

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 18 APRIL 2013**

Present: Councillor E Godwin – Chairman.
Councillors G Barker, P Davies, I Evans, D Morson, E
Oliver, J Rich and D Watson.

Also present: Councillors A Dean and J Ketteridge.

Officers: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services), M Cox
(Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of
Public Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive –
Legal), V Taylor (Business Improvement and
Performance Officer) and A Webb (Director of Corporate
Services).

SC51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Harris and Howell.

Councillor G Barker clarified his interest in respect of item 6, NHS England reports. He worked as a self-employed medical practitioner and was on the principal list of the General Medical Council and his name was held on the Performers' List North Essex PCT. He had never worked within the NW Essex area and had no conflict of interest. However he had still obtained dispensation from the Council's Monitoring Officer to talk and vote in relation to NW Essex PCT and its successor body. In relation to item 8, Municipal Waste Strategy he declared an interest as he was related to the Cabinet member for Environment but he had obtained dispensation in relation to this interest.

Councillor Davies declared a pecuniary interest in item 6 as his wife was employed at the Great Dunmow doctors' surgery.

SC52 LOWER STREET CAR PARK STANSTED

The meeting was informed that this item had been included on the agenda under the provisions of Rule h of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. The item, in relation to the heads of terms of the Section 106 agreement, had been considered at the last meeting of the Cabinet. The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal clarified that although the item could be discussed, there were no powers for this Committee to put a hold on the Cabinet decision overturn it or refer it to Full Council.

Councillor Evans said that concerns expressed in relation to this item had highlighted the need for an overview of car parking in the district. The

suggestion of a Task Group had been mooted at the meeting in December, and could cover many aspects of car park arrangements including: the identification of any problems relating to capacity, season ticket usage, and residents' parking. Its work would be evidence based. It would not seek to replicate previous work of the committee on income and ticket sales. She suggested that the working group should be set up as soon as possible with the initial report back to the Scrutiny Committee in 6 months' time.

Catherine Dean from Stansted Parish Council had requested to speak to the Committee. She said she was disappointed that issues relating to the use of the car park had not been addressed by Cabinet members. The suggestion of a decked car park had been dismissed by the Cabinet member, but this had been put forward by the developer as a possible way to achieve more capacity. The parish council did not want to hold up the process, but was concerned about the adequacy of the car park and the lack of evidence in the Cabinet report to allay the fear that there would be insufficient spaces for the retail use. It wanted to be assured that the final layout and provision of spaces would be properly scrutinised and remodelled if there was found to be a problem with capacity.

Councillor Morson said that the concerns about the car park were a separate issue to the Health Centre proposal, there was no intention to delay the project. He agreed with Councillor Evans that this was about the overall investment in the district's car parks and whether the numbers of spaces were adequate. He endorsed the setting up of a task group.

Councillor Rich supported the Committee's intent to scrutinise the adequacy and usability of car parks in the district as suitable provision was important for economic development.

Councillor Dean welcomed the task group as there were significant matters to be addressed. In relation to the Lower Street car park, when all the uses on the site came into use he expected there to be a net shortfall of around 40 spaces. There was also increased demand at the Crafton Green car park.

Councillor G Barker said that this subject would be a significant undertaking for the Task Group, with the huge volume of data involved and the numerous possible scenarios and patterns of usage.

The Chairman suggested a number of areas for the task group to consider including capacity, need, patterns of use, charging, opening times, residents parking, leading to suggestions for improvement for the community as a whole.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Committee appoint a Car Park Task Group.

- 2 The terms of reference to be drafted in accordance with the matters mentioned above.
- 3 The membership to comprise Councillors Evans, Watson and Davies.
- 4 The Task Group to report to the Committee in 6 months' time. Interim reports would be accepted if the Task Group felt it appropriate.

SC53 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2013 were received and signed as a correct record subject to the deletion of the following words from the 7th paragraph of SC42. 'He raised the possibility that a referendum on council tax would be needed if the administration were to try to implement a 'volte face.'

SC54 **BUSINESS ARISING**

i) Minute SC49 – East of England Ambulance Service – scoping report

In answer to a question, members noted that the Fire Brigade Union and Police Federation had not wished to submit a further report on this matter.

