

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 11
JUNE 2019 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor N Gregory (Chair)
Councillors M Caton, C Criscione, C Day (In place of N Reeve),
J Evans, R Jones, G LeCount and G Sell

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), A Bochel
(Democratic Services Officer) and A Webb (Director - Finance
and Corporate Services)

SC1 THANKS TO THE PREVIOUS CHAIR

Members agreed to pass a vote of thanks to Councillor Dean for his work as the previous Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

SC2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coote, Driscoll and Reeve.

SC3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

SC4 REFLECTIONS ON TRAINING

Members agreed that training provided to the Committee had been of a high standard.

Members noted that it was the job of the Scrutiny Committee to work as honest brokers instead of as representatives of political parties, in order to be effective as a critical friend. This would make for an effective committee and add the most value for residents of the district.

Councillors Sell and Evans noted that training ought to be a continuous process and asked that additional training be provided throughout the Council's term.

**SC5 STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

The Chair introduced the report which presented two documents: the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Memorandum of Understanding between Scrutiny and Cabinet.

The Chair said paragraph 18 of the report stated that Members who had been appointed “topic leads” should not take part in any research, discussion or decision on any subject relating to their topic. However officers had since advised him that this had been reviewed and could prove to be too restrictive. . Members agreed to review the matter if concern arose regarding the role of topic leads in this respect.

Members agreed that it was important to maintain a positive relationship with Cabinet, including having Cabinet members attend meetings of the Committee to discuss issues which they were leading on.

Councillor Criscione said having the budget presented to the Committee within good time would be important for effective scrutiny. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services said the procedure for this was the same annually. The budget strategy was initially presented to Scrutiny Committee in November, and then the budget reports were presented to the Committee in February.

On the request of Members, the Democratic Services Officer said he would circulate the list of Members who were topic leads once this list had been finalised.

SC6 **WORK PLANNING**

The Chair said the Scrutiny Committee had developed a number of ideas at the training session that they could choose to look into in greater depth. He would prefer to focus on a smaller number of items so that the focus of the Committee’s work was quality rather than quantity.

Councillor Evans said that Councillors Criscione, Jones and himself had put together a proposal for the Committee to undertake a review of the Council’s current approach to and management of planning processes, including the appraisal, drafting, agreement, monitoring and enforcement of conditions and planning obligations associated with major planning applications.

Members noted that an independent study had been commissioned to identify improvements to the Council’s processes for handling major planning applications. It was agreed that the Vice Chair and a representative of Councillor Criscione, Evans and Jones would meet to discuss whether there was merit in combining the work on these two projects.

Members discussed how the Committee might play a part in the review of the Council’s governance structure. It was decided to invite the Leader or the Deputy Leader of the Council to the next meeting to discuss what forum would lead this review and the role that it was envisaged that the Scrutiny Committee might play in this work.

The Committee agreed that it was unnecessary to hold the meeting scheduled for 31 July because this would not allow sufficient time for Members to carry out enough work on its projects. Instead the meeting could be moved to 31 October.

The Chair said that if Members had no objections, the Local Council Tax Support Scheme would be removed from the Work Programme as there was to be no change made to the Scheme for the upcoming year.

The meeting ended at 8.35.