

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 – COMMUNITY AND HOUSING held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on
10 MARCH 2004**

Present:- Councillor A R Row – Chairman.
Councillors M A Gayler, R T Harris, A J Ketteridge
E Tealby-Watson, A Wattebot and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- M Cox, S McLagan and I Orton.

S1.41 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S C Jones.

S1.42 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

S1.43 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute S1.32 (ii) Scrutiny Training for Members

Councillor Wilcock thanked officers for arranging the training. He encouraged as many Members as possible to attend.

S1.44 UTTLESFORD PCT – PRESENTATION

The Chairman of Uttlesford PCT, David Baron and Mark Davis, Director of Primary Care Development attended the meeting to provide information on current issues and to answer Members questions.

Mr Baron began by providing details concerning Addenbrookes Hospital's move to Foundation Trust Status later in the year. This would give the Hospital greater freedom, particularly in relation to finance and the ability to develop new services. The relationship with the PCT would change in that services would be provided under legally binding contracts and payments would be results based. The Hospital would still be bound by national standards and targets, so patients should not be disadvantaged by the changes. However, it was likely to have financial implications for the PCT.

The Kingfisher Rehabilitation unit at the Saffron Walden Hospital was due to open on 29 March. It would provide follow up patient care in an appropriate setting with a specialist team of therapists. The PCT was very pleased with this development as positive investment in the local hospital.

Mark Davis then explained that from 1 April 2004, significant changes to GP's contracts would come into effect. One of the main elements to affect the public was changes to GP core hours. These would now be from 8.00 a.m. to

6.30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Saturday morning surgeries would therefore be out of hours and the practice would not be obliged to provide these. The emergency doctor service would be enhanced to cover these additional hours.

David Baron then outlined initiatives that had been put in place to address the problems of poor ambulance response times within the District. The number of paramedics on duty at the Airport had been increased. Also, a community paramedic was now permanently based in Great Dunmow. This had already improved the situation and it was the intention to further develop this service

David Baron then reminded the Committee of the Government's targets for obtaining access to a GP or a health professional. The target had only just been missed and the PCT was hopeful of meeting it next year and achieving the three star rating. He concluded by advising the committee of the very tight financial situation currently faced by the PCT

Councillor Copping expressed concern about the effectiveness of the corporate governance of the PCT. He questioned whether satisfactory management could be achieved by a committee with a lay member majority and asked whether appropriate systems and controls were in place to safeguard public money. He questioned whether a risk management strategy had been in place in 2003, to cover breakdown and the loss of the Chief Executive and whether the PCT was concerned about low public confidence.

In reply, David Baron said that a committee with a majority of lay members was common and appeared to work well. There was a clear system of controls and appropriate monitoring committees. A Risk Management Strategy had been initiated in 2001 and had been developed since. However, he did concede that improvements could always be made and the Board was currently working with consultants with the view to improve working practices and procedures.

Members questioned the effect of the proposed changes in GP hours on patient services. Mark Davies gave examples of proposed service improvements at GP surgeries.

Councillor Wilcock asked how the PCT intended to respond to the possible development of Stansted Airport. David Baron replied that it was important to ensure that the Departments of Health and Transport were made aware of the health implications from the start of the planning process.

Councillor Cant, the Council's representative on the PCT said that the organisation continued to undergo significant change. It had to respond to frequent changes to Government policy and to deal with a wide number of bodies and organisations. All of the Executive Board members were committed to their roles and she considered that the Council should be supportive of the activities of the PCT.

RESOLVED that the Uttlesford PCT make a twice yearly presentation to the Committee.

S1.45 CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The Committee was given details regarding the management of the major contract within the Council. The Domestic Waste and PFI Leisure contract was carried out by external contractors, whilst Street Cleansing, Vehicle Maintenance, Recycling and Housing Repairs were carried out by the In-House Direct Services Team. It was noted that management arrangements would change as part of the restructuring being carried out within the Council. The In-House Direct Service Teams would be transferred to the appropriate Executive Manager and would be managed directly by the appropriate staff in that section. Also the Procurement Task Group would be considering new ways to effectively manage the Authority's contracts. A detailed report would be submitted to the Committee once the restructuring of the senior management of the Council had been completed.

RESOLVED that the Committee receives a report on the revised contract management arrangements at its meeting on 22 September 2004.

S1.46 LEISURE AND CULTURAL STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report, which detailed the progress that had been made towards the objectives of the revised Leisure and Cultural strategy. It set out the progress that had been made towards each of the actions. On the whole, good progress had been made. Where there had been slippage, it was due either to the nature of the action being pursued or the restrictive resources available.

In an answer to a question from Councillor Gayler, it was confirmed that all the new initiatives had been fed into the appropriate service plans. He also questioned whether the Strategy had been reviewed and prioritised in line with the Quality of Life Plan. It was important that all of the Council's plans worked together and duplication should be avoided if possible.

RESOLVED that the progress made towards the action plan for the Leisure and Cultural strategy be noted.

S1.47 SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCESS 2005/06

The Committee received details of the service and financial planning process for preparing the 2005/06 budget. An initial workshop was planned for 24 May 2004 and Councillor Gayler asked that the issue of zero based budgeting be included.

RESOLVED that Members agree the suggested timetable for service and financial planning for 2005/06.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2003

The Committee received the performance data for the first three quarters of 2003/04. The data was made up of 69 performance measures plus 3 measures that were collected by Essex Police. Of the performance measures, 19 were green, 44 amber and 6 red. A rescue recovery package had been developed for each of the red indicators, which outlined how the indicators could be returned to either amber or green. The report also detailed the sickness levels across the divisions of the Council.

Members commented on the future presentation of this information. It was considered that the current black and white “smiley faces” format was sufficient for monitoring purposes. It would be helpful if this Committee only received data for the services within its remit. Senior Managers had early access to this information and Members asked that they be reminded to liaise with the appropriate Committee Chairmen about information affecting their service. With regards to the sickness data, this should be presented as a percentage of days lost per section in order to make more meaningful comparisons.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Committee noted the performance data, the rescue recovery packages and the sickness comparative data.
- 2 The reporting structure of Performance Management be changed to reflect the new executive management system that would be introduced from 1 June 2004.

PFI LEISURE CONTRACT – 6 MONTHLY REPORT

The Committee was advised of the performance of the leisure contractor running the three leisure centres in the District. Under the terms of the contract, Leisure Connections was required to provide the Council with details of its performance and where it failed to meet the standards set out in the Contract.

Monitoring was also carried out by the Council and the report gave details of the various monitoring activities that the Council had undertaken since August, and detailed any issues that had arisen. Due to constraints on resources it had only been possible to carry out planned monitoring. To address this, extra officer time had been secured to enable checks to be carried out on one day every week. In addition, the new Cultural Services Officer would carry out unscheduled and adhoc monitoring checks, and address complaints and suggestions made by the public.

Councillor Copping said that he found the report depressing and did not consider that the public were at present getting a good service. He asked for an urgent meeting with Leisure Connections to discuss the number of problems and how they intended to address these. The Head of Community and Leisure replied that some teething problems had been expected with the new centres. She also stressed that Leisure Connections were committed to

making the contract work. She reassured Members about the proposed changes to the contract. These related to technical matters and were not fundamental changes.

Members reported comments that they had received from residents who considered some of the activities to be overly expensive. The Committee hoped that these matters would be brought to the attention of Leisure Connections. Officers confirmed that the concerns of the Committee would be forwarded to the Community and Leisure Committee.

RESOLVED that the detail of the report be noted.

S1.50 SCRUTINY TRAINING

Members were given details of the Scrutiny training, which had been arranged for Members and Managers at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 29 March 2004.

S1.51 MATTERS ARISING FROM HEALTH AND HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AND LEISURE COMMITTEES

The Committee received the action lists from the Health and Housing Committee held on 26 February 2004 and the Community and Leisure Committee held on 24 February 2004.

S1.52 ITEMS REFERRED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Tealby-Watson asked for further information regarding the local Government Arts Forum. A Member had requested that the Committee review the list of Members on outside bodies and consider whether value for money was being achieved. Another Member had asked about the progress of the Council's re-branding exercise. These matters would be addressed at the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.50 p.m.