comments and complaints that originate from the monthly Hitchin councillor surgeries we have introduced a specific process for identifying and recording 3Cs raised via this 'source', so we are able to identify and report on these.

The numbers of 3C's received via this channel are shown in the following table.

The number of 3Cs logged at councillor surgeries.

| | 1 April 08 to 30 Sep 08 (6 month figures reported to PARC in Dec 08) | 1 April 07 to 31 March 08 | 1 Oct 06 to 31 Mar 07 (Lagan introduced Oct 06, no data available as to source prior to that time) |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Comments | 28 | 82 | 30 |
| Compliments | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Stage 1 complaint | 42 | 71 | 25 |
| Stage 2 complaint | 0 | 1 | 0 |

(F) NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM

“What data exists on the detailed sizes of spaces, in square metres individually and in total, which would be needed for a North Hertfordshire Museum? What type of spaces are needed? What consultations have taken place with museum staff and users, and comparisons with similar authorities, to establish these needs? How does the Hitchin Town Hall space, in square metres and type, compare with these needs? What building work would be required, in which parts of the Town Hall, and at what approximate cost - to include presumably making all parts accessible to people with disabilities? What areas of the Town Hall would remain for other types of community use, and what refurbishments would be undertaken on these?”

The Strategic Director of Customer Services will provide a response as soon as it is available.

The following question has been submitted by Councillor Paul Clark:

(G) SAVINGS IN CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY

“What savings in consumption of energy and water has the council assumed in the preparation of the 2009-2010 budget?”

The Head of Financial Services has provided the following response:

“The Council has not made any budget assumptions for efficiencies on its energy and water consumption in 2009/10. Improvements to those buildings the Council operates, and is responsible for energy and water charges, have already been undertaken as far as practicable and efficiencies arising have been recovered over a number of years. The Council is however, working with its key contractors managing its leisure facilities to partner joint initiatives that will assist in reducing energy and water consumption as part of our joint commitment to reduce CO2 emissions. Efficiencies that may arise from these will translate into improved profit share arrangements in later years.”

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF REPORT: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – THE DRAFT FORWARD PLAN: 1 APRIL 2009 – 30 JUNE 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 April 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 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Use of Compulsory Purchase Powers – The Wynd area, Letchworth GC TC 12/08 | | Council (via Cabinet) | 30 June 2009 (via 23 June 2009) | Portfolio Holder Letchworth Area Committee | Meetings | Relevant planning application /indemnity agreement | Cost neutral | Cllr Richard Thake david.scholes@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474836 |
| Great Ashby Rural Resource Centre Consideration of implications of feasibility study 10/08 | | Cabinet | 23 June 2009 | Local Residents, Ward Members Portfolio Holders Southern Rural Committee | Meetings | Feasibility Study once complete | TBA | Cllr Lynda Needham Cllr Ian Knighton Cllr Tricia Gibbs andrew.mills@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474272 |
| Climate Change Strategy 11/07 | Scrutiny Committee | Council (via Cabinet) | 30 June 2009 (via 23 June 2009) | Community groups; Partners; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members | Meetings and consultation events; Draft report to April Cabinet | Draft Climate Change Bill 2007; Nottingham Declaration | TBA | Cllr Claire Strong jim.brown@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474835 |
| Adoption of Green Space Strategy 10/07 | Scrutiny Committee | Cabinet | 23 June 2009 | Portfolio Holders – Leisure & E-Government and Waste & Recycling | Meetings | NHDC Green Space Strategy | Capital - £100K p.a. Revenue - £50K p.a. | Cllr Richard Thake Cllr Lynda Needham Cllr Ian Knighton steve.geach@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474553 louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474359 |

| 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 |
|---|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| New Customer Service Strategy and updated Customer Care standards 05/08 | PARC | Council (via Cabinet) | 30 June 2009 (via 23 June 2009) | Customers Staff CMT | Via the Citizens Panel, Staff Survey and meetings | Previous Customer Care Strategy and Standards | Contained within existing budgets | Cllr Bernard Lovewell lynn.saville@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474530 |
| Building Control Policy 12/08 | | Cabinet | 23 June 2009 | Portfolio Holder Customer Liaison Panel | Meetings | | TBA | Cllr Richard Thake ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 476 370 |
| Final Accounts closure & Annual Statement of Accounts 2008/09 01/09 | Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub) | Council (via Cabinet) | 30 June 2009 (via 23 June 2009) | Budget Holders; HoSG CMT | Meetings | Budget Papers | £17.7M net estimated annual budget 2008/09 | Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470 |
| Capital Programme outturn 2008/09 01/09 | Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub) | Cabinet | 23 June 2009 | Budget Holders; HoSG CMT | Meetings | Budget Papers | £10.9M estimated programme 2008/09 | Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470 |
| Financial Management Strategy 2010 - 2016 02/09 | Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub) | Cabinet | 23 June 2009 | HoSG CMT | Meetings | Budget Papers Corporate Plan | £19.1M net estimated annual budget | Cllr Terry Hone norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474297 |
| Comprehensive Equality Policy 07/07 | | Council (via Cabinet) | 30 June 2009 (via 23 June 2009) | Community groups; Residents; LSP Members; Partners | Meetings and consultation events | Race, Disability & Gender Equality Schemes | TBA | Cllr John Smith liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474230 |
| Corporate Business Planning Priorities 2010/11 03/09 | PARC | Council (via Cabinet) | 30 June 2009 (via 23 June 2009) | Portfolio holders | Meetings | Corporate Plan, District Wide Survey, Budget papers | TBA | Cllr Claire Strong Liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474230 |
| Royston Leisure Centre - Drainage 02/09 | | Cabinet | 23 June 2009 | Royston Area Committee & Portfolio Holder | Meeting | Consultants Report | Excess of £100,000 | Cllr Ian Knighton Steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474211 |

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 |
|---|---|-----------------------|------------------|---|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| 1 st Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2009/10 06/09 | Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub) | Cabinet | 8 Sept 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 |
| 1 st Quarter Capital Monitoring 2009/10 06/09 | Scrutiny Committee (via Scrutiny Finance Sub) | Cabinet | 8 Sept 2009 | Budget Holders; HoSG CMT | Meetings | Budget Papers | £8.9M programme 2009/10 | Cllr Terry Hone tim.neill@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474470 |
| Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) 05/08 | Scrutiny Committee (TBC) | Council (via Cabinet) | 8 Sept 2009 | Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members | Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release | Submission DPD | TBA | Cllr Richard Thake andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317 |
| Submission Development Policies DPD 05/08 | Scrutiny Committee (TBC) | Council (via Cabinet) | 8 Sept 2009 | Community Groups; Residents; Parish Councils; LSP Members | Online consultation; Written comments; Press Release | Submission DPD | TBA | Cllr Richard Thake andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317 |
| Allocation Procedure LAA(1) Performance Reward Grant 03/09 | PARC | Cabinet | 8 Sept 2009 | LSP Members | LSP Meetings | | Approx. £750K income to the district via LSP | Cllr John Smith liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474230 |
| 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 |
| 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 Richard Thake andy.beavan@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474317 |

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR DAVID MILLER

PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR DAVID MILLER ON THE ISSUES SURROUNDING HEALTH SCRUTINY.

This Item will take the format of an oral presentation.

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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**3.1 Work Programme for 2009/10**

| | |
|------------|---|
| 16 June 09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climate Change Strategy ▪ Adoption of Green Space Strategy ▪ Comprehensive Equality Policy ▪ Action Plan for Homeless Strategy ▪ Review of Children's and Young People's Plan ▪ Building Control Policy ▪ Review of Scrutiny Task & Finish Group outcomes |
| 1 Sept 09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) ▪ Submission Development Policies DPD ▪ Report of the CCTV Task and Finish Group |
| 13 Oct 09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ |
| 8 Dec 09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preferred Options Land Allocations DPD |
| 19 Jan 09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ |
| 23 Mar 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual Report |

- 3.2 Members may wish to consider the work programme for 2009/10 in the light of the forward plan, and taking into account any particular topics they may wish to consider.
- 3.3 On 27 January 2009, Cabinet resolved to proceed with the **closure of Letchworth Museum** and develop a new museum in Hitchin Town Hall. Given the lack of time available to scrutinise the decision, Cabinet invited its decision to be scrutinised prior to implementation. The Director of Customer Services is preparing a report on the proposed way forward which will be considered by PARC (which monitors the implementation plan) before being considered by a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible.

4. SUB GROUPS

4.1 Task and Finish Groups and Hot Topics

4.1.1 The **CCTV Scrutiny Task and Finish Group** has met twice and has also visited the CCTV Control Room in Stevenage. It is intended that the Group will complete its work and prepare a report by the end of June 2009, with a report to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in September 2009. Further meetings are scheduled for 7.30 pm on the following days:

- Tuesday 17th March
- Monday 6th April
- Tuesday 28th April
- Wednesday 20th May (provisional)
- Meeting in June (to be arranged)

4.1.2 At the 20th January Committee, members chose **trade waste** as a task and finish group; and **the Council's new office accommodation** as a hot topic. Scoping documents for each of these are attached at annexes A and B.

4.1.3 Members intended to choose **a third task and finish group** at this meeting. An e mail was circulated to all councillors seeking suggestions for task and finish groups and these are attached, along with the eight topics already under consideration by the Committee, at annex C.

4.1.4 Members also resolved to take part in a joint working party convened by the Portfolio holder for Policy and Green issues to consider actions required for the **Climate Change Strategy**. Members of the group have been nominated and officers are preparing a report for consideration by the Portfolio holder as a basis for discussion by the working group.

4.2 Finance Scrutiny Sub Group

4.2.1 The Finance Scrutiny Sub-group met on 16 February and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet. The Cabinet paper is attached at Appendix D which also includes the Portfolio Holder's response.

4.2.2 The Finance Scrutiny Sub-group will be meeting on Monday 23 March. Any recommendations from the sub-group will be considered at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. NEW SCRUTINY POWERS UNDER THE 2007 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT

- 5.1 The Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) is due to come into effect on 1st April 2009. The guidance has been published and a report has been prepared for consideration by the Corporate Management Team. Further discussions will be needed about how best to implement the CCfA.
- 5.2 Briefing is also being prepared on the scrutiny of local, regional and national partners covering the legislative requirements to engage with partners; the benefits of partnership working; and practical guidance on doing so.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- note the Scrutiny work programme for 2009/10;
 - consider which other items which it might wish to consider in 2009/10; and
 - consider which Task and Finish Groups it may wish to undertake in 2009/10;
 - Note the developments on scrutiny powers under the 2007 Local Government AND Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

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 Financial and Regulatory Services
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

Appendix A - Scoping Document for Trade Waste Recycling – to follow

Appendix B - Scoping Document for new Council Offices – to follow

Appendix C - Possible Scrutiny Topics for 2009/10

Appendix D - Scrutiny Finance Sub-group meeting on 16 February.
Recommendations to Cabinet on 17 March.

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**North Hertfordshire District Council
TRADE WASTE PROVISION
Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

DRAFT SCOPE

Terms of reference

To review the current Trade Waste collection service operated by NHDC considering our existing customer base of 1300 traders within North Herts. This will include the incorporation of a new service element through a comprehensive Trade Waste Recycling Service, potentially operated via a 3rd party operator on behalf of NHDC.

The key areas of focus will be:

- * To maximise the diversion of recyclable / compostable materials from landfill.
- * To further reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.
- * Maintain and improve the financial performance of the trade waste service.
- * Developing working relationships with 3rd party contractors to offer NHDC customers a multi-materials collection service to enhance services provided by NHDC to its customers.
- * Offering all NHDC customers, whether domestic or commercial an opportunity to recycle their waste.
- * To ensure that the trade waste service is effective, efficient and consider the long term viability and sustainability of the councils trade waste service.
- * Working with the Hitchin and Royston BIDS teams to ensure a better manner of trade waste collections from the town centres is achieved.

Expected Outcome

- * A District wide trade waste recycling service, offering a multi-materials collection service for all NHDC customers.
- * Diverting waste from landfill, helping to meet National, Local and Hertfordshire Waste Partnership LATS targets.
- * A more efficient, effective and financially viable Trade Waste collection service, maximising the potential for growth through publicity, whilst maintaining the existing customer base.
- * To ensure our trade waste service is a competitive and viable service for the future. Alternatively, consider other options for delivering this service.

Timeframe

This will be confirmed once a full timetable of work to be undertaken has been agreed by the group.

However, to meet the needs of the service the project timetable will need to be produced.

Link with Council Priorities

- * To meet the councils priorities on Town Centres and the Green Agenda.
- * Responding to residents requirements to recycle more,
- * Controlling the growing cost of waste, and
- * Helping the environment.
- * Joint working with BIDS teams.

Potential witnesses

Other witnesses will be confirmed as the group develops, (but may include):

- Jamie Sells – Contracts Manager
- Daniel Kingsley – Service Manager Waste and Recycling
- Jo Lines – Service Development Manager
- Elaine Easton – Contracts Manager, Veolia
- 3rd Party service Managers.
- Duncan Jones – HCC Project Manager
- Town Centre Managers

Key Questions

- * What is our current service provision?
- * What are our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats?
- * What are our options for future trade waste provision?

Information documents –

- * We will need a Trade waste audit to ascertain what level of recyclable materials are available for recycling.
- * Schedule of rates / costs of existing trade waste collection costs to ascertain at what level an additional service can be pitched.
- * Existing customer base information.

Chairman & Membership - to be confirmed

Portfolio Holder – Cllr Needham

Lead Officer

Support Officer – Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer

Key Tasks:

| Areas to cover - aim & objectives | Date |
|--|------|
| Pre-scoping meeting with the Chair | |
| First meeting for the committee to agree scope | |
| First meeting of the T&F group | |
| | |

**North Hertfordshire District Council
TOPIC New Council Office Accommodation
Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

DRAFT SCOPE

Terms of reference

To review New Council Office Accommodation Project

The key areas of focus will be:

Identify the key risks to a successful delivery of the project and how they are managed.

Expected Outcome

Reach a judgement on whether the key risks are adequate and what actions may be necessary to remedy any identified failings in the management of the risks.

Timeframe

This will be confirmed once a full timetable of work to be undertaken has been agreed by the group.

Link with Council Priorities

Town Centres – Prosperous and Satisfied Communities

Potential witnesses

Head of Financial Services
Property Services Manager
Senior Estates Surveyor

Other witnesses will be confirmed as the group develops, (but may include):
Consultants – Vincent & Gorbing

Key Questions

What are the key risks to the successful delivery of new accommodation.
How have they been arrived at and what processes are there in place to manage those risks.

Information documents –

Office accommodation report 16th December 2008 (Part II)
Appraisal report – Vincent & Gorbing, 1st December 2008

Chairman & Membership - to be confirmed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor T Hone

Lead Officer

Support Officer – Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer

Key Tasks:

| Areas to cover - aim & objectives | Date |
|---|------|
| Pre-scoping meeting with the Chair | |
| First meeting for the committee to agree scope | |
| First meeting of the T&F group to refine and agree scope | |
| Meeting of the T&F group to interview witnesses on the programme and management of key risks. | |
| Meeting to reach conclusions and draft findings. | |
| | |

Possible Scrutiny Topics for 2009/10

At the end of each civic year, the Scrutiny Committee decides which topics it will scrutinise in detail in its task and finish groups. Resource constraints mean that the Committee can establish a maximum of three task and finish groups in a civic year. A review of CCTV is already under way, and the Committee has already decided to look at trade waste as a second task and finish group. In addition, the Committee intends to look at the Council's new office accommodation as a hot topic. The Committee has identified the following as possible topics for a third task and finish group.

1. Revisit major policy changes to monitor effectiveness & look at progress made, looking in particular at:
 - Customer Services
 - Housing & Environment Health
 - Fly-tipping
 - Waste collection
 - The Constitution
2. Facilities for teenagers (possible joint review with Hertfordshire County Council)
3. Parking in residential areas
4. Green issues and the Council's carbon footprint (CO² emissions)
5. Does the provision of sports facilities meet the needs of communities (eg. youth, low income families, rural/urban areas)
6. Can the Council support / help to retain local community events
7. Increasing public involvement in the work of Scrutiny
8. Services for 50+ and reviewing the existing strategy

Members have also suggested the following topics:

- the development of Scrutiny in North Herts;
- the processes which are in place in the council to respond to requests, recommendations and resolutions from Area Committees.
- the effectiveness of Hertfordshire's Pathfinder, in terms of its benefit to N Herts.
- the effectiveness of measures taken by NHDC and HCC in helping people and businesses affected significantly by the recession (as a hot topic).
- the closure of Letchworth Museum and the proposal to site a new North Herts Museum in Hitchin Town Hall.
- The implications of the CAA for Scrutiny.

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Scrutiny Finance Sub-group Meeting on 16 February. Recommendations to Cabinet on 17 February.

The Finance Sub Group met on Monday 16 February 2009 and looked at:

- **3rd Quarter Revenue Budget 2008/09**
- **3rd Quarter Capital Budget 2008/09**
- **Treasury Management Strategy**
- **S106 monitoring (report to PARC dated 11 December 2008)**

Revenue Monitoring Report – assessment of risk

Members were concerned about the relatively high levels of provision made for risk in the general fund balance against the backdrop of the need to find efficiencies. They heard that once risks had been assessed by individual work areas, risks were passed from the Risk Manager to the Accountancy Manager for review and, if necessary, challenge. Members considered it would be beneficial if the process of assessing risks was strengthened to include a stronger element of challenge to ensure consistency of risk assessment.

Recommendation: That Cabinet put in place a more robust process of review and challenge for the financial provisions made for the Council's risks.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that he considered the existing process for reviewing the Council's risks to be sufficiently robust, which involved input from himself, the Risk Manager, the Head of Financial Services, the Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services and the Risk Management Group.

