

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

Present:- Councillor A R Row – Chairman.  
Councillors D Corke, M L Foley, R T Harris, E Tealby-Watson  
and A Wattebot.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor D W Gregory

Officers in attendance:- S McLagan, I Orton, C Roberts and R Secker.

**S1.20 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Gayler, S C Jones, A J Ketteridge and E Tealby-Watson (who was involved in another meeting in the building).

**S1.21 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**S1.22 BEST VALUE REVIEW DAY CENTRES – FINAL REPORT**

Councillor D W Gregory expressed his thanks to the Members of the Reference Group including the Day Centre representatives and Council officers for all their work towards the production of the report, and said that he hoped it would be well received and that the Improvement Plan would be approved by the Community and Leisure Committee in due course. He gave a detailed account of the work undertaken by the Reference Group.

Councillor E Tealby-Watson then joined the meeting.

The Chairman commented upon the length of time allowed in the report for achieving a “makeover” of the Centres. The Head of Community and Leisure Services explained that this included time for collection of information about the cleaning of the five Day Centres.

Councillor E Tealby-Watson asked whether there was room for savings by use of a single cleaning provider.

The Performance Manager said that economies of scale would be explored in the process of reviewing all the Council’s contract arrangements.

The Head of Community and Leisure Services explained that the majority of the direct costs were to pay for cooks and for charges in connection with the premises. She stated, in answer to a question, that possible steps to reduce the deficit could be partnership arrangements, eg operation of booking procedures.

It was noted that a large proportion of the costs was for internal support charges. Councillor Gregory acknowledged that opportunities were limited for making direct savings, but said that the Centres looked to maximise income by advertising, introduction of possible alternative uses, review of charges and development of a common day centre constitution. He answered that the Reference Group had not considered expansion of the service on this occasion.

Councillor Tealby-Watson said that she had hoped for a firm commitment to target groups other than the elderly for regular use of the day centres. Councillor Gregory explained that each day centre had different rules about permitted uses, due to differences in eg storage facilities, types of furniture available, etc. He also stressed that the operation of the day centres without volunteers would involve the Council in much expense.

Councillor M Foley then joined the meeting.

It was confirmed that the proposal to provide a new day centre at Vicarage Meads, Thaxted was not being pursued and it was agreed that this item be deleted from the Proposed Improvement Plan. The Head of Community and Leisure Services informed the meeting that there was a structural issue with the Day Centre and further information was awaited. A report would go to the meeting of the Community and Leisure Committee in January if there was a significant problem.

At the suggestion of Councillor Tealby-Watson it was agreed that, on the third page of the Improvement Plan, "Consider" be altered to "Pursue" the lowering of age limits for users of day centres, and that Quality of Life theme F be inserted in the final column of the Plan.

The Chairman of the Committee asked that the dates, set in the Plan for projects, be reconsidered since some seemed far too long.

RESOLVED that

- 1 subject to the deletion and amendments agreed above the Day Centre Best Value Review Improvement Plan be approved and recommended to the Community and Leisure Committee for adoption.
- 2 the Committee's appreciation be recorded for the depth to which this subject has been researched by the Reference Group, and for the effort put into the review by officers.

## S1.23

### **GRANTS ALLOCATION POLICY**

The Performance Manager explained that, as a part of the work programme, the Committee had the opportunity to consider and comment to the appropriate policy committee on this statement of policy.

The Head of Community and Leisure Services outlined the decisions which had been made by the Community and Leisure Committee for allocations of the Contributions Fund Grant Scheme budget.

Following a comment by Councillor Foley about the lack of influence the Council had over the Thaxted Festival, Members considered the possibility of requiring Council representation on the managing committee of organisations in receipt of grants.

Members considered the policy statement as a whole and commented on the low maximum grant figure for the Leisure and Cultural Grant Scheme.

RESOLVED that the Community and Leisure Committee be advised that this Committee considers that

- 1 the Council should consider appropriate Council representation on the managing committee of organisations in receipt of grants.
- 2 the maximum grant limit for the Leisure and Cultural Grant Scheme should be raised to £500

#### S1.24 **WORK PROGRAMME – COMMUNITY PLAN (UTTLESFORD FUTURES)**

Members considered a report referring to the policy elements in this plan.

The Performance Manager informed the meeting that a conference of Partners was being held that Friday. He suggested that Members might wish to re-visit the Community Plan in about six months.

In answer to questions he explained that target monitoring would happen via Local Agenda 21 and by the performance management process, which was incorporated into the Quality of Life Plan and would generate reports to the Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED that the Community Plan be noted and that it be reviewed by the Committee in six months time.

#### S.1.25 **WORK PROGRAMME – CPA PROCESS**

Members considered a report referring to the policy elements in delivery of the CPA process. The project plan for delivery of the CPA process was attached to the report and the Performance Manager informed the meeting that the main on-site inspection would be in February of 2004.

RESOLVED that the Committee records its satisfaction with the way the CPA is being progressed.

**S1.26 WORK PROGRAMME – PORT HEALTH SERVICES**

Members considered a report detailing the Port Health Services undertaken by the Council for control of disease in connection with arrivals of both passengers and cargo.

The Head of Environmental Services also described the self-financing nature of the services, the twenty-four hour cover provided and the professional competencies of the staff involved. He explained that the Council's duties had been devolved from the Department of Health, the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Union.

The Performance Manager agreed to circulate Committee Members to assess how much interest there would be in an organised visit to the Port Health Unit and the Border Inspection Post.

RESOLVED that the Committee records its appreciation for the very useful and enlightening report on Port Health Services.

**S1.27 SCRUTINY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**

The Performance Manager outlined a possible form of scrutiny training for Members with approximate costs of £1-2,000 per day. He undertook to let Members know exact costs as soon as these were available.

RESOLVED that training possibilities be researched and the amount of likely interest assessed.

**S1.28 UTTLESFORD PRIMARY CARE TRUST UPDATE**

The Policy Manager explained that the arrangements for a presentation on the Uttlesford Primary Care Trust had been postponed until the January meeting due to unforeseen circumstances.

**S1.29 COMMUNITY AND LEISURE COMMITTEE – 28 OCTOBER 2003**

The Head of Community and Leisure Services described the proposed "concession card" for use of the Leisure Centres' facilities and explained how it would be funded.

Councillor Foley asked that funding of travel costs for young persons to the Leisure Centres be considered and the Head of Community and Leisure Services said that, subject to funding and confirmation of need, consideration would be given to the deployment of Sports outreach workers in Thaxted.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm