

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT held at
7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on
9 JULY 2003**

Present: Councillor S Flack- Chairman.
Councillors M A Hibbs, R M Lemon, D J Morson, J P Murphy,
S V Schneider and F E Silver .

Officers in attendance: M Brean, J B Dickson, R Haylock, S Martin, I Orton,
J Rice and R M Secker .

S2.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H D Baker, C A Bayley,
V Ollier and G Sell.

S2.2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2003 were received, confirmed
and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

S2.3 BUSINESS ARISING

**(i) Minute S2.46 (v) - Proposed Waiting Restrictions - Harvey Way,
Saffron Walden**

The Chairman informed Members that the Highways Department at Essex
County Council had cut back the overgrown trees, however visibility was still
poor. Due to legal reasons they were unable to take any further action and the
owner was still refusing to co-operate.

(ii) Minute S2.50 (i) - Locally Determined Budget Programme 2002/03

It was reported that a meeting would be held on 28 August to discuss the
increase in Uttlesford's Road Budget. The Chairman said that Uttlesford would
benefit from this as it had many rural roads.

**(iii) Minute S2.50(ii) - Car Boot Sales - The Common Car Park, Saffron
Walden**

It was noted that Car Boot Sales were to be reinstated as soon as practicable.

(iv) Minute S2.53 Future Work Programme

Members expressed concern regarding the issue of wider communications.
The Chairman informed Members that Essex County Council would soon be
undertaking a review of County Council communications with Town and
Parish Councils. Councillor Hibbs said that this was a problem that needed to
be addressed, as communications between the two parties were poor.

S2.4 **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF REFUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICES - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Head of Environmental Services presented the report which detailed the progress to date with the Best Value Review of refuse and recycling services. Since the last meeting the Members of the Member Reference Group had been appointed and had met with the Officer Working Group. The scope of the review and a programme of work to enable the review to be concluded by November 2003 had been agreed. He reported that due to the affluence of the area a large amount of household waste was produced; approximately 30,000 tonnes, of which 6,000 were recycled.

Members expressed concern that Uttlesford was lacking in civic amenities sites. The Head of Environmental Services informed Members that a site was due to open in Great Dunmow at the beginning of 2005.

The Head of Environmental Services informed Members of a forthcoming review that consisted of questionnaires to all user groups, the general public, trade customers, town/parish councils and all UDC Members. The questionnaire invited comments on value for money, type and style of service and satisfaction ratings. The Head of Environmental Services informed Members that domestic waste constituted 7-10% of all waste, of which the Council were aiming to recycle 24%. The target for 2007 was 36%.

Councillor Hibbs expressed concern that the recycling service was not being used to full capacity, as the public were not always aware of collection dates. " He suggested that the review should consider more effective ways of communicating with the public.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes progress and adds any appropriate comments for further consideration.

S2.5 **SCRUTINY PROCESS: MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Performance Manager informed Members that if they required training it would be available in the future. Members agreed that a workshop would be useful.

S2.6 **WORK PROGRAMME 2003/04**

The Performance Manager presented the above report, which gave an officer perspective on the key issues facing Scrutiny 2 Committee during 2003/04. The report recommended that the Committee determined the work programme for that period. He informed Members that during 2003/04 there would be a Best Value Review of Revenue Services, Planning Services and Refuse and Recycling, which the Scrutiny Committee would monitor.

In addition, the authority was preparing for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in February 2004 and an IdeA Peer Challenge in November 2003. Scrutiny 2 Committee would be expected to comment on the process

and self-scoring leading up to the CPA submission. The monitoring of the PFI Project as a resource issue also fell within the remit of Scrutiny 2 Committee.

In addition, the progress in monitoring corporate governance would be reported to Committee twice a year .

In response to a question from Councillor Schneider, the Director of Resources informed Members that issues regarding the Police were covered by Scrutiny 2 Committee. Members expressed concern regarding the current policing situation in Uttlesford and requested that the Performance Manager write a letter to Essex Police requesting a statement on the current establishment.

RESOLVED that the items set out in paragraphs 3 to 6 of the report be included in the work programme for 2003/04.

S2.7

INTERNAL AUDITS

The Audit Manager informed Members that a number of internal audits had been completed since the last report to Scrutiny 2 Committee. The areas audited were Council Tax and Business Rates, Housing Benefits, Miscellaneous Debts, Creditor Payments, Insurance and Loans, Cash and Risk Management. He reported that the responses had been very positive and that all audit work would be followed up to ensure the recommendations had been addressed. Members expressed concern regarding the high number of recommendations (14 in total) whereupon the Audit Manager reported that, this was not uncommon when such an in-depth audit was undertaken.

RESOLVED that Members note the report content and seek management assurance on any important issues.

S2.8

GOLDS NURSERIES

The Director of Resources informed Members that this report followed a request regarding internal audit procedures. The report briefly outlined the internal audit procedures both generally and also covering Golds Nurseries in the context of the annual overall Audit Plan and informed Members of a significant audit of the Golds Nurseries facilities which would be undertaken in late summer 2003. Following a request from newly elected Members, the Director of Resources briefly outlined the background of Golds Nurseries Business Park.

The Director of Resources informed Members that the Golds Nurseries Business Park had previously been covered as part of both Land and Property Management and Sundry Debtors audits. There had been previous references to un-let units, grounds maintenance and rent arrears, which service officers were already aware of, but due to economic reasons could not be re-let. He reported that the 2003/04 Audit Plan included a robust fifteen day audit of Golds Nurseries. A risk map for the service would be developed by Internal Audit in conjunction with the Head of Housing Services who was now the officer responsible for the management. It was planned that the audit would

be carried out during late August/September and the full, unedited audit report circulated to all Members of this Scrutiny Committee, if possible, before its next meeting on 1 October for consideration.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the full report for the audit of the Golds Nurseries Business Parks be circulated to all Members of this Committee for consideration, if possible, at the next meeting.
- 2 regular monitoring reports (three times a year) be submitted to Environment and Transport Committee and Scrutiny 2 Committee including progress in implementing the agreed Council Action Plan.
- 3 from 2004, the annual Audit Plan be approved by both the Resources Committee and Scrutiny 2 Committee.
- 4 a report summarising asset management be submitted to Scrutiny 2 Committee for consideration at the meeting on 1 October.

S2.9

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF REVENUE SERVICES

The Head of Revenue Services presented the above report which detailed the progress made to date with the Best Value Review of Revenue Services. He reported that since the last Scrutiny 2 Committee meeting a Member Reference Group (MRG) had been appointed. The MRG had met with officers and the Best Value Review critical friend, Peter Coles IRRV, and agreed the ~ programme of work for the review.

The Head of Revenue Services informed Members that Revenue Services had subscribed to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). This would enable a full comparison of Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits service information to be made with other service providers. It was also intended to compare service performance with the Daventry Benchmarking Group, which comprised authorities of a similar make up to this Council. Members were informed that the customer surveys would be carried out for all three areas of the service. This year, the Council had engaged an external company to conduct all its customer satisfaction surveys. The Head of Revenue Services reported that a Challenge Event was planned for 25 September 2003 which would focus on key service delivery issues and make suggestions for improvement. All Councillors, relevant stakeholders and both internal and external service users would be invited to attend. It was hoped that the results of the customer surveys would be available for discussion at the event. The Chairman requested that a verbal report on the Challenge Event be made at the meeting on 1 October.

RESOLVED that Members note progress on the coverage of the Best Value Review.

S2.10 **TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 JUNE 2003**

(i) Minute RE6 – Planning Delivery Grant

Councillor Murphy requested that a further report be submitted on the Planning Applications procedure.

S2.11 **TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 JUNE 2003**

Councillor Hibbs declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item by reason of his profession of architect.

(i) Minute RE3 – Dunmow Office Letting

The Director of Resources informed Members that he did not expect the Offices to be let until April 2004, whereupon Councillor Hibbs expressed concern regarding the implications of un-let properties. The Director of Resources informed Members that as a result of the move substantial savings had been made. Members requested regular updates on the progress of the lettings.

(ii) Minute RE4 – Community Support Officers

Members discussed the appointment of Community Support Officers within the Uttlesford district. The Chairman requested that the Performance Manager submitted a report to the next Scrutiny 2 Committee meeting on the Performance Management process.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.