

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 – RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT held at 7.30 pm at COMMITTEE ROOM COUNCIL OFFICES HIGH STREET GREAT DUNMOW on 31 MARCH 2004

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

Also Present:- Jonathan Bottomer from Benefits Fraud Inspectorate,
Chief Superintendent Sue Harrison and Inspector Les Weller.

Officers in attendance:- R Kirmani, M Brean and I Orton.

SC2.50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Hibbs and D J Morson.

SC2.51 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SC2.52 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Item 2.47 – Local Service Level Agreement for Highway and Transport Service in Essex

Councillor Murphy inquired about the update on the County Council's gritting policy.

The Performance Manager reported that he had sent a letter to the Essex County Council and that he would obtain details from the County Council and inform Members.

SC2.53 ESSEX POLICE – POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

The Chairman informed the Committee that this item would be considered before other items and welcomed the Chief Superintendent Sue Harrison and Inspector Les Weller.

The Chief Superintendent outlined the work of the Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) within Uttlesford District.

She thanked the Council for their contribution of £50,000 for the appointment of community support officers. The PCSO's were appointed in August/September and after training they took up duties in November 2003 and 4 were based at Saffron Walden and 1 at Dunmow.

The Chief Superintendent outlined their key roles, powers, location and what was planned for the future. She highlighted the fact that the PCSO were doing good work within the Community.

In response to the Chairman's query the Chief Superintendent said that performance indicators were set for the PCSO's. The performance of PCSO's was measured as part of the performance management systems and they were required to take 10 minutes each day to fill out a form indicating the work areas they had covered. The Performance Manager said that performance of the PCSO's was included in the performance management system of the Council elsewhere on the Agenda.

In response to Councillor Sell's query the Chief Superintendent responded that if additional PCSO's are appointed then consideration would be given to allocating them to other towns.

Councillor Sell said that rural villages were not getting any benefits from the appointment of the PCSO'S. The Chief Superintendent said that they were looking at various options in the master plan for the rural posts.

In response to Councillor Schneider's concerns the Chief Superintendent reassured the Members that the PCSO's were complimenting the police officers and were in no way replacing them.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Superintendent and the Inspector for their presentation.

RESOLVED that the work of the Police Community Support Officers be noted.

S2.52

BENEFITS FRAUD INSPECTION MANAGER - PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Jonathan Bottomer of the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate. He gave a presentation and summarised the work of the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate. He outlined the main elements of the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate and how Uttlesford District Council fitted into this process.

As part of the Comprehensive Performance Inspection (CPA) process the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate subjected the Council to an inspection. The Inspection was carried out on the 14 January 2004 and the department was awarded Fair to Good on current performance and proven capacity to improve was rated as Good.

The key strengths of the existing services were that the Council processed the benefit forms within 21 days on an average where as the national average was 36 days.

The Benefits Fraud Inspector confirmed that the Uttlesford District Council residents claiming benefits were receiving 'top end' service from the Council.

Councillor Schneider said that this message should be put across to the local residents. She suggested that leaflets could be circulated at public places in simple language outlining the procedures for claiming benefits.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and further reports on Benefits Fraud Services be considered by the Committee

SC2.54 **GOLDS ENTERPRISE ZONE – OCCUPANCY RATES**

The Performance Manager reported the current situation of the management and lettings of units at Golds Enterprise Zone, Elsenham and informed the Committee that 13 Units had been let to date. A bid had been submitted to the Essex Capital Projects Fund for CCTV and rebranding this was successful.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the current updated position at Golds Enterprise Zone, be noted.
- 2 the Chairman congratulated the officers on their hard work.

SC2.55 **CONTRACT MANAGEMENT – WORK PROGRAMME**

The Performance Manager reported on the details of the Management of Contracts within the Council as part of the forward plan of the Committee. The Domestic Waste and Leisure Contracts were contracted out to external contractors and other five were carried out in house. He pointed out that this report was an interim document as under the new system after the restructuring each department would be responsible for managing its own contracts.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the existing management arrangements of the monitoring of the six major contracts within the Council be noted;
- 2 Scrutiny Committee to receive at its meeting on 6 October 2004 a report on revised contract management arrangements under the new management structure.

SC2.56 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2003**

The Performance Manager provided the Committee with details of the performance management of the Authority during the period April to December 2003.

Councillor Pedder expressed concern at the high number of missed bins which was a seasonal blip brought about by contractors holiday arrangements. The Performance Manager confirmed that efforts were made to see that this situation did not arise next year.

Members expressed concern that they did not receive any response to the E Mails sent to some senior managers and requested that they should be informed if there was a major problem that needed to be resolved. Senior Management should also clearly state specific times when they would be available in the office.

Councillor Sell requested that the key areas and trends for increase in sickness from one quarter to the next should be identified so that these could be addressed. The Chairman suggested that the reasons could be long term sickness, stress caused due to bad management style or injury.

In reference to BV code 109a Members requested the Performance Manager to send the definition of what was regarded as a 'major planning application in accordance with the Governments regulations.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Performance Management Quarterly Monitoring report be noted;
- 2 the Rescue Recovery Package attached as Appendix B to the report be noted;
- 3 the new reporting structure of Performance Management as changed to reflect the new executive management system that would be introduced from 1 June 2004 be noted;
- 4 the Sickness comparative data as attached at Appendix C be noted.

SC2.57 **SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCESS 05/06**

The Performance Manager informed the Members on details of the Service & Financial Planning process for preparing for 2005/06. Members were given time to consider the process and were given opportunities to work their way through the process. They could make comments to be considered by the Resources Committee in due course.

Members requested the Committee and Communications Manager to circulate a list of dates of Members Workshops.

RESOLVED that the suggested timescale for Service & Financial Planning for 2005/06 be noted;

SC2.58 **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – MONITORING**

The Performance Manager reported details of the progress towards delivering Corporate Governance within the Council. He reported that the updated Code identified all functions that were in the process of being implemented with a manager accountable for the various strands that made up the Code.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the progress made with implementing the Code of Corporate Governance be noted;

2 further reports be submitted to the Committee twice a year.

SC2.59 MATTERS ARISING FROM ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE – 2 MARCH 2004

The Committee noted decision list from the Environment and Transport Committee held on 2 March 2004.

SC2.60 MATTERS ARISING FROM RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 11 MARCH 2004

The Committee noted decision list from the Resources Committee held on 11 March 2004.

SC2.61 MATTERS ARISING FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2004

The Committee noted the decisions of the Licensing Committee held on 3 March 2004.

SC2.62 ITEM REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

(i) Ink cartridge

The Chairman informed the Committee that Ink cartridges could be recycled and a refill could be bought at 60% of the cost of original. Councillor Pedder said that she was looking at the option of sending empty cartridges to a charity they could recycle these.

(ii) Planning Enforcement

Councillor Murphy expressed concern at the conditions that were added on planning applications but these were not enforced. The Performance Manager was requested to report back on the existing enforcement policy.

(iii) Waste Management Contract

The Chairman said that the Members should be informed about the process of awarding waste management contract.

The Performance Manager said that new arrangements for the waste management contract would be agreed under the new Management Structure.

(iv) Response from the police

Councillor Baker said that it was difficult to contact the local police over the telephone.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm, Page 5