

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 20 FEBRUARY 2007 at 7.30 pm**

Present: - Councillor A Dean – Chairman.
Councillors, R M Lemon, S Schneider, and A Wattebot.

Officers Present:- A Clarke and C Roberts.

SC28 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Alaine Clarke to the meeting and expressed his appreciation for the support given to the Committee's work by Tracy Turner the former Director for Communities.

He said he thought the Committee needed further officer support, if necessary from the Regional Assembly or Building Capacity East. Other Members were concerned about poor attendance at the Committee's meetings and thought that training should be provided about Members' role in the activity of scrutiny.

The Chairman offered to send a letter to the Chief Executive and Leader requesting support and expressing concern about recent poor attendances at the Committee and Members accepted this.

SC29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Sell, L Wells and A Yarwood

SC30 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2007 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the amendment of the resolution in Minute SC24 to read:

"RECOMMENDED that the Community Committee encourages the Council to support the Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow in its ambition to become an NHS Foundation Trust in 2008".

SC31 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute SC23 Wicken House

The Chairman updated the Committee on action taken about Wicken House. He had met Lord Hanningfield and enquired about replacement facilities.

(i) Minute SC25 Joint Scrutiny Panel for West Essex

The Head of Partnerships and Performance updated the Committee on action taken to contact possible partners in this project.

SC32 UPDATE ON RECENT SCRUTINY INVESTIGATIONS

Updates were given by Councillor Wattebot and the Head of Partnerships and Performance about ongoing negotiations with Thaxted Parish Council and Great Dunmow Town Council concerning devolvement of some of the Council's maintenance functions.

The Head of Partnerships and Performance referred also to negotiations between planning and highways officers about issues of mutual interest.

Members commented on deterioration in some sorts of highways work due to reduced manpower, and they mentioned the possibility of, through John Mitchell, inviting a highways officer to the next meeting and requesting comments from parishes to feed into the discussion.

RESOLVED that the updates are noted and a further report be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

SC33 DECISION LISTS

Members noted the decision lists from the Environment, Finance and Administration and Community Committees.

(i) Finance and Administration item 4 – Great Dunmow Offices

Councillor Schneider expressed the hope that the CIC would be given a good space in the new library with internal and external signing.

Councillor Dean said he had heard a complaint that some Dunmow staff had read in the papers about changes affecting them before being informed of them by the Council. He offered to inform the Chief Executive about the Committee's concern that there appeared to have been a lack of communication.

(ii) Finance and Administration item 9a – Saffron Walden TIC Transfer

It was noted that the intention was to make the ambit of the TIC more inclusive to other Parishes.

Decision tracking

In answer to a question from the Chairman it was explained that decision tracking was undertaken by use of the decision lists and as a pilot in the Performance Select Committee actions were monitored via Covalent.

Councillor Lemon was particularly concerned about an Environment Committee decision to call a meeting which did not appear to have happened.

(iii) Community item 6 – Rat treatment

Councillor Lemon complimented the Community Committee on this decision.

SC34

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) Scrutiny Handbooks

The Chairman circulated two booklets entitled “Scrutiny Handbook” for Members views. He suggested that the two should be combined and recommended to the Council for adoption.

(ii) Audit Commission review of Housing

Councillor Lemon referred to a longstanding problem with gas heating at a tenant’s house.

Councillor Dean suggested that the impending Audit Commission review of strategic housing issues might embrace maintenance issues. Councillor Schneider expressed concern about the costs of Audit review.

(iii) Scrutiny committees – lack of attendance

Councillor Dean agreed to write to all group leaders about the lack of attendance at scrutiny committees.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.