Revenue Monitoring Report – Vacancy Control Target

Members were concerned that despite sufficient vacancies being kept open, a £50,000 under-achievement of the vacancy control target in 2008/09 had been identified because of funds being diverted to provide vacancy cover arrangements. The Accountancy Manager explained that there had been exceptional circumstances which were unlikely to be repeated in 2009/10. Members noted that the vacancy control target had been extended from three months to four, and were concerned that the efficiencies expected might not be realised. They also considered that if a post had been vacant for four months, officers should review whether the post was really needed.

Recommendation: That the Corporate Management Team review the arrangements for setting and monitoring vacancy control targets to ensure that the efficiencies proposed are achieved; and review any vacant posts to assess whether they are needed.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that the review for setting and monitoring vacancy control targets had already commenced and recommendations would be reported to the Corporate Management Team, and that all vacant posts were reviewed by the Corporate Management Team and an assessment made as to if and when they were to be filled.

3rd Quarter Capital Budget 2008/09 and S106 Agreements

The Accountancy Manager reported that the funding for much of the Council's Capital Programme depended on realising funds from the Council's asset disposal programme. Members were concerned that sufficient capital receipts might not be available given that asset sales were likely to be less profitable than in recent years. Members suggested that schemes that meet the criteria of S106 monies could be bought forward in the capital programme while schemes that required the use of capital receipts for funding might be delayed until there was an upturn in the market for asset disposals.

Recommendation: That Cabinet review the capital programme and consider whether S106 monies could be used earlier, provided that the monies were still used for the benefit of communities, and the need to dispose of assets be delayed as much as is possible.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that a process for delaying asset disposals was already in operation, and that Section 106 monies were allocated to appropriate capital projects as soon as such projects arose.

Treasury Management Strategy

Members noted there were no major changes from the previous year, noting the review of treasury management within local government in paragraph 3.4. Members agreed that consideration of this, and similar annual reports with very few changes would be eased by highlighting those changes in the text.

Recommendation: That annual reports to Cabinet such as strategy documents which have very few changes should have those changes highlighted to assist readers identify changes.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance accepted this request for future strategic documents, provided that the changes were of a significant nature.

TITLE OF REPORT: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON SHELTERED HOUSING

ORAL REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Committee considered the final report of the Sheltered Housing Task and Finish Group on 17 June 2008. The review considered North Hertfordshire Homes' (NHH) review of Sheltered Housing in North Herts, with a particular focus on how NHH had arrived at its decision to decommission Probyn House, Wheatsheaf Meadow and St. Andrews, and how the consultation process had been undertaken.

The Committee made a number of recommendations and asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health to provide an update on progress in due course.

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. SUMMARY OF THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made to encourage effective communication between North Hertfordshire Homes and NHDC regarding sheltered housing provision:

- (1) The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be requested to review the arrangements for partnership working with Registered Social Landlords operating in the district;
- (2) The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be requested, as part of this review, to ensure that the established Communication Protocols continue to be relevant, and that the Protocol clearly refers to the need to involve appropriate public bodies, especially where identified actions may not be consistent with the Council's Housing Strategy and/or an action that may arouse public concern;
- (3) The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be requested to discuss with NHH the particular circumstances of Probyn House;
- (4) That ward Councillors be encouraged to visit the residents of the affected schemes to offer support to residents and ensure they are fully aware of the assistance available to them.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked to note the summary outlined above prior to receiving the Portfolio Holder's report.

5. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

6. REPORT AUTHOR

- 6.1 Brendan Sullivan
Scrutiny Officer
Tel 01462 474612 Email brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

TITLE OF REPORT: MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY FINANCE SUB-GROUP ON 23 MARCH 2009**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report records the main points from the Finance Sub Group meeting on Monday 23 March 2009, along with the sub-groups recommendations.

2. CLOSURE OF LETCHWORTH MUSEUM

- 2.1 Members were concerned that the potential benefits of the offer of £50,000 by Letchworth Town Council should be properly explored. Members heard that the Strategic Director of Customer Services was preparing a paper for Cabinet which would pick up all aspects of the rationalisation of the Museums Service. The paper would be the subject of a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in April or May before going to Cabinet and then on to PARC.
- 2.2 **Recommendation: That Cabinet ensure that the offer of £50,000 from Letchworth Town Council regarding Letchworth Museum is fully investigated and properly assessed.**

3. E COMMITTEE SYSTEM & IT

- 3.1 Members heard about the Council's intention to introduce a modular Committee Management system within Committee and Member Services section. It was intended that members would be able to use search facilities to find information, rather than requesting copies of full reports. This would significantly reduce paper, copying and distribution costs. They might also be able receive automatic alerts about subjects of interest as they emerged and progressed through the decision making process.
- 3.2 Members reported that at a recent IT event, it emerged that many members were not using the Council's Citrix system either fully or at all due to access and training issues. Members commented that further training and member development would be useful and noted that a training session was due to be arranged. Members were concerned that without proper member access to the IT system, potential savings would not be realised. Members asked for a report back on progress with the E Committee system in 6 months time.

4. OFFICER TIME APPORTIONMENT

- 4.1 The Accountancy Manager reported that officers do not generally estimate or record the time spent on individual projects as it is not considered cost effective to do so. The one exception to this is Legal Services who allocate their time in 15 minute blocks to all the projects they are working on. Time recording is commonplace in the legal profession and is necessary for charging external users of legal services. The difficulties experienced in the Legal team suggested that other teams in the Council would find it difficult to record their time accurately and there were doubts about the benefits of doing so.

