

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2004 AT 10.00 AM

Agenda Item No.

8

HERTFORDSHIRE BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

Report of the Director of Environment

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Executive Member: Derrick Ashley

1. Purpose of Report

This report has been requested by Nigel Agar who has asked for "...an update on the work of the Biodiversity Officer in view of the fact the existing officer is leaving..... and information about what arrangements are being made to complete the biodiversity programme".

2. Background

- 2.1 The post of Biodiversity Officer was established by the Hertfordshire Environment Forum (HEF) in May 2002. The county council agreed to host the officer and provide day to day management through the Biological Records Centre. The work programme is overseen by a steering group comprising of HEF, Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre and the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.
- 2.2 The Officer's primary work was to carry out an audit of the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and make recommendations on next steps for the Plan and actions by contributing organisations. The initial results of the audit were reported to the Environment Scrutiny Committee in January 2003.
- 2.3 The postholder recently gave notice of her intention to resign, having been appointed to a job at national level. The county council has sought, from the HEF, news of their intentions - for the post and the outstanding work programme. At the time of writing this report, nothing has been received from the HEF. It is understood that the matter will be considered by the Forum's Member Steering Group on 8th March and any outcomes can be reported verbally to the Scrutiny Committee.

3. Financial implications

The position of Biodiversity Officer is funded by HEF and English Nature and the Environment Agency also contribute. Hertfordshire County Council provides management support, office accommodation and IT. The post is situated in the Biological Records Centre at County Hall. Cost recovery from HEF was for salary and salary on-costs only (for 2003/2004 this was approximately £25,000.) The overheads listed above were not re-charged. If HEF decide to replace the Biodiversity Officer the county council will need to review whether it is still able and willing to host the position and on what terms.

4. Access to services implications

Recasting of the Hertfordshire BAP should help clarify, for contributing organisations, roles and responsibilities, enabling a more focussed service for selected users e.g. volunteer workers, land managers.

5. Conclusions

Members are asked to decide if there are any items arising out of the report on the Biodiversity Officer that they wish to consider for future scrutiny.