

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 6
OCTOBER 2009**

Present: Councillor A Dean – Chairman.
Councillors S Anjum, R P Chambers, D M Jones,
G Sell, S Schneider, A Wattebot and L A Wells.

Officers in attendance: G Bradley (Community Partnerships
Manager), P Evans (Business Improvement and
Performance Manager), S Martin (Head of
Customer Support and Revenue Services) and C
Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

Also present: Councillor D G Perry and M D White representing
the Saffron Walden Town Council.

SC8 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF
INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H S Rolfe
and A C Yarwood.

SC9 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2009 were approved
and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SC10 **LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Customer
Support and Revenue Services which covered the Scrutiny
training event which had been held on 7 July 2009, an update
on previous matters arising and compilation of the Committee's
annual report to Council.

Members were informed that the recommendations concerning
fees and charges would be submitted to the meeting of the
Finance and Administration Committee to be held on 26
November 2009.

They noted that the scrutiny process was to expand to embrace
crime and disorder regional partnerships and local area
agreements as well as the health service and the Chairman
referred to the need for further officer support in this context.

At this point Councillor Chambers declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in so far as he was the Chairman of the Police Authority and a member of the Essex County Council. The Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services was asked to e mail Members for suggested items to include in the Committee's Annual Report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

SC11

SAFFRON WALDEN TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES

Councillor Anjum declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in so far as he was a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council.

Councillor Perry declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in so far as he was a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council and the Uttlesford District Council.

The Group received a presentation by Mr M White, the Clerk of the Saffron Walden Town Council, dealing with the history of the Town Council's involvement with and financial commitment to Tourism in the Town and District, and describing recent developments at the Tourist Information Centre.

He stressed that the Town Council had not only succeeded in improving the web site and aesthetic appeal of the Tourist Information Centre but had also achieved substantial reduction in the costs of running the premises and a £13,000 increase in its income, thereby reducing the projected annual deficit by an appreciable amount. The redesigned and improved web site, Visitor Guide and District-wide Accommodation Guide had won awards and were displayed at the meeting.

In answer to a question from the Chairman Mr White confirmed that there was no plan to do away with promoting tourism.

Councillor Chambers commended the work of the Town Council as an excellent example of localism and Members wished to record thanks to the Town Council for all their hard work.

Councillor Dean expressed concern about the large number of pubs which were closing, and felt this problem should be taken on board as part of the tourism agenda.

Councillor Schneider congratulated the staff and Board of the Tourist Information Centre and asked about the progress of the Blue Plaque scheme.

Councillor Perry said he wanted to promote tourism but wanted it to be carried out by a partnership.

RESOLVED that the minutes record Members' thanks to the Town Council for all their hard work.

SC12

2012 OLYMPICS

The Committee considered the report of the Community Partnerships Manager about the progress of preparation for the Olympic Games by organisations external to the Council and the current limitations on the Council's ability to undertake sports development work.

Councillor Chambers suggested that Mr M White should contact Stephen Castle, the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for the Olympics who was keen on cycling, and the Chinese delegation mentioned in the Essex Plan.

Councillor Sell thought the running track at the Mountfitchet School could do much for the District if the Council promoted it, though he was concerned not to duplicate what the Town Council was doing.

Councillor Chambers considered it important not to spend a lot if the District was not getting something back.

Councillor Dean wished to work with the Airport to discourage monopolistic practices there. Mr M White said that he wanted to get more parish councillors and town councillors involved in this and Councillor Dean said that he would "oil the wheels".

The Community Partnerships Manager said that provision of an information site at the Airport had been too expensive. Mr White said that whilst they could not send staff to the Airport they could help other organisations to help.

Councillor Dean suggested that Members should have a dialogue around tourism channels to see if they could move forward and Mr White referred to a document as relevant.

Councillor Dean commented that they had had lots of ideas to move forward and he took it that Members all supported them – it was up to the Olympic Working Group to meet and decide what it could do.

In answer to a question from Councillor Dean Councillor Sell said he thought it would be good to revisit this topic to get user responses. He felt the remit was wider than the Town Council's.

Councillor Perry commented that it must be a two way thing and Councillor Sell said that he would report the Committee's observations to the Stansted Parish Council to see if there could be a re-think. Councillor Chambers agreed to mention them at the Dunmow Parish Council meeting and Councillor Wattebot at the Thaxted one.

Mr White thanked the Committee and Councillor Jones asked him whether he thought footfall and traffic were limited in any way by the amount of parking spaces in Saffron Walden. Mr White thought not, parking was not difficult except on Saturdays.

Councillor Dean thanked Mr White for the presentation and said he looked forward to continuing the dialogues.

SC13

REVIEW OF DAY CENTRES

The Committee received an update from the Business Improvement and Performance Manager on the progress of this review which had been limited since the production of the report, but detailed some initial research and fact finding that had been carried out.

Members discussed who would be serving on the review group and the Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services stressed that any review must be Member led.

It was noted that some Members could not attend day time meetings and that there must also be restrictions on what the day centres themselves could manage.

Councillor Chambers emphasised the importance of being able to benchmark on an equal basis and Councillor Dean said he felt the Review Group meetings should be minuted.

The Business Improvement and Performance Manager asked for confirmation that the Committee saw her role to be one of a co-ordinator in terms of any investigative research and fact finding exercises as well as supporting the development of any subsequent recommendations.

The Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services commented that it would be appropriate to refresh the memory of the Review Group regarding the terms of reference and that a meeting would be called in the near future.

RESOLVED that Councillors Chambers, C Dean, Jones and Rolfe form the Review Group for Day Centres.

SC14

DECISION LISTS

The Committee considered the Decision Lists of the meetings of the Environment Committee on 15 September, the Community and Housing Committee on 17 September, and the Finance and Administration Committee on 24 September. Members raised no issues in connection with the decisions which had been made.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.