

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 – RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN on 4 FEBRUARY 2004

Present: - Councillor S Flack – Chairman.
Councillors H D Baker, C A Bayley, M A Hibbs, R M Lemon, D J Morson, J P Murphy, V Pedder, S V Schneider, G Sell and F E Silver.

Officers in attendance: - R Kirmani , S Martin, J K Mercer and I Orton.

S2.40 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

S2.41 WORK PROGRAMME – I T SERVICES

The Head of Information Services gave a Power Point presentation and summarised the work of the Information Technology Services (IT). He outlined the main elements of the IT Service and the key strengths of the existing services which were

- a) On-going investment in recent years had resulted in one of the best infrastructures in the country for a district council of this size.
- b) All the large corporate applications had been modernised over recent years, apart from the Financial Information System which was currently being replaced.
- c) IT section was innovative in many areas.
- d) The section had a strong track record of implementing new systems on time and within budget.

The Council was short-listed for a national innovations award for its work in this area.

Councillor Murphy expressed concern that information should be available electronically and there should be facility for E Forms.

The Head of IT reported that E Form was being developed in partnership with the Essex County Council but it had not made a lot of progress.

The Chairman pointed out that not all the people were computer literate and it was not practical to expect these people to pay their bills on the WEB.

In response to Members query the Head of IT Services reported that funding for E government had been submitted and it was anticipated that the Council would receive the money soon. Part of this funding would be used to install better security systems and virus protection.

Money would also be used to consult public electronically on various aspects of Council services.

Councillor Hibbs expressed concern that the weaknesses of the I T Service were not detailed in the report and if there was a problem it should be identified and addressed.

The Performance Manager reported that the Council had engaged new consultants to assist Councillor Bowker to fully utilise IT facilities within the Council.

The Chairman thanked the Head of IT for his excellent presentation.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and a further report on IT Services be considered by the Committee in three months.

S2.42

INTERNAL AUDIT WORK PLAN – 2004/05 – 2008/09

The Internal Audit Manager gave a Power Point Presentation. He outlined the work of the Internal Auditors. Internal Audit was a part of the Council's corporate governance framework. Corporate governance was defined as the system by which local authorities direct and control their functions. Relevant legislations required Internal Auditors to ensure that the services were run efficiently and effectively.

The Chairman enquired as to who received the Internal Audit reports, as she had received 3 reports which no other Member had received. The Internal Audit Manager confirmed that all Internal Audit reports were required to be sent to the Leader of the Council, Chairmen of the Service Committee and Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Pedder suggested that if the Internal Audit identified a problem, then Scrutiny should look into it and look at the ways to improve it. If there was an ongoing programme like the Refuse Recycling then the Internal Audit report should feed in the details of last years report into the next years report. Best Value Performance Indicators could be highlighted so as to identify a problem and how it could be solved.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the draft internal audit coverage be approved for the period 2004/05 to 2008/09 with the proviso of disseminating information to the Members;
- 2 the Performance Manager to submit a report in three months time on how Scrutiny Committee could be more involved with the Internal Audit.

S2.43

WORK PROGRAMME – SPONSORSHIP

The Performance Manager reported the existing policy and practice within the authority on Sponsorship. He reported that at present the Council did not

have a formal sponsorship policy. Appendix A detailed the Good Practice Guide in sponsorship that could be considered by Senior Management Team if approved by this Committee.

The Chairman suggested that all big or small schemes could be sponsored, like rubbish bins or roundabouts, to name a few.

Councillor Pedder enquired whether there were any ethical guidelines for officers who would get involved in this scheme.

The Performance Manager said that these were commonsense guidelines and if in doubt then the officer could discuss with colleagues.

Councillor Sell said that there should be clarity on part of the sponsors.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the good Practice Guide be noted;
- 2 the Planning Services be excluded from sponsorship scheme.

S2.44

WORK PROGRAMME – POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

The Performance Manager reported on the work of the Essex Police Community Support Officers who were based within Uttlesford. The report provided a range of interim information and a comprehensive report would be delivered by Chief Superintendent Sue Harrison from Essex Police at the 31 March meeting of the committee.

