

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 11 FEBRUARY 2010**

Present: Councillor A Dean – Chairman.
Councillors D M Jones, H S Rolfe, G Sell, A M Wattebot
and L A Wells.

Officers in attendance: M Ford (Community Safety Officer), S Martin
(Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services),
R Procter (Democratic Services Officer) and B Tice
(Project Officer).

Also attending: Mr Alan Johnson, Chairman, Uttlesford
Neighbourhood Watch Steering Group.

SC22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Anjum and S
Schneider.

SC23 MINUTES

Subject to the following addition, the Minutes of the meeting held on 8
December 2009, having been received, were signed by the Chairman as
a true record.

The list of officers attending the meeting was amended to show the
attendance of Martin Ford, Community Safety Officer.

SC24 MATTERS ARISING/ACTION LIST

(i) Minute SC12 – 2012 Olympics

The Chairman asked whether a meeting of the Olympics Working Group
had yet been arranged, as at the South Area Forum officers had given
an indication a meeting was planned. The Head of Customer Support
and Revenue Services said he had obtained a verbal update from the
Chief Executive to the effect that the Group had no plans to meet, and
did not in any event have a chairman. However, he had today received
information from Essex County Council on *The Big Event 2012* regarding
a large-scale County Council led initiative. The Chairman asked for
confirmation of the Council's position in relation to the Olympics Working
Group.

(Councillors H S Rolfe and G Sell arrived at this point.)

(ii) Minute SC18 – Scrutiny Landscape – Health Scrutiny

The Chairman gave a summary of a productive meeting with the County
Council. A health overview and scrutiny protocol had been drawn up,

with the aim of facilitating co-ordination of health scrutiny in the area. The Chairman requested the paper to be circulated to members of the Committee.

(iii) Minute SC18 – Scrutiny Landscape - Councillor Call for Action

Officers confirmed information had been publicised in the Members' Bulletin of 22 January 2010.

(iv) Minute SC21 – Decision Lists

Regarding the planned scrutiny review in a year's time of the transfer of Bridge End Gardens to Saffron Walden Town Council, the Chairman said had discussed this matter with representatives of the Friends of Bridge End Gardens, who had agreed it would be useful to set some ground rules in advance. In reply to a question, the Project Officer said the transfer of this amenity had been delayed due to an issue with assignment of the lease, but he believed the transfer had now taken place.

The Chairman asked for an action point to agree with Friends of Bridge End Gardens terms of reference for the scrutiny review.

(v) Action 09-SC12 – encourage Stansted Airport to promote tourism in Uttlesford

The Chairman said he had contacted BAA. He had received a letter which he had passed to Saffron Walden Town Council, who had raised various issues in their reply. He hoped a dialogue between the Town Council and BAA would now help to progress matters.

(vi) Action 09-SC12 – promoting tourism to Town and Parish Councils

Councillor Sell said a website was being developed for Stansted Parish Council, which should include links to other town and parish council websites. He recalled there had been some discussion as to whether the Tourist Information Centre in Saffron Walden took a district wide approach.

(Councillor Wattebot arrived at this point.)

SC25 **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH UPDATE**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Johnson to the meeting. Mr Johnson thanked the Chairman for inviting him to address the Committee as he had not been able to attend the last meeting when an update on Uttlesford's Neighbourhood Watch coverage had been given by the Community Safety Officer.

Mr Johnson circulated a report indicating coverage across the district was now 67%. Good progress had been made during the last year (as illustrated by the increase in volunteers in Stansted from 20 to 90 people during that time). He was pleased to report funding for the Essex Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator had been extended, as this was an important benefit in terms of communication amongst volunteers, the public and Essex police. He was also delighted that a number of new schemes were being set up, for example in Elmdon.

Mr Johnson referred to the table attached to the report, which revealed the majority of areas still lacking Neighbourhood Watch coverage were urban areas. He encouraged councillors to act as springboards for communication with Neighbourhood Watch. He said it would be helpful for parish councils to play a role in establishing the scheme. In reply to questions, Mr Johnson said the first point of contact for parish clerks was Lindsay Baillie, Essex Watch Administrator.

Members raised various issues, including theft of signs from villages and availability of graffiti prevention kits. In reply to a question regarding work involved for a co-ordinator in a typical small village, Mr Johnson said once a scheme had been established, there was not a great deal of work involved. Volunteers would receive membership packs, and would subsequently receive emails alerting them to information from the police. (It should be noted that people were now encouraged to report incidents directly to the police, however, rather than through their Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator.) The Co-ordinator would also receive a quarterly newsletter, *The Observer*.

Those participating in Neighbourhood Watch Schemes benefitted from reduced crime in their area; reduced insurance premiums; early warnings and advice in bulletins from the police and enhanced community spirit.

The Chairman expressed concern about fear of reporting crime. Mr Johnson said fear of crime was an issue, but that it was through people reporting incidents that the police built up intelligence.

The Chairman said he rarely saw police community support officers on the beat. Mr Johnson said it was a question of statistics and that in urban areas people were more likely to be aware of a police presence.

The Chairman thanked Mr Johnson for coming to speak, and agreed the Neighbourhood Watch Steering Group progress report could be circulated to all Members. He asked for feedback in six months.

SC26

SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services, setting out a status report on the current work programme and seeking a decision on the next scrutiny reviews.

A brief verbal update on the current review of Day Centres was received from Members involved in the review group. Further visits were to be arranged, as not all Day Centres had yet been visited.

Suggestions for additional work topics were considered. The Committee felt it had been of interest to invite external speakers, and the possibility of inviting a representative from Trading Standards to the next meeting should be pursued.

The Chairman asked whether staff sickness absence was an issue which was reported to Performance Select Committee. Councillor Rolfe said it was monitored by that Committee, and whilst there were some individuals on long-term sickness absence, the organisation was not particularly dysfunctional in this regard. It was agreed that officers should establish whether there was a need for benchmarking scrutiny of any problems reported by Performance Select Committee on this issue.

The issue of CCTV use was considered in terms of whether it represented value for money.

Members expressed their desire to review the issue of emergency planning and business continuity. Councillor Sell said this was an area of concern for many residents, not just in terms of internal arrangements but also in the ways this council linked to other organisations. Councillor Jones said there were two aspects to this issue: the external service the Council delivered and the internal arrangements, for example where something happened to the Saffron Walden premises. It was important that the Council should have a good business plan.

Members were keen to review enforcement priorities. Councillor Sell said the question of whether enforcement was more effective than it had been before should be explored. Councillor Wells said the issue of recurrent and persistent cases needed to be looked into. Councillor Jones was concerned that the schedule of enforcement priorities seemed to show a number of inactive cases.

The Chairman concluded that the areas of enforcement priority and emergency planning should be looked at, as well as closed circuit television (CCTV). Councillor Rolfe said there would be likely to be other empirical studies into the effectiveness of CCTV, to which the Committee could not add much. The issue of effective use of CCTV in evidence was raised. Members asked how many cameras the Council was responsible for, and the Chairman requested a status report on CCTV.

RESOLVED to undertake scrutiny reviews of the following areas:

- 1 enforcement priorities
- 2 emergency planning and business continuity

- 3 use of Closed Circuit Television (initial status report only)

SC27 **DECISION LISTS**

The Committee considered the decision lists of the policy committee meetings held during the last committee cycle. The necessity of printing the lists was questioned, and it was agreed to provide the lists in electronic form only at future meetings.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.