



Committee and Date

Environment and Services
Scrutiny Committee

Monday 7 October 2013

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 JULY 2013**

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Present: Councillors P Adams, C Barnes [substitute for N Hartin], J E Clarke, R Hughes, Mr V Hunt [**Chairman**], S Jones [substitute for C Lea], K Pardy [substitute for P Moseley], K Roberts [**Vice Chairman**], D Tremellen and A Walpole.

Also in attendance: Councillor K Calder [Portfolio Holder for Health]

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Hartin [sub: C Barnes], C Lea [sub: S Jones] and P Moseley [sub: K Pardy].

6. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

7. MINUTES – 18 MARCH AND 16 MAY 2013

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings of the former Protecting and Enhancing our Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 18 March and 16 May 2013 be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

9. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Members' questions.

10. LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS: GOOD PRACTICE

The Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager tabled for Members' information a briefing note on the draft policy of Local Lettings Policies together with the Shropshire Affordable Housing Allocation Policy and Scheme. She drew particular attention to the benefit of Local Lettings Plans [LLPs] that allowed the development of locally based allocation policies for an identified area or scheme of accommodation. Members noted that LLPs needed to respect legislative requirements, clearly justify the need for them and the community benefits expected to be achieved and would be reviewed after a maximum of three years to ensure that the strategic objectives were being met and remained relevant.

The Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager explained that the new Housing Allocation Policy had many aspects from LLPs woven into it and this should reduce the number of LLPs across the county as issues should be addressed in the general policy.

The Committee Chairman commented that flexibility within the LLPs could tilt problems in some areas, for example an area may comprise too many young people or too many old people. The Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager re-iterated the ability to review LLPs after a maximum three year period or as little as six months. She stated that direct or sensitive lets could also be made and stressed that the Housing Allocation Policy was fundamentally a 'tool box' for landlords to use thereby increasing freedoms and flexibility.

Referring to managing the demographic of those allocated to new build homes the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager explained that the criteria with section 106 Agreements could be overlaid with LLPs and could be used to set the tone of a community and how it may see itself developing in future.

A Member queried the merits of housing applicants being able to submit only one single bid in each cycle; the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager explained that, prior to the introduction of the new single bid scheme, the Homepoint system had been overloaded. Members noted that the single bid scheme was being tested and would be evaluated.

In answer to a Member's comments on the paucity of detail available on housing applicants, the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager explained that LLPs represented only one method of managing anti-social behaviour and there were other pathways available to manage problematic behaviour. The Portfolio Holder for Health stated that some local communities had been asking for LLPs to assuage their concerns on the allocation of affordable housing in their areas as a means of addressing the limits of the Local Development Framework and the Supplementary Planning Guidance on affordability.

The Housing, Health and Wellbeing Service Manager explained that the Housing Allocation Policy attempted to address issues of 'local connection' but agreed that the LLP could be tailored to be more specific to an area. Members

noted that the criteria within a Section 106 Agreement would override the Housing Allocation Policy in order to make the first selection of local candidates, after this initial sift the LLP would then come into force in order to give a 'balance'.

Members welcomed the information that had been provided but requested that, in future, it should be provided in advance of the meeting to allow Members sufficient time to prepare for the meeting. The Chairman assured the Committee that he would ensure that information was available in good time.

11. SHROPSHIRE COMMUNITY ALCOHOL PARTNERSHIP – PROGRESS REPORT AND THE WAY FORWARD

Dr Ghani from Public Health provided an update on the Shropshire Community Alcohol Partnership [Shrops-CAP] on progress made to date together with development plans for Year 2 (July 2013 - June 2014).

Members were concerned that member involvement in the local CAPs should be enhanced and their input needed to be encouraged in order to help address the needs of their local communities. In answer to a query on the areas covered by the existing CAPs, Dr Ghani replied that other areas may be considered in future and existing areas were monitored in accordance with the Action Plan.

The Chairman drew attention to paragraph 5.6 of the report that detailed the Department of Communities and Local Government [DCLG] Alcohol Fund, a fund of £90K over a two year period being made available to ten local authorities in England for projects aimed at addressing underage drinking and resulting in a reduction in anti-social behaviour and the development of stronger partnership working between agencies and local communities. The Chairman added that local Members working in their own areas could achieve much with little funding and cited the examples of a recent event in Cae Glas Park, Oswestry and a creative writing competition for local school children that had received some 150 entries.

Referring to public surveys, Dr Ghani explained that a survey would be undertaken through Survey Monkey during 2013 in order to establish a more significant baseline from which future project initiatives would be developed. He added that an extensive drink/alcohol survey was to be rolled out to young people in Shropshire. A Member commented that Community Support Officers [CSOs] were to be stationed at schools in the Oswestry area to help educate children and young people on the expectations of good behaviour and help address issues before they developed. Members noted that this was an excellent, proactive initiative and the CSOs would be under the management of the school whilst posted there. Dr Ghani added that the future role of school nurses would be changing in future to focus on appropriate lifestyle promotion.

The Committee Chairman suggested that the schools based CSOs be invited to feedback on this initiative to a future meeting of the Committee and, if considered successful, the Committee could seek to promote this across the wider network of schools across the county.

12. DEVELOPING THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee Chairman drew Members' attention to the revised remit of the Committee and the new ways of working that were being developed including single item agendas [where possible] in order to drill down into a subject area and seek information from service providers and service users. He stated that Members were encouraged to undertake their own research and report back to the Committee, and come forward with suggested issues for future scrutiny; all Members were encouraged to contribute to the process.

The Performance and Design Team Leader stressed the importance of looking at the 'right' topics and the following areas were suggested:

- Community Alcohol Partnerships - What are their functions? How do they spend the money allocated to them? How do they generate energy within the community? Could scrutiny add value?
- Better Regulation and Enforcement Policy
- Waste Collection Service Review
- Exercise on prescription was suggested as a possible issue that had links with alcohol misuse – promotion of healthy lifestyles
- Drug rehabilitation in the prison service [as suggested by the Director of Public Health at the Committee's informal meeting]
- Public Protection – comparison of the current analysis of food shops/cafes to establish whether improvements made or need to be made
- Contaminated Land Strategy – possible issue for joint scrutiny with Economy and Growth Scrutiny Committee or a Task and Finish Group. Measure the costs of clean up against the added community value following clean up

The Performance and Design Team Leader encouraged Members to undertake their own initial research with Portfolio Holders and Officers and bring forward cogent issues for onward scrutiny.

A Member commented on the value of inviting the appropriate Portfolio Holders to future meetings to ascertain areas where scrutiny could have a practical input.

In bringing the debate to a close, the Chairman urged all Members to take up the challenge of the new way of working and not be afraid to bring forward ideas for the Committee's Work Programme where scrutiny could make a difference to the lives of people in Shropshire.

13. DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Committee’s next meeting would be held on Monday 7 October 2013. The Chairman stated his intention to canvass Members’ opinion on future earlier meeting start times of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....