

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 3 SEPTEMBER 2013**

- Present: Councillor E Godwin – Chairman.
Councillors G Barker, P Davies, S Harris, S Howell, D Morson, E Oliver and J Rich.
- Also present: Councillor J Ketteridge (Leader of the Council) Toni Coles (Director of Development and Strategy, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group) Dr Alice Hodgkinson (vice chair and Uttlesford GP representative, CCG).
- Officers: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), and A Webb (Director of Corporate Services).

SC11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Evans and Watson.

Councillor G Barker declared the following pecuniary interests

Item 8 – as a local GP in the NHS Essex region but as yet had not worked within the NW Essex Area.

Item 9 – His wife is a County Councillor and Chair of the Audit Committee.

Item 12 – His wife is the portfolio holder for Planning.

Item 13 – His wife is the portfolio holder for the septic tank service.

Item 14 – His wife is the director of Bell Street Investments Ltd and he uses Buzcom broadband.

He stated that he had obtained dispensation from the Council's Monitoring Officer to talk and vote in relation to NW Essex PCT and its successor body and on issues where his wife a portfolio holder and Member of ECC .

Councillor Davies declared a pecuniary interest in item 8 in so far as his wife was employed by the West Essex PCT.

SC12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2013 were received confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SC13 **BUSINESS ARISING**

i) **SC3 – NHS England**

Councillor G Barker reported that patients that required blood- taking in the south of the District were now being asked to travel to Braintree rather than Harlow or Bishop Stortford. This was still a considerable distance for residents to travel and the area would benefit from a locally based phlebotomist.

SC14 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the proposed work programme for 2013/14. The Chairman asked for suggested items for the April 2014 meeting; new issues, or topics that could be revisited. The following were suggested

- Ambulance Service – review of the position after 8 months
- Airport related Parking
- Public swimming facilities across the district.

Members asked if they could have, as a reminder, a list of the topics that the Committee had considered over the last year.

SC15 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted the latest Cabinet Forward Plan.

SC16 **CCG PROGRESS UPDATE**

Councillor Davies left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

The Chairman welcomed from the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Mrs Toni Coles, Director of Development and Strategy and Dr Alice Hodgkinson, Vice Chair and Uttlesford GP representative.

Dr Hodgkinson explained that the Commissioning Group was currently consulting on a 10 year strategy 'Vision of West Essex Health and Social Care'. It aimed to find out what was important to local people in terms of health care provision. The plan was being prepared within the background of rising costs and a short-fall in funding. The plan would look at future structure of health and social care provision in Uttlesford. The consultation would close on 20 September with a draft strategy expected to be produced by the end of October.

Minutes of meeting held on 3 September 2013

The CCG had identified areas of improvement and specific groups of patients where the biggest change could be made and had started to work on a new system based on these principles.

There was a wide consultation with front line staff, patients, health professionals as well as the public. The initial feedback from focus groups raised a number of issues including:- lack of joined up care with different organisations, frustration at cross district boundaries and the desire for a single point of care.

Further consultation was planned including - focus groups with patients and staff, leaflets placed in surgery's and public access points locally and a 'big debate' event (question time format) on 11th September in Saffron Walden.

In summing up Dr Hodkinson said that in order to address funding issues and concerns in relation to health provision there would need to be radical change in the provision of services and the subsequent structure to accommodate this.

Councillor Godwin thanked Dr Hodkinson for her presentation. She said that one of the main issues reported to her was the difficulty that residents found in getting an appointment at a GP surgery, particularly in the evening and at weekends. Councillor Favell said that this was also an issue in Felsted and this had been exacerbated by the growth in housing. Dr Hodkinson said that this was an important issue for the CCG and she would like to hear of specific details. She said that access to services was reported to CCG meetings on a monthly basis.

The Committee raised concern about the extent of the publicity as most members were not yet aware of the consultation. There appeared to be a very short timescale for comments and for collating the replies, which gave little scope for the feedback to play into the vision. Mrs Coles gave details as to the extent of the consultation, which she said was wider than on previous occasions. Councillor Oliver questioned whether the consultation had reached the more rural communities.

Councillor Howell thanked Dr Hodkinson and Mrs Coles for coming to the meeting. He realised the direction of travel was for a single commissioning point for healthcare and that GP's were leading this exercise. For this to be achieved there would need to be a significant increase in investment in the GP Infrastructure.

Councillor Barker said that whilst it was good practise to consult with the public this was not key to what would happen in the next 10 years. There was talk of radical change, which he expected would involve a different way of organising and expanding GP services. It would no longer be a gateway to care and in

order to achieve cost and efficiency savings the future would be very different to now. Dr Hodgkinson replied that whatever the nature of the new structure it would still be the aim to retain a local GP feel.

Councillor Rich said that the Health Service had a budgetary chasm that needed to be addressed and there were two parallel objectives, structure change and budget cuts. It appeared that the CCG had some feel of what outcome might be and he asked why it was not consulting on a likely structure at this stage. Mrs Coles said the model would come later after the vision had been agreed. It was important to decide what you wanted to do before deciding how to do it. She confirmed that any significant service change would be subject to further consultation.

In answer to a question by Councillor Ketteridge, it was confirmed that the CCG would be working with ECC and the districts in relation to community budgeting. It was helpful to work in partnership with ECC to prepare bids as this showed the overall picture in relation to both health and social care.

The Chairman said there had been a number of recent incidences at the Planning Committee where Section 106 contributions in relation to health had not been requested for new housing developments. Dr Hodgkinson said she would take this up with the relevant people.

The Chairman asked for the following information, requested at the last meeting, to be provided

- Patient to GP ratios.
- A responsibility chart for different areas of the CCG.

The Chairman thanked Dr Hodgkinson and Mrs Coles for attending the meeting. She felt there had been a useful dialogue and she hoped to hear from them in the future once the strategy had been developed.

SC17

HIGHWAYS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Members considered the reply from Essex Highways in response to the questions put from the scoping report. The aim of the review was to consider whether the Highways Strategic Partnership was working effectively.

Councillor Barker commented on the subjective nature of the response and the lack of data and evidence provided. He had concerns about the performance of the ECC contract with Ringway Jacobs.

Councillor Morson asked for further details concerning the jet patcher and whether it provided a longer term solution to the issue of pot holes.

Councillor Howell said that highway maintenance was an enormously complex issue and the service was going through a particularly challenging

time with two wet summers and two unusually cold winters, so had a lot of catching up to do. There were many different ways of dealing with pot holes; the jet patcher was a good piece of equipment, and lasted for longer than manual repairs but was still a temporary solution. The only effective way of maintaining the roads for the longer term was by resurfacing. He was concerned at the direction taken by ECC in the awarding of this new contract. Only a small percentage of roads were planned to be resurfaced each year, and the positive claims made by ECC about the number of potholes dealt with did not solve the long term problem. 1% of household had made an insurance claims for damage to vehicles by potholes, this was a very high number which indicated that there was a problem in the district. He did not doubt that the crews were working hard but it was a question of how to balance the budget and he was concerned that ECC had chosen the short term option.

It was suggested that the Committee should ask ECC Highways the following supplementary question:

- How many miles of roads are resurfaced each year against the overall network?’

It was agreed that this subject would be reviewed by the Committee after next winter.

SC18

HIGHWAY PLANNING CONSULTATION

The Committee received a report prepared in response to members’ concerns at the quality of the information provided by ECC Highways on the officers’ reports to the planning committee. The planning committee members had been concerned that consultation comments had stated ‘no objection’ but there had been no evidence to support this opinion. In response to these concerns, Highways had run a workshop to explain the processes and procedures that highway officers followed when responding to the consultations. The planning officers had reviewed the information provided by highways and considered it to be good quality. New procedures had been put in place to ensure that this information would now be presented to the planning committee.

The Chairman was pleased that the issue was being resolved as it was important to the committee and members of the public that there was more detail information on the Highway reasons for supporting or refusing an application.

It was agreed that the Chairman, as a member of the Planning Committee, would continue to monitor the situation and report back to the Scrutiny Committee if she had any further concerns.

SC19 PLANNING PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Further to a request made by a member at the last meeting, the committee received the last five quarters' results for the planning performance indicators. These figures were routinely presented to and monitored by the Performance and Audit Committee. The latest figures demonstrated a considerable improvement in all areas of planning performance and the first 2 months of the next quarter appeared to be continuing this improvement.

Councillor Howell said that the Performance and Audit Committee had been monitoring the service's performance for a considerable period of time and had questioned the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control on three or four occasions. The service had faced a significant challenge and had implemented changes to the structure and working practises. A lot of hard work had gone into turning the service around and whist there were still issues to be addressed there was clear evidence of improvement. The indicators continued to be monitored by the committee.

Councillor Harris commented that in order to meet the 13 week target, there had been occasions when an application had come before the planning committee before the consultation period had ended. This could result in issues not being given due consideration. Councillor Godwin said this occurred only rarely and in any event the decision notice would not be issued until the end of the consultation period.

Councillor Barker referred to some of the mitigating comments in the report. One stated referred to the DMS system running slowly in the afternoons and he questioned whether there were issues with the IT system. Councillor Howell said he was aware that during the transformation period the planning department had been bedding down a new IT system.

Councillor Barker said that the indicators did not give information on the 'outliers' and asked if it would be possible to have data on the exceptions. Councillor Howell commented that with drilling down too far there was a danger of getting confusing and contradicting information. He would prefer to continue with the broader detail which enabled monthly performance to be compared.

It was agreed that the committee be advised of the latest planning performance figures at the next meeting.

SC20 CAR PARK TASK GROUP -UPDATE

The Chairman reported that the working group had met on a number of occasions. Some initial findings were reported but as the working group members were not present at the meeting it was agreed that this matter should be considered at the next meeting of the committee.

SC21 SCOPING REPORT – SEPTIC TANKS

Members considered a scoping report on the council's septic tank service, which aimed to understand septic tank provision and the associated potential impacts on residents.

Members mentioned that there were new regulations in relation to this service that should be considered. It was also suggested to include an additional question concerning the cost/benefits of getting rid of the council's septic tank service.

The Director of Corporate Services suggested that an officer from Environmental Services be invited to address the committee on this subject.

SC22 SCOPING REPORT – RURAL BROADBAND

Members considered a scoping report on rural broadband. The aim was to ensure that all areas of the district could access the internet. Members asked for the following additional questions to be added to the terms of reference.

- What can UDC do to get parishes further up the list for roll-out?
- Provide assurances on the effective broadband speed to be delivered

SC23 POLICE CRIME COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS

The Police Commissioner would be attending a public forum at the Friends School, Saffron Walden on 19 September. Members suggested the following questions to be put to the Commissioner before the meeting.

- § Will the Police Commissioner be looking at the plan, currently being considered by Suffolk to amalgamate the Police and the Fire Service?
- § What assurances can be given that Uttlesford, as a rural area will have access to the Police service and reported crimes will be pursued?
- § Can you provide performance response data, particularly data on borderless working and the success of this initiative?
- § Can you provide an assurance that national crime data is kept securely and will not be passed to a 3rd party?
- § What effect has the closing of rural police stations had on the crime statistics in the area?
- § When a prolific criminal is released into a rural area what measures are in place to protect the local communities?

The meeting ended at 10.10pm.