

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 13 APRIL 2010**

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

Officers
in attendance: G Bradley (Community Partnerships Manager),
M Ford (Community Safety Officer), S Martin (Head
of Customer Support and Revenue Services),
R Procter (Democratic Services Officer), B Tice
(Project Officer) and A Webb (Director of Central
Services).

Also attending: Peter Stratton (Essex Trading Standards).

SC28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Chambers and
A Yarwood.

SC29 TRADING STANDARDS PRESENTATION

At the suggestion of the Chairman, this item was brought forward. Mr
Stratton gave a verbal presentation on the work of Essex County Council
Trading Standards, highlighting the following points:

- There were two main aspects to trading standards work, frontline advice to consumers and businesses and project-based work, most of which was intelligence-led. Following receipt of a complaint, Trading Standards Officers would offer training, carry out test purchases, and only if necessary approach the District Council's Licensing Panel.
- Main projects currently included age-restricted goods such as alcohol and tobacco sales. Targets for this issue set under the Local Area Agreement had been achieved last year, and work was continuing to reduce the level of infringements. Uttlesford had a comparatively low level of problems, as exemplified by the fact that there were only 10 test purchases for alcohol carried out in the district last year, and only 2 instances of failed tests (both at the same store).
- Work was being done with the police in connection with sale of knives, although fortunately knife crime was not a significant problem in Essex. Publicity was kept low to avoid unnecessarily increasing public fearfulness.

- Trading Standards Officers were working with districts to produce a pack based on the *Challenge 25* campaign. Discussions were currently taking place with Uttlesford's CDRP group to explore the possibility of funding a campaign pack.

Mr Stratton briefly summarised other areas of Trading Standards operations as follows, reassuring reassured Members that in Uttlesford there was little activity in most of these issues:

- proxy sales for age-restricted products;
- monitoring breaches of weight restriction orders for HGVs;
- roadside car sales;
- 'secure parking' offered by rogue traders at Stansted Airport, which could involve parking cars in other locations;
- roadside checks on vehicles at the service station on the A120 with the aim of investigating itinerant traders;
- investigations across the County into sun bed provision: early indications showed worrying breaches of European Standards.

Mr Stratton then gave details of a recent initiative aimed at providing reassurance to elderly people in accessing services or traders, called 'Buy with Confidence'. He asked that the campaign be publicised in the district, and invited Members to read and circulate the campaign literature.

Members put various questions, which Mr Stratton answered as follows:

Q: Who was responsible for exhaust fumes?

A: The Department of Transport, rather than Trading Standards, had responsibility for monitoring exhaust fumes. Advice could be obtained from the local VOSA.

Q: How was the 'Buy with Confidence' scheme publicised?

A: The scheme was still at an early stage in terms of increasing its database of participating traders, but had had some publicity via press and radio.

Q: What were the sanctions for participating traders who failed to deliver the expected standard?

A: Aside from existing statutory powers, no strategy for this eventuality was in place at this early stage, but one would be formulated if necessary.

Q: Did Trading Standards liaise with bodies such as the ECA Electrical Contractors Council?

A: Only in cases where details had been provided to Trading Standards by such a body on the Consumer Direct website.

Q: How did Trading Standards work with the local Uttlesford enforcement team?

A: Regional groups shared expertise at present, but a transformation project was being developed to enable Trading Standards to provide improved support to local authorities.

The Chairman said the 'Buy with Confidence' scheme could be publicised through the LSP. The Community Partnerships Manager said *Challenge 25* could be promoted through the CDRP. She spoke briefly about the work Uttlesford was already doing in terms of its successful proof of age scheme, training for licensees and Operation Moonscape, whereby officers from the Council joined police to confiscate alcohol.

Members suggested awareness of the 'Buy with Confidence' campaign was insufficient in Uttlesford. It would be useful to liaise with the Chambers of Commerce to ensure traders were aware of the scheme. Mr Stratton offered to arrange for a Trading Standards representative to address a Chambers of Commerce meeting.

It was agreed to publicise the 'Buy with Confidence' scheme through *Uttlesford Life* and at the Area Forums. The Chairman thanked Mr Stratton for attending.

SC30 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010 were received and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

SC31 **MATTERS ARISING/ACTION LIST**

(i) Minute SC24 – 2012 Olympics

Councillor Sell asked whether a meeting of the Olympics Working Group would be convened before the Olympics took place. The Community Partnerships Manager said convening the Group was her responsibility, and she was meeting an ECC representative in May to explore some options. However, as there was no budget any work would be limited to fact-finding. The possibility was being considered of running a festival similar to the Diversity Festival of some years ago, but again, funding was an issue.

Councillor Sell asked whether members of the Olympics Working Group were in fact willing to meet. The Community Partnerships Officer said to her knowledge they were willing to do so. Councillor Sell said he recognised there were issues of money, but as the event was now so close, some of the district's local attractions ought to benefit from any economic spin-off. Officers agreed that for this district it would be tourism (particularly bed and breakfast and heritage attractions), rather than sport, which would potentially benefit.

(ii) Minute SC26 – sickness absence

Members asked whether progress had been made in obtaining data. The Lead Officer said Councillor Rolfe said he would follow up this

enquiry, as this information was monitored by Performance Select Committee.

SC32 **CCTV STATUS REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Community Safety Officer providing an update on current and proposed CCTV coverage in Uttlesford. The report highlighted the fact that the current CCTV system in Great Dunmow was to be replaced with a wireless system once protocols had been determined. Cameras supplied by four companies were being trialled. Members asked various questions, in particular questioning how 'adequate coverage' would be evaluated, and whether data might be obtained on the success rates of using CCTV footage in prosecutions.

Councillor Sell declared an interest as a member of Stansted Parish Council. He said the Parish Council had funded its own cameras for four years, and had questioned their value for money, and whether there was any significant deterrent effect. Until quite recently, the police had rarely viewed the images from these cameras. Information on successful use of camera footage in prosecutions would be useful. It was important to know whether any new cameras purchased were image quality compliant.

Councillor Jones said there were two issues here, as the evidential value of cameras was one aspect, and the assistance such cameras could prompt from the police was another. He asked whether wireless cameras to be installed in Dunmow would be secure against jamming. Officers undertook to find out.

Councillor Rolfe asked about the reasons why certain parishes were running cameras independently. The Chairman asked that all questions raised by Members at this meeting be incorporated in a further more detailed report to be brought to the September meeting.

SC33 **DAY CENTRE REVIEW UPDATE**

The Lead Officer gave a verbal update on the Day Centre review. He said it had now become apparent that the original timescale to conclude the report by this meeting was rather optimistic, as the review group had had to investigate many complex details relating to the five Day Centres. Officers had prepared a discussion document, but the Day Centre review group members had not yet had a chance to consider it. He therefore asked the Committee to agree to extend the time limit for the conclusion of the review, to permit the final report to be brought to the June meeting.

Members of the review group reported on how this work was progressing. Councillor Jones said he had attended meetings at the Day Centres with Councillor C Dean to gather information. He wished to acknowledge the stalwart and insightful work of Councillor C Dean in this

task. The picture which was emerging showed the considerable value of the service, for example he had learnt of a resident travelling several miles every day to attend the Saffron Walden Day Centre.

Councillor Rolfe suggested asking the Day Centres to contribute to the debate. He said he would like to know the views of the most influential people running the day centres, as he was aware some volunteers were immensely valuable.

The Project Officer said a meeting had taken place with chairmen of the Day Centre management committees, and their comments were incorporated into the discussion document. He said Day Centre representatives were keen to address the Committee during the public session at the next meeting.

The Chairmen said he would like to increase the involvement of Day Centre representatives to a greater extent than this, by including them in discussions.

The Chairman asked that the reference group bring their work to a conclusion to enable the Committee to receive the report at the next meeting.

Councillor Sell declared an interest in that his mother was a member of the Stansted Day Centre management committee. He said the management committees were made up of volunteers, and it was both desirable and essential that they should be present at the discussions, so as to give the Committee a better idea of their views and whether there was a consensus on the way forward.

SC34

BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND EMERGENCY PLANNING REVIEW

The Committee considered a report setting out terms of reference for a review into business continuity and emergency planning, in accordance with the Scrutiny work plan for the present year. The Chairman said this area of work was likely to be extensive, and the Lead Officer suggested the initial emphasis should be on the Council's own internal business continuity arrangements.

In reply to a question by Councillor Rolfe about the current process, the Lead Officer said emergency planning was led by Lisa Lipscombe, the Emergency Planning Officer, working closely with the Strategic Management Board. Councillor Rolfe asked which committee had responsibility for this area, as he considered scrutiny should take place once policy had been drawn up.

Councillor Jones said he hoped the review would permit Members to gain a better appreciation of the Council's business resilience.

The Chairman asked whether the review group would need any external advice.

The Lead Officer said officers had very recently updated councillors on the business continuity plan, which included details of planned response to emergency situations, and the impact on delivering services. He said the Emergency Planning Officer had indicated her willingness to attend before the Committee.

Members were keen to establish what work had been done on business continuity arrangements in the event of an emergency such as a fire, for example in identifying alternative premises from which the Council could continue to deliver services.

The Director of Central Services, in answer to the question of availability of external advice, said the Emergency Planning Officer worked closely with Steve Daly, Senior Emergency Planning Officer, who was seconded from Essex County Council for two days a week.

It was agreed that information should be obtained on where the responsibility lay for emergency planning and business continuity, to enable the Committee to take the scrutiny review forward. It was further agreed that Members for the review reference group would be Councillors A Dean, D Jones and A Yarwood (who although not present had indicated his interest in this subject).

SC35 **DECISION LISTS**

For technical reasons electronic display of the decisions lists was not possible, and the Chairman therefore asked Members to contact him with any comments on the lists, which were available on CMIS and had previously been circulated to all members following each of the meetings to which they related.

SC36 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Rolfe suggested that the area of section 106 agreements should form a further scrutiny topic, to which the Chairman agreed.

The meeting ended at 9pm.