

**To: All Members of the County Council  
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S  
DEPARTMENT**

**Ask for: Nikki Patient**

**Ext: 25560**

**My Ref: /np**

**Your Ref:**

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**COMMUNITY INFORMATION & PROTECTION SELECT COMMITTEE  
30 OCTOBER 2001**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

P T J Channell, M D Colne, G M Cook, K Emsall (Chairman), B N W Hammond,  
J A Hobday (Vice-Chairman), D R McManus, S Quilty, P A Ruffles, J A W Usher.

**EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

D A Ashley (Community Information and Development), D Beatty (Resources), G D Game (Protection and Registration).

Other Members in Attendance

J Gipps, M Green, B J Lamb, D B Lloyd.

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Community Information & Protection Select Committee meeting on 30 October 2001, as circulated, copy annexed, action was taken or decisions were reached on individual items as recorded below.

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(i) Membership Changes

**Seamus Quilty** had replaced **Moyra O'Neill**

**Gary Cook** had replaced **Keith Crout**

The Chairman was pleased to welcome back Michael Colne to the Select Committee who had returned to health following a recent illness.

(ii) Academic Achievements

The Select Committee joined the Chairman in congratulating officers from both Trading Standards and the Fire and Rescue Service on the attainment of academic qualifications. Paul Farley and Melanie Pierson from Trading Standards had both passed the Diploma in Consumer Affairs. Their colleague, Andrew Butler, who is following the same path, had just successfully completed Part 1 of the Diploma. The Diploma is based on distance learning material, supplemented by 'block release' units of study.

Temporary Divisional Officer Chris Strickland, who was at the meeting, and Sub Officer Tony Smith of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service had both attained a Bachelor of Engineering Degree with Honours in Fire Engineering. The Select Committee commended all the officers, who had shown great commitment and put in a lot of hard work in conjunction with their normal duties.

**(iii) Assistance Provided During Foot & Mouth Crisis**

The Chairman reported that a letter of appreciation had been received by the Chief Executive from his opposite number in North Yorkshire following the temporary secondment of three Trading Standards staff to that county to assist with the crackdown on Foot and Mouth Disease. Anne Bradbury, Michael McLean and Richard West joined colleagues from 15 other authorities to mount patrols with Police in the 'hotspot' areas around Settle and Thirsk. The patrol operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week to enforce biosecurity measures to try and ensure that the disease did not spread into the large pig breeding areas in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Another member of staff, Erik Graham, carried out a similar exercise in Cumbria.

**(iv) Funds Raised by Hertfordshire Fire Fighters**

The Chairman was delighted to inform members that as a result of the many fund raising activities by Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, together with generous donations from members of the public and local business, around £75,000 had been raised for the families of the American Fire Fighters who so tragically lost their lives or were injured on 11 September 2001.

## MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 July 2001 were confirmed as a correct record.

## PUBLIC PETITIONS

None.

## QUESTIONS

None.

## PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS

### 1. ANNUAL LIBRARY PLAN 2001 - 2004

[Officer contact: Glenda Wood Tel: 01992 555610]

- 1.1 Andrew Robertson, Director of Community Information, introduced this item and advised that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) required the County Council to produce an Annual Library Plan. The format and content of the plan was set out by the DCMS. Andrew explained that the version to be considered by the Select Committee was an advanced draft that was still under review.

## ACTIONS

- 1.2 Glenda Wood, Head of Libraries, highlighted the achievements from last years plan and outlined the main strategic areas focussed on in this plan:
- a) Continued improvement of Information Communications and Technology (ICT);
  - b) Improving access to library services by both remote and direct access;
  - c) Social inclusion
  - d) Redevelopment to encourage an increase in user numbers;
  - e) Lifelong learning
- 1.3 The Annual Library Plan was not isolated from other planning processes and would be related to the documents such as the Quality Action Plan, and district council plans.
- 1.4 In considering the Executive Member proposal, the select committee made the following comments:-
- i) it was a good plan which included a great deal of information;
  - ii) the Plan would benefit from the inclusion of a glossary, summary and index;
  - iii) good initiatives contained within the plan e.g. facilities for people with learning difficulties, could be better publicised;
  - iv) the County Council should continue to tap into available grants, but this should be undertaken in proportion to the amount of officer time required to prepare bids;
  - v) concern that regionalisation would result in the loss of local influence, particularly in relation to Museums. The Select Committee asked to be kept up to date with developments in this area.
  - vi) the advances in ICT were welcomed as they provided ways of increasing accessibility, especially for the elderly and 'hard to reach' users;
  - vii) recognition that leisure use was important, particularly for the elderly, and may in the past have been compromised by withdrawal of some periodicals. This is now being addressed;
  - viii) all members of the County Council should be given an opportunity to comment on this plan before it is submitted to the County Council meeting.

