

**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:

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION & PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 MARCH 2002**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

P T J Channell, M D Colne, K M Crout, K Emsall (Chairman), B N W Hammond,
J A Hobday (Vice-Chairman), D R McManus, M H O'Neill, P A Ruffles, J A W Usher.

Also present:

Executive Members: D A Ashley (Community Information and Development), G D Game (Protection and Registration) D B Lloyd (Best Value).

Other Members: M Green.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Investors In People

The Chairman announced that Community Information had been awarded Investors In People (IIP) status at their first attempt. The Committee joined the Chairman in congratulating Glenda Wood and the IIP Steering Group.

(ii) Hertfordshire Website Commended

It was reported that the County Council was one of four authorities in the Country named by the IT managers association, 'Socitm', in their annual survey 'Better Connected 2002' as being a properly transactional website fit for e-government. The report stated that "the number of transactions which can be performed on-line has increased five-fold with the best local authority sites performing as well as the best in the private sector on technical performance, and better on accessibility to the disabled."

The Committee congratulated the teams led by Bernard Thirkettle and Bob Breakey for this achievement.

(iii) Heidi Ebrahim, Assistant Director of Community Information

The Chairman announced that Heidi Ebrahim, Assistant Director of Community Information, would be retiring on 30 April 2002 after 34 years in local government. Heidi spent the first 21 years in Luton and Bedfordshire followed by 13 years in Hertfordshire.

The Committee thanked Heidi for her excellent work and wished her the very best for a long and happy retirement.

Ian McLachlan, Head of Trading Standards, will take over Heidi's responsibilities as Assistant Director of Community Information from 1 May 2002.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 January 2002 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Minute 3 - Proposed Resource Budget 2002/03 - 2005/06 for Community Information and Protection Portfolios

In relation to paragraph 3.2, Gerald Game reported that he had received a response from the Cabinet Office, but it did not contain all of the requested details about Emergency Planning funding.

PUBLIC PETITIONS

None.

QUESTIONS

None.

PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS**Scrutiny Items****1. FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES RECRUITMENT TARGETS - UPDATE**

[Officer contact: Jane Brown, Equal Opportunities Adviser
Tel: 01992 507511]

1.1 The Committee considered an update report on equal opportunities recruitment figures and initiatives which contained a profile of non-uniformed staff, as requested by the October 2001 Select Committee.

1.2 Conclusions

An interim report detailing the result of the current recruitment campaign should be submitted to the Committee in six months and a full report incorporating the target figures from the next Fire Service Inspectorate report should be submitted in one year.

ACTIONS

Steve Seaber
Nikki Patient to note

2. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF FIRE SERVICES INSPECTION REPORT 2001 - UPDATE ON UNWANTED CALLS

[Officer contact: John Mills, Divisional Officer
Tel: 01727 818901]

- 2.1 In response to a request of the Committee in October 2001, a report was considered that detailed progress made to remedy the poor performance in the area of unwanted fire calls, as identified in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire Services Report 2001.
- 2.2 In response to a member's question, the Committee were advised that if a retained crew were mobilised, there was a direct cost of £85. Where whole time crews were used, there were no direct costs but they were diverted from other activities and may not be able to attend other incidents. In all calls there were additional costs relating to fuel use and wear and tear on vehicles.
- 2.3 Members asked what policies were being developed to reduce the number of hoax calls. It was noted that officers were working closely with the Police and the University of Hertfordshire to reduce repeat offending.
- 2.4 **Conclusions**
- 1) The activities set out in the report provided a good start to tackling unwanted calls but that there was still a way to go.
 - 2) The developments made on hoax calls were welcomed. The Chief Fire Officer was supported in the continued work with the police on hoax calls from young people and the targeting of persistent offenders.
 - 3) Jane Hobday was asked, in her role as Chairman of the LGA Fire Executive, to use the local experience to take up this issue with National Government.
 - 4) A report was requested to be submitted to the next meeting to provide further information about strategies for tackling hoax calls.
 - 5) It was requested that the figures in the appendices be presented more clearly the next time this issue is considered.

