

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

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs C D Down, M A Gayler, D W Gregory,
P G F Lewis, R A Merrion, Mrs E Tealby-Watson and
P A Wilcock.

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

S1.44 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Dean, R J O'Neill,
Mrs S V Schneider and R C Smith.

S1.45 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2003 were received,
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

S1.46 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute S1.38(iii) – Mobile Police Station

Councillor R A Merrion informed the meeting that the Mobile Police Station
had made a very successful visit to his own village. Members of the public
had visited it and the uniformed officer on it had walked round the village
which resulted in traffic speed being reduced at once.

Councillor Mrs E Tealby-Watson suggested that better advance publicity
could be given of Mobile Police Station visits. The Committee and
Communications Manager agreed to circulate the timetable of visits to
Members.

(ii) Minute S1.39 – PFI Progress

The Chairman drew attention to the Progress Report which had been
circulated recently.

Councillor Mrs E Tealby-Watson said that it seemed the Lord Butler Leisure
Centre had introduced new membership arrangements which were less
flexible than the previous "Ambassador" arrangements. The Committee and
Communications Manager agreed to ask the Head of Community and Leisure
Services to investigate this aspect and send a note of explanation to
Councillor Mrs E Tealby-Watson.

(iii) Minute S1.40 – Health/NHS Overview and Scrutiny

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had put Councillor A Dean in touch with officers at the West Essex Community Health Council but did not know whether a meeting had taken place.

S1.47 INTERNAL AUDITS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Audit Manager on recent audits which had taken place and management plans which had been completed. It was stressed that all management responses to audit comments had been very positive.

In answer to questions he added that the electronic till at the Museum was due to be brought into full operation next month. If this were not the case he would report this to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

A member suggested that the emergency office recovery plan might be enhanced by use of disaster recovery offices rather than portakabins and the Audit Manager agreed to refer this to the Head of Information Technology.

RESOLVED that the report contents be noted.

S1.48 ESSEX COMMUNITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on Essex Community Strategy Consultation. A response to the Essex County Council was needed by 31 March 2003.

Councillor Mrs E Tealby-Watson made the point that the challenges offered in the document stressed the relationship with London, whereas there was a closer geographical and social relationship between Uttlesford and Cambridge. In addition, there should be a stronger link between the sections on the environment and health issues.

Councillor P A Wilcock added that there were many Essex areas directly adjacent to Hertfordshire. Further, Harwich and Felixstowe needed to unite as a strong port despite the county boundary between them. He felt that the section on “feeling safe” should address crime reduction, family needs, deprivation and road safety.

Overall, Members thought that there needed to be more co-ordination between the sections and that the following areas should be highlighted:-

- (i) furthering of cross-boundary links and business ventures
- (ii) more co-ordination between sections of the consultation document, eg health and development.
- (iii) address youth work, crime and traffic calming – under the heading “feeling safe”.

Councillor M A Gayler emphasised the importance of planned costed actions to meet the challenges referred to.

RESOLVED that the Committee's observations be relayed to the Chief Executive for inclusion in the Council's response to the Essex County Council.

S1.49 **RIGHT TO BUY**

The Head of Housing Services referred to the request of Members for an update on this topic. He explained that action was necessary to prevent loss of affordable housing stock to property companies.

His report described policy changes which had become available to the Council following Government guidance on proposed changes to the Right to Buy scheme. The Health and Housing Committee had agreed that the Council should apply to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for a restriction to be put on sales of RTB property. The Housing Department was currently preparing an appropriate scheme of restriction. He anticipated that conditions would be attached to sales and would apply for a number of years.

The most important area was loss of rural affordable housing, some of which had already been lost to property companies. Further preventative action would be taken by alerting tenants to the problem via the Council Page, tenant meetings and the tenant newsletters, and asking them to be aware which organisations might be in contact with them.

Members thanked the Head of Housing Services for his helpful report.

S1.50 **HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE –6 MARCH 2003**

With the consent of the Chairman the Committee then considered the decision list of the Health and Housing Committee meeting held on 6 March 2003 and noted the contents.

S1.51 **NHS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – NON-URGENT PATIENT TRANSPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Principal Environmental Health Officer that a Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been formed to examine Non-urgent Patient Transport Services. The report detailed the objectives of the project and the type and scope of inquiry which would be undertaken. The next meeting of the Panel would take place on 20 March 2003.

Members discussed this matter at length. In particular, it was considered that the review should address:-

cross border issues (eg transport to Addenbrookes Hospital); links and coordination between the transport providers; appropriateness of

some transport for particular patients disabilities links to hospitals from park and ride schemes and rail stations and flexibility in appointment systems.

RESOLVED that the Committee welcomes the study into non-urgent patient transport in Essex and that the comments made by Members be forwarded for the consideration of the Panel at its meeting on 20 March 2003.

S1.52 **COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee and Communications Manager reminded the meeting that the work programme of the newly appointed Committee in May would already contain NHS scrutiny, monitoring of the PFI contract and two separate best value reviews.

Members considered that it would be inappropriate at this time to add more to the new committee's work programme.

S1.53 **COMMUNITY AND LEISURE COMMITTEE – 4 MARCH 2003**

The Committee considered the decision list of the Community and Leisure Committee meeting held on 4 March 2003.

(i) Minute CL35 – Young Musician of the Year Festival

(Councillor Mrs E Tealby -Watson declared an interest in this item by reason of her husband's employment)

Members stressed the need for concrete sponsorship proposals, whilst noting that the suggested date for the Festival was not until September.

(ii) Minute CL38 – Day Centres Best Value Review

Members considered at length the terms of reference proposed for this best value review.

They stressed the importance of obtaining the views of users /customers. It was also suggested that the Review should look at other similar care services such as "Friday Clubs".

Because of the rural nature of the District Members also asked that the Review should include transport and access to Day Centres. They emphasized the importance of other users of the Day Centres and asked that the Review should include other hirers and that Challenge Events should be held in the Day Centres and not the Council Offices.

S1.54 **CHAIRMAN'S THANKS**

The Chairman of the Committee expressed his gratitude to the members of the Committee for their contributions during the past municipal year.

Members of the Committee reciprocated these sentiments and thanks were expressed to officers.

The meeting ended at 8.59 pm.