G Wood  
N Patient to note

1.5 Comments to Cabinet

- 1) The Annual Library Plan 2001 - 2004 is a good plan which includes a great deal of valuable information;
- 2) The Cabinet is asked to approve the Plan subject to the changes in 3), below, and recommend that the County Council give its approval;
- 3) The Plan should include a summary, glossary and index;
- 4) All members of the County Council should have an opportunity to comment on the plan before it is submitted for approval to the County Council.

D Roberts  
G Wood  
N Patient

**2. GATEWAY PANEL - NAME AND REMIT ALTERATION**

[Officer contact: Paul Jackson Tel: 01992 588389]

2.1 The Select Committee were advised that the Gateway Panel had requested that its name and remit be altered in view of the requirements of the national agenda for electronic service delivery and the Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement.

2.2 Select Committee Conclusions

The Select Committee AGREED to:

- 1) Change the name of the Gateway Panel to the E-Government Panel, and
- 2) Alter the remit of the panel by the addition of the following:
  - (a) to review progress against the implementation programme contained in the IEG statement.
  - (b) to scrutinise any matter relating to integrated e-service delivery.

A Robertson  
L North  
N Patient

**3. REPLACEMENT OF ST ALBANS FIRE STATION**

[Officer contact: Mike Roblin Tel: 01992 588132]

3.1 Mike Roblin introduced this item and explained that the 1997 Standards of Fire Cover Review in Hertfordshire had identified that an area south of St Albans could not be reached within the statutory response time of 10 minutes. The former Community Services Committee agreed in March 1999 that the Chief Fire Officer should apply to the Secretary of State for the relocation of the fire station to a new site that would "ensure attendance times in London Colney are met, while maintaining appropriate standards of cover for the remainder of the area."

3.2 The Select Committee were advised that the site identified for the new fire station was within the Green Belt and, as a departure from the Development Plan, would be submitted for decision to the Secretary of State.

3.3 Jill Gipps, the local member, made the following comments:

- i) all involved parties should recognise and consider the many competing interests;
- ii) the committee should be sure that there is not another viable site;
- iii) compulsory purchase of the land should be a last resort;
- iv) local residents should be consulted shortly;
- v) Jill had not felt informed in relation to the report.

3.4 Comments to Cabinet

- 1) The Select Committee accept the principle that the County Council need to move the St Albans Fire Station in order to provide adequate fire cover and that this needs to be done with all possible speed;
- 2) The Select Committee accept with some regret that this is the only viable site available;
- 3) Full and inclusive consultation with residents should be commenced quickly now that this information is in the public domain;
- 4) Whilst recognising that the Council has a duty to use its capital receipts wisely and to provide community facilities, the compulsory purchase order should be used as a last resort only and all efforts should continue to negotiate with the school;
- 5) The Select Committee agree that a planning application should be submitted and the option of a compulsory purchase order should be made available as a contingency measure.

D Roberts  
S Seaber  
M Roblin  
N Patient

#### **4 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY (ICT) - IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING SHEET**

[Officer contact: Stuart Campbell Tel: 01992 588397]

4.1 Andrew Robertson advised the Select Committee that the implementation of the recommendations of the ICT Best Value Review were either completed or on target for completion. The Audit Commission Best Value Inspectors who had recently assessed ICT in Hertfordshire had concluded that the service was 'good with some elements that are excellent' and that it would 'definitely improve'.

4.2 Select Committee Conclusions

The Select Committee AGREED that a further report to provide an update on the progress of implementation should be submitted in six months.

S Campbell  
N Patient to note

## 5 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CORONERS - IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING SHEET

[Officer contact: Steven Charteris Tel. 01992 555533]

5.1 Tom Hawkyard introduced this item and informed the Select Committee that the implementation of the recommendations were on target and that the working protocols were gradually being reviewed in liaison with other bodies, such as the Police.

### 5.2 Select Committee Conclusions

The Select Committee AGREED that a further report to provide an update on the progress of implementation should be submitted in six months.

S Charteris  
N Patient to note

## 6 CIVIL NAMING

[Officer contact: Tom Hawkyard Tel. 01992 555499]

6.1 Tom Hawkyard introduced this report and explained that Hertfordshire was one of eight local authorities to be piloting different approaches for civil naming ceremonies. The learning points of each authority were shared at group consultation meetings.

6.2 The Select Committee discussed the item and made the following comments:

- i) efforts should be made to increase the number of questionnaires returned after ceremonies;
- ii) concern was expressed regarding the price of ceremonies, but it was recognised that this was relative to the level of service offered;
- iii) members were encouraged at the increase in the number of bookings between September and November 2001.

### 6.3 Select Committee Conclusions

The Select Committee noted the progress and changes made to the civil naming ceremonies and AGREED that a further report on progress should be submitted in six months.

T Hawkyard  
N Patient to note

## 7 FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES RECRUITMENT TARGETS

[Officer contact: Jane Brown Tel. 01992 507511]

7.1 Steve Seaber introduced this item and outlined the equal opportunities recruitment targets and the initiatives being used to help Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service achieve them.

- 7.2 The Select Committee discussed the report and made the following comments:
- i) the progress made in this area was welcomed;
  - ii) the recruitment initiatives and good practice were commended;
  - iii) undertaking joint recruitment initiatives with other authorities may be more effective;
  - iv) it was difficult to compare employment of women and ethnic minorities because the methods of measuring these groups were inconsistent; the statistics for ethnic minorities included non-uniform staff but the statistics for women only took into account uniformed staff;
  - v) the report is a credit to all involved in this work.

7.3 Comments to the Chief Fire Officer

- 1) Fire and Rescue Service staff should be congratulated for their work;
- 2) A further report on progress should be submitted in six months which included figures showing the number of women employed in non-uniform positions in the Fire and Rescue Service;
- 3) The Chief Fire Officer should write to the Chairman of the LGA Fire Executive and ask for the ways of measuring the number of women and ethnic minorities employed in the Fire and Rescue Service to be standardised.

S Seaber  
J Brown  
N Patient to note

**8 HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF FIRE SERVICES  
INSPECTION REPORT 2001**

[Officer contact: Stephen Sanders Tel. 01992 507502]

- 8.1 **Keith Emsall** requested that this matter be considered for scrutiny by the Select Committee because he felt that it was an issue on which there should be an opportunity to comment and to monitor progress.
- 8.2 Stephen Sanders outlined the two recommendations and the negative and positive comments made in the report. Stephen explained the actions that had been put in place to address the points raised by the Inspector.
- 8.3 In discussing this issue the Select Committee made the following comments:
- i) the efforts made to address the areas highlighted by Her Majesty's Inspector were recognised;
  - ii) there was a deliberate decision to put more resources into Community Fire Safety, as all fire deaths are in residential fires, which had resulted in negative comments about fire safety enforcement with businesses;
  - iii) the Fire and Rescue Service are limited in their efforts to reduce false alarms caused by automated fire alarms.

#### 8.4 Select Committee Conclusions

- 1) The efforts made to comply with the recommendations of Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire Service were noted;
- 2) A further report should be submitted to provide evidence of improvement in six months.

S Seaber  
S Sanders  
N Patient to note

### 9 **HATFIELD DERAILMENT, FLOODING AND FUEL CRISIS DEBRIEFING REPORTS**

[Officer contact: John Boulter Tel. 01992 555951]

9.1 John Boulter explained that autumn 2000 saw County Council departments together with other relevant agencies responding to a number of significant emergencies. John summarised the themes that had emerged from a review of the interagency work involved in these emergencies.

9.2 The Select Committee discussed this matter and made the following comments:

- i) concern that it was likely that flooding would become an on-going problem that would require aspects of response to be co-ordinated better e.g. provision of sand bags;
- ii) further scrutiny of these issues should involve other relevant agencies and interested parties;
- iii) the County Council should continue to build on their relationships with other agencies.

#### 9.3 Select Committee Conclusions

The Select Committee AGREED that a topic group should be set up to scrutinise the problems and risks associated with flooding in Hertfordshire.

J Boulter  
A Laycock  
N Patient

### **REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL**

No items were reported to the County Council.

**Andrew Laycock**  
**County Secretary**