

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 7 JULY 2009**

Present: Councillor G Sell – Chairman.  
Councillors H S Rolfe, L A Wells and A C Yarwood.

Officers in attendance: S Martin (Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services) and R Procter (Democratic Services Officer).

**SC1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Dean, S Schneider and A Wattebot and from C Rockall, Interim Change Manager.

*Councillor Rolfe declared a personal interest as the Council's representative on the Saffron Walden Day Centre Management Committee. Councillor Sell declared a personal interest, as his mother was a member of the Stansted Day Centre Management Committee. Councillor Yarwood declared a personal interest as he was a member of the Scrutiny sub-committee on fees and charges.*

**SC2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**SC3 MATTERS ARISING**

**(i) Minute SC21 – joint PCT scrutiny training**

Councillor Sell requested an update. Officers said approaches continued to be made to Harlow District Council, which had offered to take the lead.

**(ii) Minute SC26 –scrutiny work programme**

The Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services gave an update on publicising free swimming by means of information displayed in GP surgeries. This resource was currently publicised via the GP patients' referral scheme, and through the Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Programme ('HELP'). Officers confirmed advertisements had been placed in the local press and in Uttlesford Life, and take-up of free swimming had been good. However, additional publicity posters for doctors' surgeries was something which would be explored.

**SC4 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES**

The Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services presented the report of the Interim Change Manager. The report updated Members on the conclusion of a review of the Council's fees and charges, with particular reference to ensuring equality of treatment in concessionary charging. A number of inconsistencies had been identified in the setting of charges and the granting of concessions. Recommendations to policy committees were made.

Members considered the report. Comments made were as follows:  
Councillor Wells said, as a member of the working group which had looked into this subject, that the current fees and charges contained many discrepancies. Inconsistencies were identified in the report and policy committees were invited to consider ways in which to ensure uniformity of fees and charges.

Regarding rodent control, Councillor Rolfe warned people could be discouraged from taking action if a fee for dealing with rats was introduced. Councillor Wells said the report did not suggest making such charges, but recommended areas to be looked at more closely.

Regarding bulky waste collection, Councillor Yarwood said there had been incidents where the concession rate service was being abused, at a cost to the Council.

Councillor Rolfe had reservations about the working group's view that concessions for over 65s should be examined. This age tended to be the trigger for many concessions. Councillor Wells said the criteria should be financial need rather than age, as those who were over 65 were not necessarily those in most need. Councillor Yarwood said there was a potential risk in that discrimination could be perceived. Further work needed to be done in exploring these issues.

Councillor Sell said it would be helpful to have the input of Environmental Health officers and Building Control officers. The Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services said the lead officer for the group reviewing pest control services was the Head of Environmental Health. Building control services were being explored through the Strategic Solutions initiative.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Yarwood, seconded by Councillor Wells and carried unanimously.

#### RESOLVED

- 1 that the Community and Housing Committee be invited to consider and act upon the views relating to pest control services set out in the report;
- 2 the attention of the Environment Committee be drawn to the working group's comments on burial charges;
- 3 the Chief Finance Officer be asked to prepare a draft corporate pricing and concessions policy for consideration by the Finance and Administration Committee and that
  - a) the policy provides for a standard level of discount of 50% for those on state benefits;
  - b) no specific discounts be granted on the basis of age
  - c) consideration be given regarding whether the above proposal should be the subject of some form of public consultation;
- 4 charges for services should be set on the basis of full cost recovery, and

- 5 the attention of the Community and Housing Committee be drawn to the need to review the approach by which leaseholders of Council owned properties are charged for maintenance and other costs.

SC5

## **REVIEW OF DAY CENTRES**

The Group considered the report of the Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services. Councillor Yarwood suggested co-ordinating with the County Council as there was funding available for community centres. Whilst he knew of no County run community centres in this district, it was advisable to engage with the County Council as part of the consultation.

Councillor Rolfe said his only concern regarding the review was to avoid a conclusion that one size fits all, as all five Day Centres had very different arrangements. He recommended concentrating on stakeholder views, as it was important to understand what people wanted. He said Saffron Walden Day Centre was run well. Whilst best practice could be shared between the Day Centres, he warned the same model might not work elsewhere.

Councillor Sell agreed with this point, and said Stansted Day Centre was run almost like a community centre, as other age groups used it in the evenings, since Stansted did not have a village hall. It was crucial to treat the management committees with sensitivity, as most members were volunteers, and they were very important stakeholders. Consultations must involve them, but should also involve the other groups who used the day centres.

### **RESOLVED**

- 1 to approve the terms of reference for the review of Day Centres as set out in the appendix to the report, taking in the comments made during this meeting;
- 2 to nominate three Members to form a Day Centre Review Reference Group.

Councillors Anjum, Chambers and Jones were nominated accordingly. It was noted that stakeholders to be consulted should include the Primary Care Trusts, and that the Review Group should ensure they visited the Day Centres as part of the review.

SC6

## **DECISION LISTS**

The Committee considered the Decision Lists of the meetings of the Environment Committee on 16 June, the Community and Housing Committee on 18 June, and the Finance and Administration Committee on 25 June. Members raised no issues in connection with the decisions which had been made.

SC7

## **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Councillor Rolfe raised the question of scrutinising the Council's approach to the Olympics whilst there was still time. The Chairman agreed to discussion of the item, as timely consideration of the possible benefits to the district was appropriate. Opportunities to promote local businesses and tourism in the area should be seized, with particular regard to the Olympics website facility. Councillor Sell said he would welcome the investigation of such opportunities, as he had thought prevailing lack of resources had limited what could be done. He mentioned there had been proposals to use the track at the Mountfitchet Mathematics and Computing College for an Olympic event.

Councillor Yarwood asked whether Members could receive a copy of the executive summary on performance

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.