

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 16 JUNE 2016**

Present: Councillor A Dean (Chairman)
Councillors G Barker, R Chambers, M Felton and G Sell

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services), R
Harborough (Director of Public Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief
Executive – Legal) and A Rees (Democratic and Electoral
services Officer)

Also present: Councillors S Barker and N Hargreaves and Mr R Harrington.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee held a moments silence after the tragic death of Jo Cox MP.

The Chairman invited Mr Harrington to speak. Mr Harrington explained that he had been helping Saffron Walden Town Council research street names. He had compiled a list of twenty questions which had been circulated to officers prior to the meeting.

In response to the Chairman, the Director of Public Services said that officers had not yet had an opportunity to answer the questions.

Mr Harrington explained that in the past he had helped one of the previous town clerk Simon Lloyd research the history surrounding street names throughout the town. He had been asked to help with street naming research by the Town Council following the appointment of the new clerk. When the Policy was first implemented the town and parish councils had been consulted and the policy had worked well for the past few years.

He had come across the new policy by chance and said the Town Clerk was surprised as the Town Council had not been consulted about the changes.

The Chairman said that he felt the best way forward to put forward the points the Committee felt should be considered. The Committee then had to decide whether the matter should be referred either to Cabinet or Full Council.

Councillor S Barker said that the Committee could only discuss the reasons the matter was called in for. The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal clarified that the Committee could only decide whether to refer the matter to Cabinet or Full Council.

SC1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Asker, Davies, Harris and Light, and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

Councillor G Barker declared a pecuniary interest in Item 2 as his wife was the Portfolio Holder. He had been given dispensation by the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal to consider the item.

SC2

CALL IN OF A CABINET DECISION – STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY

Councillor Sell said that the main issue was the lack of consultation over the changes and urged then if the matter was referred back to Cabinet for consideration a consultation was undertaken. His concern with the policy was that it was too prescriptive. More opportunity was needed for town and parish councils to provide input into the street naming process.

In response to a question by the Chairman, the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal said he was not aware of any statutory duty to carry out a consultation, but there would be an expectation that one would be carried out this time if it had previously.

The Chairman invited Councillor Hargreaves to speak as he was the Member who had asked for the decision to be called in. Councillor Hargreaves explained that he had first been made aware of the changes after a proposed street name in Newport had been rejected and a less appropriate name had been adopted instead. The new policy was far too prescriptive and although Section 1.3 suggested that rules were not compulsory, Section 1.5 suggested that the list of names were compulsory. He had looked at a number of other authorities' policies and suggested that any problems with a less prescriptive policy could be overcome by giving the authority the power to reject any names deemed to be inappropriate. He requested that the matter was referred back to Cabinet.

The Chairman asked for the views of the Committee. Councillor G Barker said that he had attempted to look at the Guidance for the policy but it was not clear which elements were statutory and which were not.

Councillor Chambers said that a common sense approach was taken and proposed that matter was referred back to Cabinet. He had spoken to the Leader who had said he was happy for Cabinet to consider the policy again. Councillor Felton said that she agreed with the comments which had been made by other Members.

The Chairman suggested that a consultation needed to take place once the matter was referred back to Cabinet. Members agreed with this suggestion. The Chairman added that the degree of prescription in the policy needed to be re-examined.

The Chairman noted that the policy had been amended to incorporate the relevant ward member into the policy and said that he was pleased by the change.

Councillors Chambers said that he did not feel strongly about the inclusion of ward members in the policy. Street names should be decided by the relevant

town or parish council unless the names were considered inappropriate. Councillor Sell added that he felt the decision should be made at the lowest possible level. He agreed with Councillor Hargreaves addition of a backstop allowing the Council to reject inappropriate names.

The Assistant Director Corporate Services entered the meeting.

The Director of Public Services, in response to a question by the Chairman, said that he believed it was a statutory requirement for parish councils to hold a ballot for any name changes. He would check whether this was definitely the case.

In response to Members, the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal clarified that the whole policy would be referred back to Cabinet and not just Section 1.5.

Councillor G Barker asked that it was made clear which elements of the policy were statutory and which were not. The Chairman then asked that the questions from Mr Harrington were answered by officers.

Councillor S Barker said that she was happy for Cabinet to reconsider the policy and she would take on board the points raised by the Committee. She noted that the most likely objector was the Royal Mail who wanted to avoid similar street names being adopted.

RESOLVED that the matter was referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

The meeting ended at 8.05pm.