SC55 **STANDING ITEMS**

The Chairman said she was aware of no matters referred to the Committee in relation to call in of a decision, nor of any responses of the Executive to reports of the Committee.

SC56 **NHS ENGLAND REPORTS**

The Committee received three documents in relation to the changes to the National Health Service Commissioning Services and in particular the West Essex Commissioning Group (CCG) that would replace the West Essex PCT from 1 April 2013. The reports gave a background to the new arrangements, how they would operate and gave answers to the questions raised in the scoping document regarding the provision of medical services in the Uttlesford area.

Councillor Morson commented that the reports only provided an overview of the new arrangements rather than setting out any real evidence of how the new body would operate on a practical level within Uttlesford. It was felt that there were still questions to be answered and that representatives of the CCG

should be invited to attend a future meeting. Members were asked to forward their questions to the Business Improvement and Performance Officer.

SC57 **ESSEX POLICE COMMISSIONER UPDATE**

The new Essex Police Commissioner had attended the South Forum public meeting in March. Those members that had been present said he had answered a lot of questions and appeared to be very active in the area. Members said they would welcome the opportunity to ask more in depth questions. The Director of Corporate Services said he would approach the Police Commissioner with the view to discussing options for a future meeting.

SC58 **MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

Further to the scoping report considered at the last meeting members received two information reports to assist the Committee in its scrutiny of the Essex Joint Waste Strategy. The first report addressed those aspects of the scope that were within the Council's function as a waste collection authority. It gave comparative information on various waste collection figures for Uttlesford. The second report had been prepared by ECC, as the Waste Disposal Authority and gave information on the implementation of the Joint Municipal Waste and Management Strategy for Essex.

Cllr Godwin said she was pleased with the total recycling rate of 55% but noted that the figures had plateaued at this level. The Director of Public Services replied that the Council operated a very efficient method of collection so that any uplift in performance would result in increased costs. However, the Council would try to encourage more households to subscribe to the kerbside garden waste collection. He explained that the take up of the scheme for 2013 had been slow at the start of the year due to the late spring and cold weather but similar take up levels to 2012 were expected.

Members highlighted the importance of effective communication with residents in relation to the waste and recycling service. This was a particular issue in rural areas that did not receive local newspapers or for people who didn't have access to the website. A more effective method would be via parish clerks to include information in parish magazines.

It was explained that placing stickers on the bins appeared to work well, but this did have a cost implication. Officers had learnt by experience over the Easter period and intended to sticker all bins before the May bank holidays to advise residents that under the new arrangements there would be no change to their collection day. Some residents were still not aware that glass was now included in the dry recyclables kerbside collection. Large bottle banks had now been withdrawn but mini banks at pubs and halls would be retained if the bins were readily accessible to the collection trucks.

Councillor Rich understood that some residents had experienced difficulty obtaining additional green bins. He hoped this could be addressed as this would encourage additional recycling.

In answer to members' questions, it was confirmed that staff had been consulted on the 4 day week and had been in favour of the change. Initially there had been some teething problems and additional resources had been deployed. The situation was now improving which meant that other lower priority matters such as delivery of additional bins could now be addressed more promptly.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Public Services for his reports.

SC59

HIGHWAY PLANNING CONSULTATION RESPONSES – SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Committee considered a scoping report on ECC Highways' response to planning application consultations. This issue had been raised by members of the Planning Committee following concern at the quality of the highway comments for both major and minor applications. Members requested answers to the following questions:

Do Highway officers visit all sites, if not, what are the criteria for a site visit?
What are the timescale for providing information?
Would it be possible for the responses to explain the reasoning behind the comments made?

SC60

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2012/13 REVIEW AND 2013/14 PLAN

The Committee noted the matters that had been considered by the Committee in 2012/13 and discussed the items to be included in the Committee's future work programme. The plan would be updated and circulated to members. The following subjects were suggested as additional areas for Scrutiny in 2013/14.

- Rural sewage plants, first time main sewerage.
- Rural broadband.
- Housing rent arrears levels, homelessness and the effect of welfare reforms, and Housing Discretionary Payments.
- The new Tenants Scrutiny Panel - how it would link with the Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm