

**AGENDA for a meeting of the RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE in
Committee Room B, County Hall, Hertford on 19 JUNE 2003 at 10.00am**

MEMBER MEETINGS (FOR MEMBERS ONLY)

Conservative	9. 30 a.m.	Room 117
Labour	9. 30 a.m.	Room 106
Liberal Democrat	9. 30 a.m.	Room 111

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (10) - QUORUM 4

D Clayton, G M Cook, F J Escott, P V Goggins, I H Laidlaw - Dickson (Chairman),
D B Lloyd, S Quilty, H M Saunders, R J Smith, W A Storey (Vice - Chairman).

AGENDA

AUDIO SYSTEM

The Council Chamber has an audio system to assist those with hearing impairment. Anyone who wishes to use this should contact Main (front) Reception.

PART 1 (PUBLIC) AGENDA

Meetings of the Committee are open to the public (this includes the press) and attendance is welcomed. However, there may be occasions when the public are excluded from the meeting for particular items of business. Any such items are taken at the end of the public part of the meeting and are listed under "Part II ('closed') agenda".

MINUTES

To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 March 2003 (previously circulated).

PUBLIC PETITIONS [SC.11]

Any member of the public, (who is a resident in Hertfordshire or is on the electoral register for Hertfordshire) may present a petition to the Committee. An authorised representative of any Hertfordshire parish or town council subscribing to a parish charter approved by the County Council may also present a petition to the Committee in relation to matters within that parish. The subject of the petition must be appropriate for the Committee and must be signed by at least 100 residents or business ratepayers of Hertfordshire.

Notification of intent to present a petition must be given in writing to the County Secretary, (County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DE) at least **fourteen clear days** before the meeting where an item

relating to the subject matter of the petition does not appear on the agenda for the meeting and at least **three clear days** before where the item is the subject of a report.

If you have any queries about the procedure please contact Adrian Service, on telephone no. (01992) 555564.

No notice of petitions had been received at the time of agenda despatch.

QUESTIONS [SC.9(4)]

Members are able to question the Executive Member(s) on matters which are not the subject of reports on the agenda. A member who wishes to ask a question shall give written notice of it to the County Secretary at least **three clear working days** before the meeting, stating to whom the question is to be put. Written copies of the questions and answers shall be available at the meeting. Questions shall be answered orally at the meeting in the order in which notice has been received. The member asking the question may ask one supplementary question. The person responding may choose to answer such a supplementary question, or promise a written reply within seven days. The period of time allocated for questions shall not exceed **ten minutes**. Any questions remaining after that period has elapsed shall be answered in writing within seven days. The Chairman may, however, accept questions without notice if satisfied they are urgent. Such questions shall not count towards the allocated time limit of ten minutes and shall be answered orally at the meeting or in writing within seven days.

Questions relating to matters on the agenda shall be asked when that matter is discussed and may be addressed to the Chairman or to an officer, who may answer orally or may undertake to provide a written reply within seven days.

The following questions had been received at the time of agenda dispatch.

Q1. Nigel Agar will ask the Executive Member for Resources, David Beatty the following question :

Is the Executive Member for Resources confident that the environmental issues relating to Dunsley Bungalow have been adequately taken into account?

Would the Executive Member for Resources be prepared to examine further the ecological assessment for Dunsley Bungalow provided by EPCAD given the following :

The Ecological assessment provided by EPCAD, although by no means totally inadequate or inaccurate, nevertheless reveals a number of flaws amounting to severe bias.

Paragraph 1.4.2 refers to the identification of areas of greater ecological potential which require further survey. It is not easy to see where that has in fact been done.

Paragraph 2.1.6 lists sufficient species present which would appear to justify designation of the site as a County Wildlife Site (CWS) which is at a variance with the final conclusion that it is not one. Or is no longer one.

