

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 28 JUNE 2006

Present: - Councillor S Flack (Chairman)
Councillors D W Gregory, J P Murphy, F E Silver and S V Schneider

Officers in attendance: - V Harvey and T Turner

Also present:- Councillor G Sell

SC1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Chambers, E Gower, M A Hibbs, V Pedder and A M Wattebot.

SC2 MINUTES

The minutes of the Review and Petitions Committee held on 5 April 2006 were received and signed by the Chairman.

SC3 ROAD SAFETY

Vicky Duff the Highways Safety Engineering Manager from Essex County Council updated Members on road safety in Uttlesford. She gave an overview of the accidents and explained that data was collected at the personal injury level by the attending officer; this was then passed onto Mouchel Parkman and entered into the Highways database. This database had data stored since 1981.

The Safety Engineering Team worked closely with the LAA, Essex Police and Safety Partnership. When analysing the data to identify accident hotspots repetitive identifiable patterns were searched for on the database. For example, a hazardous right hand turn may need engineering treatment. It would be analysed on a trajectory and then an increase or decrease in accidents could be anticipated. Once an engineer was happy that the accidents at a site could be truncated they would liaise with Essex Police and the District Council before undertaking the work.

There was a £1.5million budget to spend across the County and the money was spent at the most economic rate of return.

The Highways Authority had recently bought into a new partnership with Axmap. Essex Police had access to the same system and could monitor the data enabling them to identify areas such as accident causes, targets and speeds.

Councillor Flack said that with the reorganised committee structure the Road Safety Advisory Panel had become obsolete; thus no road safety statistics were being supplied to Members.

Councillor Gregory asked how the sites were selected and Vicky Duff said they were identified by a detailed investigation. He then went on to say that many road signs had been stolen and asked how the Highways Authority were tackling this problem. Vicky Duff said that new signs were being made out of a metal that had no scrap value.

The number of road accidents at Stansted Airport had decreased over the last 3 years. In 2004 there had been 15 accidents, there were 12 in 2005 and since April there had only been two accidents this year.

Councillor Sell said that Uttlesford had a high accident rate on rural roads, but the majority of these accidents involved motorbikes. Vicky Duff said that four recent fatalities had been on sports bikes and this shifting pattern needed addressing.

The ETP (Education Training Partnership) were undertaking campaigns to educate younger drivers. She said that over recent years there had been an increase of traffic police on the roads and they acted as a good deterrent. Variable message signs were also a new deterrent that seemed to work fairly well, as regular drivers on the same roads became mindless to signs and would ignore them.

Members thanked Vicky Duff for attending the meeting and asked if she would look into providing regular road safety statistics and if it would be possible to reassess accident hotspots in Uttlesford for quicker engineering action.

SC4 **CLIMATE CHANGE REVIEW**

In the absence of Councillor Hibbs, the verbal report on climate change would be carried forward to the next meeting.

SC5 **FEES AND CHARGES**

There had been no progress as yet on the fees and charges review. The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) would be invited to attend the next meeting.

SC6 **AREA PANELS**

Councillor Sell gave an update on the current situation with the Area Panels. The role of the area panels would scrutinise the provision of services with the area, determine local priorities for service delivery within budget limits set within Council Policy and determine the destination of grants for the promotion

of the economic, social or environmental well-being on an area based connection.

The Lead Officer for all area panels was Gaynor Bradley, with John Starr as the Champion for the North, Dave Toombs the Champion for the East and Sue Hayden as the Champion for the South West Area Panel. The Area Champions would coordinate the meetings liaising with Democratic Services and present a Community Development report at each meeting on key work areas.

The main focus for the area panels was to develop community engagement. The South West Area Panel had adopted a surgery with the Chairman and Area Champion that moved location around the South West area. Councillor Sell said it was also his intention to make a leaflet drop in the village that was hosting the meeting to generate more interest.

The area panels were under constant review, allowing each panel to develop according to its local needs. The meetings would now start at 7pm and incorporate public questions into the main body of the meeting. Highways would be a regular agenda item, but the North Area Panel would have a separate sub group; Councillor Rodney Bass would be asked to attend the panel meetings to give updates. A formal review would be held in the summer of 2007.

Councillor Schneider acknowledged the differing needs between the three areas but suggested consistency was needed over all three relating to advertising.

Councillor Silver said the agendas needed to attract a wider spectrum of society and suggested broader topics.

Councillor Sell said that the area was changing, for example with the growing numbers of migrant workers.

It was hoped that over the forthcoming committee cycles Area Panels would gain higher budgets and increased levels of delegation.

SC7

PROCESS SCRUTINY

The Chairman said she would like to scrutinise the level of communication with the public; she asked whether processes were as seamless as they could be and were any areas failing to deliver. She suggested starting with the Planning department and analyse the Best Value Performance Indicator.

The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) suggested smaller review groups appeared to be most successful.

Councillor Murphy suggested meeting with another Council to view their scrutiny processes.

It was agreed that Councillor Flack would talk to the Performance Improvement Team and aim to have a questionnaire prepared for the next Scrutiny Meeting.

SC8 **WORK PROGRAMME**

A report had been prepared by the Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) on the work programme for 2006/07. No discussion arose from Members as items in the report had been discussed in previous agenda items.

SC9 **DECISION LISTS**

Members made no comments on the decision lists from the Environment and Community Committee.

The meeting ended at 10.00pm.