Councillor Hibbs informed the Members that a lot of work was being done to develop a good relationship between young people and the Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) but there were complaints that the Police Community Support Officers were confiscating tobacco products from youth and he asked if the PCSO'S had powers to do so.

Councillor Pedder said that she had attended a meeting that afternoon where it was explained that the Community Support Officer were asked to visit a County High School and they came across some students with tobacco products so they had to confiscate these.

Councillor Sell suggested that the Chief Superintendent should be accompanied by a PCSO at the meeting of this Committee in March. Councillor Silver requested information on the powers of the PCSO. The Performance Manager reported that there would be a review of performance measures of PCSO'S after six months in service.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

S2.45

WORK PROGRAMME – BEST VALUE PROCESS

The Performance Manager provided the Committee with details of the existing policy to deliver the requirements of the Best Value process during 2004/05.

Councillor Hibbs said that a lot of data on Youth was being collected by the PCT, Uttlesford Futures and other organisations. Efforts should be made to pool the resources to get a broader picture.

Councillor Bayley suggested that this year only three Best Value reviews should be carried out and the needs of the Elderly should be considered. Councillor Murphy suggested that enforcement should be considered as part of the Best Value Review.

The Performance Manager recommended that four Best Value Reviews could be carried out during 2004/05. Two of the reviews (Young Persons and the Needs of the Elderly) would be cross cutting and the two reviews (Environmental Health/Licensing and Access to Services) would be service oriented and the reviews should be staggered throughout the year. The Performance Manager indicated that he would report to the Senior Management Team on the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

S2.46 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The Members noted that the report on Performance Management Systems had been considered and approved by all Committees.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the suggested range of performance measures, performance targets, including the use of traffic light systems and smiley faces be approved;
- 2 the intention to report the Performance Review Data to Scrutiny Committee(s) be noted;
- 3 the requirement for any Red Indicators to have a Rescue Recovery Package from the relevant manager incorporated into the report be noted.

S2.47 **MATTERS ARISING FROM ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE – 13 JANUARY 2004**

(i) Item 4– Waiting Restrictions-High Stile, Rosemary Lane, Star Lane Great Dunmow

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Environment and Transport Committee had considered a report on waiting restrictions. A member of public had complained that the Highways department had submitted only one objection from the residents when in fact quite a few objections had been submitted. It was agreed that the Chairman of this Committee to write a letter to the County Council Highways Department regarding this complaint.

(ii) Item 5 – Local Service Agreement for Highway and Transport Service in Essex

Councillor Schneider expressed concern regarding the situation of the roads during the severe weather conditions. She reported that the County Council was responsible for gritting and clearing of roads. The County Council had made an agreement with the local farmers to carry out this work on their behalf. The County Council had to carry out the Risk Assessment survey before this work could be carried out but the Council did not pay for this and no agreement was reached with the farmers.

Councillor Pedder expressed concern at the state of footpaths and enquired about the parish councils gritting policy of footpaths.

Councillor Hibbs Informed the Members that the Saffron Walden Town Council had circulated guidelines to all Parish Councils about what they were required to do in severe weather conditions and how to make footpaths safe if it snowed.

RESOLVED that the Performance Manager report back on the gritting policy of the County Council and what involved strategic and non-strategic routes.

(iii) Item 9 – Kitchen Waste Recycling Best Value

Councillor Pedder informed the Committee that the kitchen waste recycling waste trial scheme would be terminated from 31 March 2004. She expressed concern that she had not seen any correspondence informing the public of this decision and the reasons as to why the trial was being dropped.

RESOLVED that the Performance Manager identify what public relations efforts were put in place and what correspondence was sent out to the public and inform the Members of this Committee.

S2.48 MATTERS ARISING FROM RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 22 JANUARY 2004

The Committee noted decision list from the Resources Committee held on 22 January 2004.

S2.49 MATTERS ARISING FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE – 14 JANUARY 2004

Councillor Hibbs reported that he had received a query regarding circus licenses. He confirmed that they would require a licence and a designated area would have to be identified for a circus in the Town

RESOLVED that the issue be referred to the Licensing Committee for consideration.

The meeting ended at 10.20 pm.