Paragraph 2.1.6 The sentence beginning 'Curiously these (Scabious plants) were distributed very evenly ...' Adds nothing to the assessment except to imply that the Scabious was planted deliberately.

Paragraph 2.2.4 A hint of herbicide treatment. Has this been verified?

Paragraph 3.3.3 The suggestion in 2.1.6 is repeated.

Paragraph 3.1.1 It has been suggested that both Ox Eye Daisy and Birds Foot Trefoil are in fact both present.

Paragraph 3.1.4 The numbers of indicator species are not relevant. Their mere presence is enough, PPG9 refers to the presence of species being 'substantive' i.e positively identified and present rather than present in 'substantial' numbers. 3 plants of agrimony and 4 of scabious, plus 3 other indicators, are quite sufficient to count as indicating an area of wildlife interest.

Paragraph 3.1.5 The same point applies here, The Maps in Appendix 3 indicate that the species are widespread not that they are necessarily common. The maps, which cover the entire British Isles may appear to show that the species are widespread but as the unit of measurement is a 10 km square i.e 100 sq kilometres this may mean no more than they are present at a rate of one 100 sq kilometres. This hardly counts as abundance. The maps do not indicate that the species are either common or are unthreatened

Paragraph 3.1.6 It would have been more to the point to include a map of old established neutral grassland in Hertfordshire to enable the Committee to assess the relative importance of this example.

Paragraph 3.1.7 There is selective quotation from PPG 7 paras 14 to 16 refer to the importance of habitat areas as links, corridors or stepping stones.' This is ignored in the final conclusion. Paragraph 18 is not the sole advice that PPG 7 has to offer. Nor is it necessarily the over riding advice. It must be taken in conjunction with paras 14 –16.

In short the EA fails to establish that the site is not a CWS on the count of plant species present.

It takes no account whatsoever of animal species including invertebrates. It takes no account of the importance of old unimproved grassland in a Hertfordshire context. Finally it would appear to be a variance with specialist local knowledge accumulated by Hertfordshire's own specialist branch – the HBRC. The fact that the site was, and possibly still is occupied by an HBRC officer, perhaps does not make an independent assessment necessary as a second opinion but does not absolve the Council from the obligation to make decisions fully informed by both local knowledge and scientific method.

Has HBRC been invited to comment on the EPCAD assessment?

The following reports are attached to this agenda:-

1. SCRUTINY UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2003 / 04

Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer

2. BEST VALUE REVIEW MONITORING UPDATE

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

The Executive Member for this item is David Beatty

3. COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET MONITOR

Report of the Finance Director

The Executive Member for this item is David Beatty

4. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE CPA – IMPLEMENTING CHANGE AND BECOMING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Report of Director of People and Property

The Executive Member for this item is Robert Ellis

5. EFFICIENCIES PROGRAMME

Report of the Director of Adult Care Services

The Executive Member for this item is Alan Searing

6. MONEY ADVICE UNIT - ANALYSIS OF POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF INCREASED WORK

Report of the Head of Money Advice Unit

The Executive Members for this item is Michael Janes

7. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Report of the County Secretary

The Executive Member for this item is Robert Ellis

8. PROMISES ‘TRAFFIC LIGHT’ MONITOR

Report of the Acting Assistant Chief Executive (Performance)

The Executive Members for this item is David Beatty

Items referred by the Council:

none

ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL (Standing Order SC.7(2))

At a Committee meeting the leader of the Opposition or a spokesman nominated by that Leader may require one identified item to be reported from that meeting to the Council.

PART II ('CLOSED') AGENDA

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There are no items of Part II (Confidential) business on this agenda. If items are notified the Chairman will move:-

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph ... of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act."

Please note that full papers have been dispatched to Committee members only. All other members have been sent the front sheets of each report.

If you require a copy of any of the reports mentioned above or require further information about this agenda please contact Adrian Service, Committee Services, County Secretary's Department, on telephone no. 01992 555564 or fax. 01992 555518