- 4.2 NHDC did have a policy of recharging the full cost of teams to the relevant service area, partly to comply with accounting practice. but also to ensure that services reflected true costs and that best value comparisons can be made between authorities. Apportionment was carried out on a sampling basis once or twice a year.
- 4.3 Members recognised the danger of spending scarce resources on fruitless work recording, but considered that the current arrangements did not go far enough, particularly on projects. It was difficult for members and officers to take decisions without full possession of the facts. Members considered that without a better grasp of how officer time was being spent on projects, it was easy to lose sight of how the benefits of a project related to its costs.
- 4.4 **Recommendation: That Cabinet ask the Corporate Management Team to develop a staff time apportionment system in relation to projects.**

5. PROPOSED REVISION OF LOCAL LAND CHARGES FEES

- 5.1 The Chairman of Scrutiny agreed that the Sub-Group should consider a report which required urgent approval by 23 March 2009. The report recommended new and a revised fee structures for searches prepared by the Local Land Charges department; for providing access to public registers to commercial third parties; and for compiling reports on properties and land from the information held in the authority's public registers and non public records. The changes would ensure the fee structure complied with the Department of Communities and Local Government guidance and Regulations; and would set fees for full searches that are comparable with those of private agencies.
- 5.2 The Head of Financial Services reported that the new fee structure would have a significant positive impact on the budget, allowing the Council to break even on Local Land Charges, and boost the Council's ability to compete with the private sector. The Sub-group was content with the new charges. The charges have been approved by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

6. SPECIAL CABINET MEETING

- 6.1 Members heard there would be a special Cabinet meeting on 15 July to consider corporate business planning and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Members agreed to hold a special meeting of the Finance Sub-group on 6 July.

7. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Sub-group recommended that Cabinet:
- ensure that the offer of £50,000 from Letchworth Town Council is fully investigated and properly assessed; and
 - ask the Corporate Management Team to develop a staff time apportionment system in relation to projects.

8. CONTACT OFFICER

- 8.1 Brendan Sullivan
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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



DRAFT

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT
2008 - 2009**

April 2009

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Foreword



The purpose of Scrutiny is to make sure that the decisions and services of the Council are based on sound advice, in line with its policies and are influenced by the views and needs of local people.

The Scrutiny Committee was introduced at North Hertfordshire District Council seven years ago. The Committee has developed well and many lessons have been learned during this time. This report reflects on the past year and looks forward to developments in scrutiny next year.

There are four main principles of good scrutiny and the Committee have sought to follow these when developing the scrutiny work programme. The principles have been developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny:

- ✓ to provide a critical friend challenge to executives as well as external authorities and agencies;
- ✓ to reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
- ✓ to take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public; and
- ✓ to make an impact on the delivery of public services.

The Committee has used various techniques to put these principles into practise.

.....items on the work programme have been taken from the Council's Forward Plan. This has given the Committee the opportunity to comment and make recommendations to Cabinet before their final decision on a policy is agreed.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our appreciation to the Cabinet for their continued co-operation and support and also to the Council Officers who have responded to our requests for evidence and information to support our work.

Finally, I would like to thank my Vice Chair Ray Shakespeare-Smith, members of the Committee and Task & Finish groups, along with the Council's officers who have worked well together in contributing to the Scrutiny work programme for another year.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2008 - 2009

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Cllr Lawrence Oliver (Chair) | Cllr Alan Millard |
| Cllr Raymond Shakespeare-Smith (Vice Chair) | Cllr Michael Muir |
| Cllr David Billing | Cllr Elliot Needham |
| Cllr John Bishop | Cllr Michael Paterson |
| Cllr Simon Bloxham | |
| Cllr Peter Burt | Cllr Judi Billing (sub) |
| Cllr Paul Clark | Cllr John Booth (sub) |
| Cllr Sal Jarvis | Cllr Lee Downie (sub) |
| Cllr Lorna Kercher | Cllr Steve Jarvis (sub) |
| Cllr Howard Marshall | Cllr David Kearns (sub) |
| | Cllr Paul Marment (sub) |

Councillor Lawrence Oliver
Chairman, Scrutiny Committee

1. Scrutiny in North Hertfordshire District Council

The depth and breadth of the Council's work means that the Scrutiny Committee has to use its resources efficiently in order to scrutinise as many topics as possible in the time available. It does so by:

- Considering a number of issues during its committee meetings and making recommendations to Cabinet;
- Appointing dedicated task and finish groups which can examine issues in depth and make recommendations to improve services;
- Charging a dedicated Finance Sub-group with keeping an eye on the Council's finances;
- Membership of the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee which enables the interests of our District to be represented.

2. The Scrutiny Committee

The full Scrutiny Committee normally meets six times a year. It considers a range of topics including key decisions going to Cabinet as well as other issues which the Committee has decided would benefit from closer scrutiny.

The Committee scrutinises issues in a number of ways:

- By considering reports from, and questioning officers about matters which are being considered by the Scrutiny Committee;
- By submitting written questions which require a written answer, and which members can follow up by asking supplementary questions in Committee;
- By interviewing and questioning cabinet members about their portfolios; and
- By calling in decisions which are of great concern to members or to the public.

The Committee has scrutinised XX topics this years and made XX recommendations on XX items to Cabinet. XX recommendations were accepted and XX were noted. A full list of these recommendations with Cabinet's responses can be found in Appendix 1.

XX questions have been asked by Members during the year. XX of the answers provided have led to either supplementary questions being asked or further work being requested by the Committee. A list of topics asked can be found at appendix 2 and the full list of questions and answers can be found at [...insert link...].

The Scrutiny Committee has not formally called in any items this year. However the Committee intends to hold a special meeting to review the decision to rationalise the museums service in North Hertfordshire.

Portfolio Holders have continued to attend Committee meetings to present areas of their work, highlight their achievements/challenges and discuss how the Committee can assist them in developing policies. As in previous years, the Committee values their support and contribution.

3. The Scrutiny Finance Sub-group

Members: Cllrs Lorna Kercher (Chair), Steve Jarvis, David Kearns, Michael Muir, Howard Marshall, Tom Brindley and Allison Ashley.

The Finance Scrutiny Sub Group have continued to scrutinise the quarterly outturns and the annual draft budget, making recommendations to Cabinet through the Scrutiny Committee. The Finance Portfolio has also appeared before the Group to answer questions.

The Finance Sub Group have made XX recommendations to Cabinet. A full list of these recommendations with Cabinet's response, can be found in Appendix 2.

4. Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups

The Task and Finish groups are dedicated sub-groups of the Scrutiny Committee. The groups can consider topics in much more depth than is possible in a single Scrutiny Committee meeting. Each group consists typically of between five and eight members, and can appoint external members who have particular areas of expertise which can assist the Group. The task and finish group take written and oral evidence over a series of meetings, quiz witnesses and consider a good deal of other evidence through literature review. A report is produced at the end which makes a number of recommendations for improvements. This is considered by the full Scrutiny Committee before being sent to Cabinet. Two task and finish groups met last year.

4.1 Local Economic Development and Town Centres Task & Finish Group

Members: Cllrs Martin Stears (Chair), David Kearns, Marilyn Kirkland, Lawrence Oliver, Peter Burt, Michael Weeks, Allison Ashley and Simon Bloxham; Dan Gomm (Friends of the Earth) and Morag Norgan (Director of the Hitchin Town Centre Partnership).

The Group began its work in March 2008 against the background of the Administration's decision to choose Town Centres as one of its priorities for the coming year. This group's final meeting was on 25 November 2008.

The Group concluded that investment in economic development would ensure that opportunities of benefit to the District will not be missed. Through working with the Council's partners including in particular the District's Town Centre Partnerships some of the extra resources available to support economic vibrancy should be tapped. The effects of the credit crunch, with its attendant risks to employment in the District makes the work of the group even more timely.

The Group made eleven recommendations which are attached at appendix 3 along with the Cabinet's response. The full report can be viewed at..[insert link...]

4.2 The CCTV Task & Finish Group

Members: Cllrs Sal Jarvis (Chair), Julian Cunningham, David Kearns, Elliot Needham and Michael Paterson.

CCTV is a topic of great interest to the public. The Group will be looking at a number of aspects including its costs and benefits, its potential for tackling crime and how surveillance can be balanced with people's civil liberties and right to privacy. The Group was established in November 2008 to review a number of issues on CCTV. The Group's scoping document is attached at appendix 4.

The Group held its first meeting on 6 January 2009 and has held a further XX meetings and visited the CCTV control room at Stevenage. The Group expects to hold its final meeting in June, then prepare a report and recommendations for the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to consider in September 2009.

5. Health Scrutiny

[to follow]

6. Developments In Scrutiny

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act came into effect on 1st April 2009, and this introduces some important changes for Scrutiny.

The **Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)** was introduced to meet the Government's aim of giving more power to local people and local ward councillors. These additional powers enable any member of the Council to refer to an overview and scrutiny committee any local government matter which is relevant to the functions of the committee and to his or her electoral area.

Scrutiny of local partnerships – to follow

7. Scrutiny in 2009/10

As well as considering topics throughout the year, the Committee has decided to scrutinise a number of special issues of particular interest to the District in 2009/10:

- The CCTV Task and Finish Group will conclude in June;
- The Trade Waste Task and Finish group will start later in the summer;
- [3rd task and finish group to be added];
- The Committee intends to scrutinise the Council's new office accommodation as a hot topic; and
- There will also be a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to look at the future of the museums service in North Hertfordshire.

8. Public Participation

As often as possible, the scrutiny process is open to involve local people directly. This can be face to face, online or in writing.

The Scrutiny process is strengthened by involving partners, residents and service users. They can bring in expertise, local knowledge, fresh ideas and an element of external challenge.

The Committee encourages public participation. Ways to get involved include:

- Suggesting a topic for investigation
- Providing evidence at meetings
- Becoming a co-optee on a topic group

For further details about the work of scrutiny or how to get involved, please contact the Scrutiny Officer using any of the methods below:

Write to: NHDC Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3JF

Tel: 01462 474612

Fax: 01462 474633

Email: brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 2007 - 2008

| <u>SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION</u> | <u>CABINET DECISION AND DATE</u> |
|---|---|
| <p>Adoption Of A Local Housing Strategy For 2008-2013 That the North Herts Housing Strategy 2008 - 2013 be recommended to Council for adoption, with the following amendments: (1) Page 4, The Vision and Priorities for Housing Vision heading to read: <i>“To meet the community’s needs for decent, high quality, affordable homes in sustainable locations”</i>; (2) Page 4, The Vision and Priorities of Housing Vision 6 to read: <i>“To protect the natural and physical environment”</i>; (3) Page 32, Action/Strategic Objective 26, First bullet point to read: <i>“Set up a Housing Strategy Action Group”</i>.</p> | <p>That Housing Strategy for the period 2008 to 2013, as attached at Appendix A to the report, and incorporating the amendments suggested by the Scrutiny Committee, be adopted. (24/06/08)</p> |
| <p>Adoption Of A New Homelessness Strategy For 2008-2013 That the Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013 be adopted</p> | <p>That the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013, as contained within Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted. (24/06/08)</p> |
| <p>Adoption Of A Common Housing Allocation Policy That the proposed Common Housing Allocation Policy for the Council, North Hertfordshire Homes and the Howard Cottage Housing Association, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted, subject to the following amendments: The title and first line of Paragraph 12.3 of the Policy to read “Moderate Preference”;</p> <p>The first sentence of Paragraph 15.1 of the Policy to read “Applicants will be made a maximum of two reasonable offers of accommodation.”</p> | <p>That the proposed Common Housing Allocation Policy for the Council, North Hertfordshire Homes and the Howard Cottage Housing Association, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and incorporating the suggested amendments of the Scrutiny Committee, be adopted, subject to the following further amendment:</p> <p>The first sentence of Paragraph 15.1 of the Policy to read “Applicants will be made a maximum of two reasonable offers of suitable accommodation.”</p> <p>That upon receipt of any minor amendments to the proposed Common Housing Allocation Policy, the Head of</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Housing and Environmental Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health, be authorised to consider and agree such requests. (9/9/08) |
| <p>Car Parking Strategy That the draft report regarding the Car Parking Strategy be supported, subject to the following clarification of the bullet points in paragraph 2.4 of the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a policy for charging for off street car parking in line with our strategic objectives, and next year's emerging themes for Green and Town Centres, recognising that different towns may need different solutions. • Investigate whether we should continue to provide on street parking services in line with current arrangements. • Investigate the possibility of parking controls through the use of CPZs/TROs on an area basis as an addition to the current practice of individual controls. • Review the ratio of parking spaces to houses detailed in the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in light of more recent Government Policy. This will include a review of car parking standards and the Car Parking Supplementary Planning Document. | <p>(1) That the North Hertfordshire District Car Parking Strategy 2004 to 2009 be reviewed urgently in light of the outcomes of the Transport Fundamental Service Review encompassing the further work identified in the report, and recognising that different towns may need different solutions;</p> <p>(2) That the use of Growth Areas Funding (GAF) to carry out the additional car parking usage survey work identified in Section 5.3 of the report to inform the production of a revised Car Parking Strategy be approved;</p> <p>(3) That, in the interim, and before a new Car Parking Strategy is approved, the use of discretionary disabled parking bays be supported, subject to funding for the implementation of such bays being identified and supported upon a case by case basis;</p> <p>(4) That the outcome of the Transport Fundamental Service Review regarding the implementation of area based residential parking controls be noted, and that this be considered as part of the Corporate Business Planning process for 2009/10 and beyond. (21/10/09)</p> |
| <p>Allotments In Letchworth Garden City.</p> <p>(1) That recommendation 9.1.1 contained in the report Allotment sites in Letchworth Garden City, regarding sites that are currently leased, be supported;</p> <p>(2) That recommendation 9.2 contained in the report Allotment sites</p> | <p>RESOLVED: That the view of the Scrutiny Committee be noted, and taken into account as part of Cabinet's deliberations (detailed below).</p> <p>(1) That consultation takes place with all</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>in Letchworth Garden City, regarding sites that are owned by NHDC, be supported.</p> | <p>Letchworth Garden City allotment holders on leased sites to determine their preferred option, and that the outcome be reported back to Cabinet before entering into any commercial negotiations regarding any possible transfer;</p> <p>(2) That the one Council-owned allotment in Letchworth Garden City, as described in Paragraph 4.5 of the report, be leased to Letchworth Garden City Town Council on terms to be agreed.</p> <p>(16/12/08)</p> |
| <p>Closure of Holwell Landfill Site That the recommendations contained in the report regarding Closure of Holwell Landfill Site and its implications be supported.</p> | <p>RESOLVED: That the view of the Scrutiny Committee be noted, and taken into account as part of Cabinet's deliberations (detailed below).</p> <p>(1) That Scenario 1, as outlined in Paragraphs 6.3 to 6.6 of the report, to use Shanks Waste Management Ltd's Transfer Station in Hitchin to move up to 10% or 3,000 tonnes of the Council's landfill material, be approved, and that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract Procurement Rule 10.2 be waived for this purpose, in accordance with the justification set out in Paragraph 5.12 of the report; • a Contract be agreed and completed with Shanks Waste Management Ltd. for the use of the Transfer Station (current draft attached at Appendix C to the report), to be delegated to the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling; |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>(2) That officers, in discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, and if appropriate, seek compensation commensurate with any additional costs associated with early closure of the landfill site at Holwell (prior to 1st August 2009);</p> <p>(3) That officers continue to work with officers of Hertfordshire County Council in respect of the matter detailed in Recommendation 9.4 of the report.</p> <p>(16/12/08)</p> |
| <p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Scrutiny Committee supports the introduction of a Common Housing Allocation Scheme in order to deliver Choice Based Lettings.</p> | <p>(1) That, as part of the North Herts Housing Partnership, the introduction of the “Home 4U” Choice Based Lettings Scheme, as outlined in Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.6 of the report, be agreed, and that the revised Common Housing Allocation Policy or Scheme, attached as Appendix 4 to the report, be approved;</p> <p>(2) That any minor amendments to the adopted Common Housing Allocation Policy or Scheme required to implement Choice Based Lettings be delegated to the Head of Housing and Environmental Health, in conjunction with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health.</p> <p>(27/01/09)</p> |

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

| Topic | Questioner | Date |
|---|--------------------|------------------|
| Battery Recycling | Cllr Paul Clark | 17 June 2008 |
| The Council's Carbon Footprint | Cllr Paul Clark | 17 June 2008 |
| The Council's Carbon Footprint | Cllr Paul Clark | 2 September 2008 |
| Increased Officer Support for Scrutiny | Cllr David Billing | 2 September 2008 |
| Equality Standard | Cllr David Billing | 9 December 2008 |
| Economic Climate | Cllr David Billing | 9 December 2008 |
| Cadwell Lane Crossroads | Cllr David Billing | 20 January 2009 |
| Scrutiny obligations and opportunities regarding County led teams | Cllr David Billing | 20 January 2009 |
| Scrutiny of North Herts local strategic partnership | Cllr David Billing | 20 January 2009 |
| parking restrictions | Cllr Paul Clark | 20 January 2009 |
| Hitchin town centre strategy & Churchgate planning brief | Cllr David Billing | 24 March 2009 |
| NHDC climate strategy group | Cllr David Billing | 24 March 2009 |
| NHDC "3Cs" policy | | 24 March 2009 |
| North Hertfordshire museum space and costs | Cllr David Billing | 24 March 2009 |
| Energy consumption | Cllr Paul Clark | 24 March 2009 |

FINANCE SUB GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS REFERRED TO CABINET 2007 - 2008

| <u>SCRUTINY FINANCE SUB-GROUP RECOMMENDATION</u> | <u>CABINET DECISION AND DATE</u> |
|---|--|
| <p>First Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2008/09 That further consideration be given to the introduction of a Trade Waste Recycling Service in light of rising tipping costs.</p> | <p>That the Scrutiny Committee's proposal for an extension of the existing Trade Refuse service be supported in principle, subject to further investigation of the cost implications and any review of the existing waste/recycling collection arrangements of the Council. (9/9/08)</p> |
| <p>2nd Quarter Revenue Budget 2007/08 That the £30,000 efficiency for the Parish Challenge Fund be re-instated, due to the significant rise in applications.</p> | <p>That the increase in the 2008/09 budget for Parish Challenge Grants up to £0.030million, subject to the approval of grant applications, be approved, and that it be re-considered as part of the ongoing resource requirement for 2009/10 and onwards, as identified in Paragraph 4.2 of the report; (16/12/08)</p> |
| <p>Museum Service That the Museum service re-provision be properly planned ensuring that staff, Councillors and the Heritage Foundation are properly engaged and the positive aspects of the new improved facility be highlighted.</p> <p>Budget That control of staff costs are managed to maximize savings from vacancy controls and staff efficiencies</p> | <p>That Option 2, as outlined in the report, be adopted and the necessary changes in the implementation plan be made; That, as part of this strategy, plans for closing Letchworth Museum by 31 March 2011 be agreed; That this be accompanied by a change in the Capital Programme to accommodate the Museum Service, including the construction of a museum in a refurbished Hitchin Town Hall; That, in view of the short time available in considering this matter, the Scrutiny Committee be offered the opportunity to scrutinise this decision prior to implementation.</p> <p>To Council, that That the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee be supported; (27/01/09)</p> |

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| <p>That objectives remain joined up by giving consideration as to whether ceasing relatively small investments may decrease income and economic activity.</p> | |
| <p>Revenue Monitoring Report – assessment of risk Recommendation: That Cabinet put in place a more robust process of review and challenge for the financial provisions made for the Council's risks.</p> <p>Revenue Monitoring Report – Vacancy Control Target Recommendation: That the Corporate Management Team review the arrangements for setting and monitoring vacancy control targets to ensure that the efficiencies proposed are achieved; and review any vacant posts to assess whether they are needed.</p> <p>3rd Quarter Capital Budget 2008/09 and S106 Agreements Recommendation: That Cabinet review the capital programme and consider whether S106 monies could be used earlier, provided that the monies were still used for the benefit of communities, and the need to dispose of assets be delayed as much as is possible.</p> <p>Treasury Management Strategy Recommendation: That annual reports to Cabinet such as strategy documents which have very few changes should have those changes highlighted to assist readers identify changes.</p> | <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance considered the existing process for reviewing the Council's risks to be sufficiently robust, which involved input from himself, the Risk Manager, the Head of Financial Services, the Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services and the Risk Management Group</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that the review for setting and monitoring vacancy control targets had already commenced and recommendations would be reported to the Corporate Management Team, and that all vacant posts were reviewed by the Corporate Management Team and an assessment made as to if and when they were to be filled.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that a process for delaying asset disposals was already in operation, and that Section 106 monies were allocated to appropriate capital projects as soon as such projects arose.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance accepted this request for future strategic documents, provided that the changes were of a significant nature. (17/02/2009)</p> |
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Appendix 4

Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group – Review of Economic Development and Town Centres

| Task and Finish Group Recommendation | Cabinet Comments |
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| <p>5.1 That the Council appoint a dedicated Economic Development Officer (EDO) to enable it to fully participate in and take advantage of forthcoming economic development challenges and opportunities for North Hertfordshire. The Council should aim to make the post self funding over the medium term.</p> | <p>That the Corporate Management Team be requested to keep the matter of a dedicated Economic Development Officer under review, and report back to Cabinet in due course.</p> |
| <p>5.2 That this Council considers whether the supply and range of employment land is adequate for the needs of the local economy, and takes steps to address any shortcomings. In particular, there should be appropriate access, for vehicles and public transport, to employment land and this should form part of the preparation and consultation on the Local Development Framework.</p> | <p>That Recommendation 5.2 of the Task and Finish Group be accepted;</p> |
| <p>5.3 That existing partnerships and networks such as HEDOG and/or related bodies continue to be used to monitor and seek to address issues raised in the conclusions through the appropriate officer input.</p> | <p>That Recommendation 5.3 of the Task and Finish Group for part of the review referred to in Resolution (1) above;</p> |
| <p>5.4 That the Council’s Town Centre Strategy is revisited to ensure that the Town Centre Partnerships have ongoing sustainable funding.</p> | <p>That it be noted that the Council had no plans to reduce the existing funding arrangements for Town Centre Partnerships;</p> |
| <p>5.5 That this Council seeks to influence Hertfordshire County Council and other agencies and forums (e.g. Transport FSR, local transport plans) about the infrastructure issues raised in the conclusions</p> | <p>That Recommendation 5.5 of the Task and Finish Group be accepted;</p> |
| <p>5.6 That the cabinet receive a report of the development proposals of Enterprise Hertfordshire; seek to make a firm commitment of support at this stage; and further seeks to encourage a vision of economic development</p> | <p>That Recommendation 5.6 of the Task and Finish Group be accepted in principle, subject to further work on</p> |

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| focused on North Herts towns and rural areas as distinct from Stevenage. | costings; |
| 5.7 That the Council publicises funding opportunities provided by the Office of the Third Sector for those planning community businesses and other social enterprises. | That, in relation to Recommendation 5.7 of the Task and Finish Group, the Corporate Management Team be requested to re-consider this matter; |
| 5.8 That the Council updates its website to provide better links to the help and information already available to businesses. | That Recommendation 5.8 be accepted. |
| 5.9 That the Council should seek to maximise income from tourism through better information for visitors and better signposting for businesses, eg by inserting links to the providers of tourist information. | That Recommendation 5.9 be accepted. |
| 5.10 As part of its Green agenda, the Council should seek opportunities to develop carbon neutral and green technologies when developing its strategies. | That Recommendation 5.10 be accepted. |
| 5.11 That the Council should investigate new initiatives to support local small businesses. | That Recommendation 5.11 be accepted. |

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

14

TITLE OF REPORT: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 2009

To note and to give consideration to the draft Scrutiny Committee Annual report 2008 – 2009.

The draft Scrutiny Committee Annual Report is attached.

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