Steve Seaber to note

Jane Hobday

John Mills
Nikki Patient to note

John Mills

3. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CORONERS IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING SHEET

[Officer contact: Steven Charteris, Head of Coroners Unit
Tel: 01992 555533]

3.1 The Committee considered an update report on the progress of the implementation of the Best Value Review of Coroners Service, as requested at the meeting in October 2001.

3.2 Conclusions

- 1) The progress made was noted with satisfaction.
- 2) A further report was requested in 12 months to update members as to how the current arrangements had bedded in and whether any issues had arisen.

Tom Hawkyard
Nikki Patient to note

4. RE-AFFIRMATION OF VOWS

[Officer contact: Tom Hawkyard, Head of Statutory Services
Tel: 01992 555499]

4.1 The Committee considered a report about re-affirmation of vows following the decision of the July 2001 Committee to include this issue in the scrutiny work programme.

4.2 In response to a member's question, Tom Hawkyard advised that LifeCycle were needed because the County Council were not able to make a direct charge for re-affirmation ceremonies as they were not a statutory service. LifeCycle were paid a £30 administrative fee for each ceremony.

4.3 Members asked if an evaluation of the re-affirmations pilot would take place. It was explained that there were meetings of the pilot authorities and that LifeCycle would produce a report later this year that drew together the experiences of the pilot authorities.

4.4 Conclusions

- 1) Re-Affirmation ceremonies were welcomed as a good public service.
- 2) An update, to contain information about the evaluation of the pilot and Hertfordshire's own experiences, particularly of home ceremonies, was requested in six months.

Tom Hawkyard
Nikki Patient to note

5. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING SHEET

[Officer contact: Stuart Campbell, Manager, Corporate Information Systems Tel. 01992 588397]

5.1 In response to the request of the Committee in October 2001, the Committee considered an update on progress of the implementation of the Information Communications Technology (ICT) Best Value Review.

5.2 Members considered that it would be useful to know the extent of ICT in libraries and be provided with information about the use and maintenance of these facilities.

5.3 Conclusions

- 1) No further scrutiny was required of the implementation of the Best Value Review of Information Communications Technology as all of the actions were either completed or on target for completion.
- 2) A scrutiny report was requested about the public ICT interface in libraries, which should include information about:
 - what facilities there are;
 - what happens when the technology goes wrong;
 - the extent the equipment is used;
 - who it is used by;
 - what it is used for, including what courses are run;
 - any security issues;
 - the cost of provision and how the equipment is financed.

Andrew Robertson
Nikki Patient to note

6. HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES AND LOCAL STUDIES (HALS) ACCOMMODATION - UPDATE

[Officer contact: Andrew Robertson, Director of Community Information Tel. 01992 555605]

6.1 The Committee considered an update on progress to resolve the accommodation problem being experienced by Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS). The Committee in January 2002 requested that an update on this matter be submitted to every Committee meeting.

6.2 Conclusions

- 1) Members welcomed the report and were pleased that a workable option for new accommodation had been found.
- 2) It was requested that an update on this matter continued to be submitted to every meeting of this Committee for the foreseeable future.

Andrew Robertson
Nikki Patient to note

Proposed Items for Scrutiny**7. FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE INITIATIVES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

7.1 Following the recent LGA Fire Conference, Keith Emsall proposed that the Committee should scrutinise the effectiveness of the work of the Fire & Rescue Service with young people.

7.2 Conclusions

The Committee agreed to scrutinise this matter and requested a report detailing current initiatives in Hertfordshire and initiatives of other Fire Brigades, in particular the innovative work undertaken in Leicestershire and Wiltshire.

Steve Seaber
Nikki Patient to note

8. INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLERS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

8.1 Keith Emsall suggested that the Committee should scrutinise the issue of installation of sprinkler systems in new developments, particularly in schools.

8.2 Steve Seaber, Chief Fire Officer, advised that an officer seminar on this issue was due to be held on 23 April 2002 at the Training and Development Centre, Hitchin Road, Stevenage, which members could attend.

8.3 Conclusions

The Committee agreed to scrutinise this matter and use the seminar to start the scrutiny. A report providing further details was requested for the next meeting.

Steve Seaber
Nikki Patient to note

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

No items were reported to the County Council.

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary