

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 – COMMUNITY AND HOUSING held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on
22 JANUARY 2003**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.
Councillors A Dean, Mrs C D Down, D W Gregory, P G F Lewis,
R A Merrion, R J O'Neill, Mrs S V Schneider, Mrs E Tealby -
Watson and
P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- W Cockerell, Mrs R Millership, M T Purkiss and
Mrs C Roberts.

S1.36 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Gayler and R C Smith.

S1.37 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2002 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the amendment, in Minute S1.23 (third paragraph) of the words "Councillor Merrion said" to read "A comment was made"

S1.38 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute S1.23 – Local Authority Health Overview and Scrutiny

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had written encouraging the Primary Care Trust to consider providing a paramedic to help with the efficiency of the service. This had also been supported by Great Dunmow Town Council.

(ii) Minute S1.28 – PFI Progress

It was noted that the Astroturf had been installed at Helena Romanes School, Great Dunmow and was now open to the public.

(iii) Minute S1.29 – Community Safety Strategy

The Chairman informed the meeting that the new mobile police station had been launched at Finchingfield on 21 January 2003. A time-table was being developed for public access times to the mobile police station.

Members commented that there were manpower problems at both Saffron Walden and Stansted police stations which inhibited the holding of persons in custody.

(iv) Minute S1.31 – Best Value Review Leisure and Cultural Services

The Chairman of the Committee commented that the report of the Member Reference Group had been well received.

S1.39 PFI PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Community and Leisure and the Special Projects Building Surveyor about progress of the PFI project.

The Chairman said that the report described capital expenditure incurred over the past five months. Work was progressing well but a delay had occurred following the discovery of an unexpected pond at the Stansted site.

RESOLVED that the Committee's congratulations be conveyed to all those responsible for maintaining the impetus of this project.

S1.40 HEALTH/NHS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the report of its Chairman on a study, by the Essex Southend and Thurrock Scrutiny Partnership Forum, of delayed discharges from the five acute NHS Hospital Trusts in the Essex Strategic Health Authority Area.

Councillor A Dean declared a non-prejudicial interest in as much as he was a non-executive director of the Princess Alexandra NHS Trust.

Problems seemed apparent at the Princess Alexandra in Harlow, Southend-on-Sea and Basildon hospitals but not at Chelmsford or Broomfield. Significant factors seemed to be the links between PCT, Social Services and Housing Authorities and the sharing of computerised information. 92% of delayed discharges were related to emergency admissions.

Intermediate care could be provided in a residential home, cottage hospital or the patient's own home. The Chairman with Councillor Mrs J Cheetham, in their capacity as Members of the West Essex Community Health Council, had visited Avocet and Curlew wards in the Saffron Walden Community Hospital and found that the beds there were underused, the problem being shortage of staff to cope with the numbers of patients. Recruitment of carers was equally a problem for supported accommodation, and residential and nursing care. Meantime the Government was proposing to impose a system of reimbursement charges for delayed discharges.

Councillor A Dean suggested that there might be merit in promoting a dialogue through the West Essex Community Health Council to improve links between the Princess Alexandra Hospital and the Saffron Walden Community Hospital. The Chairman agreed to initiate such a meeting.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer and the Property Services Programme Officer gave information about funding available from the District

Council and from the Springboard Handyman Service, for providing facilities to assist the disabled.

Officers undertook to circulate copies of the summary of the Partnership Forum's recommendations and to place a copy of the full study document in the Members Room.

Councillor Mrs E Tealby Watson asked that information be obtained about discharges from Addenbrookes Hospital since these were likely to affect the Uttlesford district.

S1.41 **RIGHT TO BUY PROCEDURES**

The Committee considered a report by the Property Services Programme Officer on the way the Council operates the Right to Buy regulations.

Copies were also circulated of a Government News Release issued that day called "Right to buy gets a twenty-first century facelift." This document described measures announced by the Deputy Prime Minister to meet market pressures, and reduce both homelessness and exploitation by companies profiteering from the scheme by reducing, for a year initially, discounts available to council tenants purchasing their own homes. It was noted however that it was not intended to extend the proposals to Uttlesford. There was some concern that, in view of the proximity to areas in which the scheme would operate, these companies could extend their activities to Uttlesford.

Officers agreed to report to the next meeting giving details of the number of tenants who had been approached in this way, of how many Right to Buy applicants had sold their property within three years, together with figures of the percentage of council owned properties lost through RTB sales in rural villages. Tenants would also be warned of these potential problems through the tenants' newsletters.

Officers also agreed to discuss the implications of the document issued by the ODPM at the next Health and Housing meeting.

Thanks were expressed to officers for the excellent report on operation of the Right to Buy regulations.

S1.42 **COMMUNITY AND LEISURE COMMITTEE – 7 JANUARY 2003**

The Committee considered the decision list of the Community and Leisure Committee held on 7 January 2003.

A Member suggested that day centre charges should be uplifted each year.

Another Member expressed the view that the post of Leisure Officer should not be lost permanently and commented on the valuable contribution which had been made by the former postholder.

The Chairman reported receipt of a letter from the Chief Executive about future best value reviews. Terms of reference for each review would be approved by the scrutiny committees in March, but in view of the election in May, it was felt that the appointment of Member Reference Groups should be delayed until after that date.

S1.43

HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE – 9 JANUARY 2003

The Committee considered the decision list of the Health and Housing Committee held on 9 January 2003. Copies of the decision list from the special meeting of the Health and Housing Committee held on 21 January 2003 were circulated for information only.

The Property Services Programme Officer explained which topics were covered by the housing needs and housing condition surveys respectively.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.