

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 25
JUNE 2019 at 7.30 pm**

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

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), A Bochel
(Democratic Services Officer), N Brown (Development
Manager), G Glenday (Assistant Director - Planning) and
S Pugh (Assistant Director - Governance and Legal)

SC7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SC8 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings held at 6.30 on 21 March 2019, and on 25 June
2019, were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

SC9 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

In response to a Member question, officers said they would look into the
feasibility of providing the Committee with access to a library of documents
relating to items on the Cabinet forward plan.

SC10 PLANNING

Councillors Evans, Criscione and Jones had previously circulated proposals for a
scoping review for planning obligations and conditions, and these had been
published as a supplementary pack.

The Assistant Director – Planning said the Planning Department undertook a
service review last year and had since begun to adopt some of the resulting
proposals to move towards smarter working. As a result, the backlog of planning
applications had been brought down from over 100 to 40. There had also been
some scope for improving the quality of decisions, giving impetus to discussions
about how to move forward. He welcomed the proposed scrutiny review as a
means to provide a better service.

The Development Manager agreed, and said he was keen to involve the
community. It was an urban myth that the council was not collecting Section 106
money, and a Section 106 officer was now in place to monitor the issue. The

Council was in the process of inputting data into a system so members of the public could see whether Section 106 funds had been collected for particular developments. It was intended that this new system would be available to the public in April or May 2020, as inputting data was a time-consuming process.

In response to a Member question, the Development Manager said the Section 106 Officer's role was to monitor the implementation of Section 106 agreements. Agreeing mitigation measures was the role of the planning officers concerned. He would forward the Section 106 Officer job description to Councillor Evans.

Members commended the scoping review proposals. The Chair suggested that the task group expand their remit to consider any other matters that might arise and be deemed relevant.

RESOLVED to establish the Planning Obligations and Conditions Task and Finish Group, comprising Councillors Evans, Criscione and Jones. Terms of reference would be as set out in the scoping review proposal, incorporating a line which would allow the group to expand their remit to consider any other matters that might arise and be deemed relevant.

SC11 **MAJOR PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESSES - PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE PROPOSAL**

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) had proposed an initial scoping review to advise which aspects of the Council's approach to major planning applications required further scrutiny. Should the Committee approve the recommendations, the PAS should be ready to report back in September.

Members noted that the Major Planning Applications Task Group would not need to commence meeting until after the PAS had issued its first report.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Approve the proposal for a scoping review from the Planning Advisory Service as set out in the report.
- 2) Appoint Councillor LeCount as Chair of the Major Planning Applications Task Group.

SC12 **GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair asked the Leader of the Council to explain how work on reviewing the Council's governance arrangements would develop.

The Leader said his proposal would be to create a sub-committee of the Council, with the aim of setting the final recommendations before Annual Council in 2020. Various approaches to governance would be examined and it did not necessarily mean returning to the committee system the Council used previously. Further details about the sub-committee would go before Council at the July meeting.

Members noted that for the moment there was little role for the Scrutiny Committee to play in the process, but that it might examine the governance review's proposals after the sub-committee had developed them. It was suggested that the sub-committee contain some membership from the Scrutiny and Governance, Audit and Performance Committees.

The meeting ended at 8.45.