

**REVIEW AND PETITIONS COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 8 FEBRUARY 2006**

Present:- Councillor S Flack – Chairman.
Councillors E Gower, D W Gregory, M A Hibbs, J P Murphy, S V
Schneider and A M Wattebott.

Officers in attendance: - D Burrige, V Harvey, S McLagan, M Perry, R
Pridham and T Turner.

Also present:- Councillor R T Harris

RP1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor V Pedder.

Councillor Flack declared a non-prejudicial interest as a Councillor for Essex
County Council, Essex Fire Authority, Barnston Parish Council and the
Environment Committee.

Councillor Murphy declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of
Dunmow Town Council, Alcohol Awareness Group, the Skate Groups and the
Community Committee.

Councillor Hibbs declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of Saffron
Walden Town Council.

RP2 CALL IN – SAFFRON WALDEN PROJECT OFFICER POST

Councillor Murphy called in the decision made by the Operations Committee
over the continuation of the Saffron Walden Project Officer Post.

Councillor Murphy said he thought the Operations Committee had based their
decision on a report, which had only provided limited information. As this had
been part funded by the Saffron Walden Town Council, they should continue
to part fund the post.

Councillor Flack referred to an example of Maldon Council, which had a
similar post that was funded by the Countryside Agency and after the post
had completed its role the community held high expectations of anticipated
future work, which was not attainable.

Councillor Harris spoke as Vice-Chairman of the Operations Committee. He
said the Committee had reached their decision to uphold the post for a further
three years due to the excellent work that had been achieved so far. The first
year of the post would be continuing with projects in Saffron Walden and the
further two years would be a district wide post. The Operations Committee felt
the Project Officer Post was extremely worthwhile.

Councillor Flack suggested the decision should maybe have gone to the Community Committee as the actions taken by the post would affect the wider community.

The Executive Manager (Quality of Life) explained the decision was made by the Operations Committee as the budget came from the quality of life portfolio which fell under Operations. It was a high profile post scoring highly in the priority process.

Councillor Gregory expressed the view that the post was extremely beneficial to not only Saffron Walden, but also the surrounding villages. For example, the Saffron Walden Cinema would be used by the wider community.

Councillor Murphy proposed that the decision be called-in to the next full Council meeting to be held on 16 February 2006. Councillor Flack seconded this proposal.

Councillor Hibbs expressed concern over the scrutiny process, stating the role of Review and Petitions was to look at the work of the Council and not to reverse any decisions made. He said the Operations Committee made their decision in the appropriate manner but this Committee did have the right to question the information they were provided with.

On being put to the vote the votes cast were three in favour and three against and on the casting vote of the Chairman it was

RESOLVED that the decision be called-in to full Council to be held on 16 February 2006.

RP3 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the Scrutiny 1 Committee held on 9 November 2005 and Scrutiny 2 Committee held on 12 October 2005 were signed as a correct record.

RP4 **DECISION LISTS**

The Chairman referred to the decision lists, which had come from the policy committees.

From the Operations Committee Councillor Flack questioned the figure for telephony in the capital budget, and stated the risk analysis needed to be clearer.

From the Environment Committee decision list the Wheeled Bin Policy came under review. Councillor Schneider asked how the Council would know which properties would not be suitable to have wheeled bins. The Executive Manager (Environmental and Cultural Services) explained that a survey, which would be ready within the next few weeks, would go out to the whole of the district, from which problem areas would be identified. Then two teams, consisting of three people per team, would visit the houses and assess those

that were not suitable for the three wheeled bins or needed individual solutions.

A series of road-shows would be going around the district promoting wheelie bins. The new service would also be promoted in Uttlesford Life, Members Bulletin and the press.

Councillor Gower asked what help the elderly would get. She was told that an assisted service would be in place, as it was at present. Councillor Flack thought there had been an omission of bones and flowers in the draft policy. The Executive Manager (Environmental and Cultural Services) said she would try and include this somewhere in the policy.

Councillor Schneider said it would take time for the wheeled bins to be fully implemented and asked what provisions were in place when the public needed guidance. She was told that a dedicated hotline with three staff would be in place within the ICM system.

The procurement of bins had been placed at 88,000. However, when it came to rolling out the bins the Council would only purchase as many as it needed. The wheeled bin suppliers had told the Executive Manager (Environmental and Cultural Services) they would take away the current bins and recycle them. The public would also be given examples, in various publications, on how to re-use their metal or plastic bins.

RP5

FEES AND CHARGES

The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) presented a report on a scrutiny investigation into fees and charges that had commenced under the Resource and Environment Scrutiny Committee. They had considered a scoping report for scrutiny investigations into fees and charges which members looked at. Since the last Resources and Environment Scrutiny Committee officers had sourced a significant amount of comparative data on fees and charges and charging policies from other authorities.

Councillor Hibbs thought there should be an annual review and welcomed a standard procedure against a set criteria.

RESOLVED that Members who were on the original fees and charges Investigation team would be asked if they wanted to carry on their work before any new members were allocated.

RP6

CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) said that a scrutiny investigation into climate change had commenced under the Community and Housing Scrutiny Committees. They had agreed a scoping report for an investigation into climate change at their meeting on 21 September 2005. Councillor B M Hughes had been nominated as lead member for the investigation and had worked on the scoping report with officers. However, Councillor Hughes was no longer a member of this Committee and a new lead

would need to be nominated. Another group would need to be formed and meet on a frequent basis. It was agreed that Councillors Wattebot and Schneider would form this group with Councillor Hibbs to lead it; Councillor Pedder would also be asked to join. The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) said there was a heavy work programme to follow, with ten themes to be reviewed and the group would need to meet fortnightly to ensure it was completed by August 2006.

RESOLVED that the Committee nominate new members for the scrutiny investigation, agree the outlined work programme and the methodology, and allocate other interested members of the Committee to the investigation team.

RP7

FORWARD WORK PLAN

The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) presented the Committee with further areas of scrutiny for the Committee to consider undertaking during the 2006-07 year. The Local Government Act 2000 guidance set out a role of overview and scrutiny in Fourth Option Councils and the Centre for Public Scrutiny cited policy review and development as the most impressive aspect of review and scrutiny. Some of the key factors in success were selecting significant review topics where scrutiny could add value, rigorous project planning with careful scoping of terms of reference, a range of investigative methods, well-presented reports and follow up of recommendations.

It would be important for Members to take the lead in scrutiny, backed by officer support. With the fees and charges and climate change investigations underway, a further two or three topics could be identified for regular scrutinising. The Committee may wish to look at more external scrutiny topics. In addition Uttlesford PCT would attend two or three meetings a year.

Councillor Murphy said there was a high accident rate in Uttlesford, often coinciding with the school run. He and other members asked for presentations from traffic aware bodies; they did not want to see a list of statistics in a report. Councillor Gregory suggested the Community Safety Officer could get involved. The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) would set up a review and scope out a brief to bring to the next meeting.

Councillor Schneider thought it would be worthwhile to review water charge provisions.

A few years ago one of the predecessor scrutiny committees looked at the police boundaries and it was thought with the changing police structure this topic could be re-visited.

The Chairman said that accident rates and traffic flows would go to the next meeting of this Committee and a presentation on climate change would also take place. Water charges would go to the following meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered broad topics for in-depth investigations in the next civic year, and a series of individual topics for future meetings.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm.