

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES
POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD
ON 11 FEBRUARY 2011**

Membership:

Councillors:	
* S Walsh (Chairman)	E Johnson
M Fisher	* J Knapman
M Garnett	* C Pond (Vice Chairman)
E Hart	* M Skeels
* J Deakin	* M Webster
* R Howard	* J Schofield

(* present)

Also present:

Councillor T Chapman, Chief Whip and Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste (*for the Scrutiny item relating to COMAH sites*)

Councillor J Lucas, Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts (*for the Scrutiny item relating to the Essex Heritage Report*)

Christine Sharland, Governance Officer, and Matthew Waldie, Committee Officer, were in attendance throughout the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am

1. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported apologies from Councillors M Fisher, M Garnett, E Hart and E Johnson.

2. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor:	Personal Interest:
Councillor J Knapman	Member of Essex Fire Authority
Councillor M Skeels	Member of Essex Fire Authority
Councillor C Pond	Chairman of Local Historical Society, Member of Loughton Town Council/Loughton Residents Association
Councillor S Walsh	Resident in a Grade 2 listed building

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2011 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. **Scrutiny Review on the Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements around COMAH Sites in Essex** (Minute 4/January 2011)

The Committee considered report SSC/03/11 concerning this Scrutiny Review on off site emergency planning requirements around COMAH Sites in Essex; and evidence was heard from the following witnesses:

- Councillor J King, Castle Point Borough Council on behalf of the Canvey Island West Neighbourhood. Councillor King also provided a written statement, which was read out at the meeting
- George Whatley on behalf of the group "People Against Methane" ("PAM"), Canvey Island, who was also supported by Steve Sawkins, a Canvey Island resident. Mr Whatley had also provided a written submission, which had been previously circulated to Members

The Committee noted that the evidence obtained from witnesses at the meeting would be collated into a separate report to be prepared by the Governance Officer, together with evidence obtained from other witnesses for consideration by Members at a later date.

5. **Scrutiny Review on Essex Heritage** (Minute 46/September 2010)

The Committee received report SSC/04/11 seeking approval for the final version of its Essex Heritage Scrutiny Report.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor J Lucas, Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts, and invited him to comment on the final report now submitted.

Councillor Lucas stated that, apart from a few minor points and one issue that had become obsolete (which he indicated that he would subsequently confirm with officers), he could not disagree with any of the recommendations set out in the report. There were, however, several points that required further thought, so when the Report was formally published, he would go through it with the Service Officers. He thanked the Committee for its work on this.

The Committee **Approved** the Report and **Agreed** to review the situation in February 2012. The Report contained the following recommendations:

National Issues

Recommendation 1

That the Cabinet should invite the Government to clarify its current stance on planning issues in respect of historic buildings and the historic environment.

Staffing Issues

Recommendation 2

That, as part of the Transformation Programme, the Cabinet should invite the Transformation Team to consider:

- (a) whether the current split of heritage related activities across Directorates is the most appropriate and cost effective method of organising staff; and
- (b) whether an approach should be made to the 12 district councils in Essex to seek to combine staffing provision in order to better deal with heritage/planning conservation matters.

Conservation Issues**Recommendation 3**

That the Cabinet be invited to consider how the County Council, twelve district councils, and parish councils can work together to achieve a consistent and robust heritage planning policy across Essex.

Recommendation 4

That the Cabinet be invited to remind County Council Directorates of the importance of keeping their property portfolio in good order.

Archival Services**Recommendation 5**

That the Cabinet be invited to consider the findings set out in this report on archival services.

Brown and White Tourism Signs**Recommendation 6**

That the Cabinet be invited to ask officers to undertake a review of the current Essex policy and guidance notes, and incorporate any necessary updating.

Heritage Signage and War Memorials**Recommendation 7**

That the Cabinet be invited to ask the Government to review the existing legislation, giving clear powers to parish councils (where they exist), and clarifying the arrangements in unparished areas.

Recommendation 8

That the Cabinet be invited to ask the 12 district councils in Essex to compile a list of war memorials in their area, with details of ownership and maintenance arrangements, and that the full list then be retained by the County Council and made available for public access.

6. Forward Look

The Committee noted report SSC/05/11 setting out the Committee's work programme to May 2011.

The following points were noted:

- A Flood Planning Exercise would be taking place shortly. Members were invited to contact Councillor Chapman, if they were interested in taking part in that exercise.
- The Committee would be reviewing the outcomes of its Scrutiny Report on Two-Wheeler Safety in due course. The Chairman advised Members that the Casualty Reduction Board had commissioned some new road signs on certain routes to promote the safety of motorcyclists.
- The work on the Local Transport Plan, which was being considered by a joint Task and Finish Group, would be reported for information to the Committee at a future meeting.

Councillor Knapman suggested that the Committee consider a new scrutiny review on the "school run" and their impact on the homes and streets around schools – like dropping off arrangements, local parking and speed limits – as well as other variables, such as weather conditions. The Chairman agreed that the proposal would be investigated for inclusion in the Committee's Forward Look, and pointed out that there would probably be some elements such as speed restrictions that fall within the remit of the Economic Development and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

7. Date of Future Meeting

The Committee noted that its next meeting was scheduled for 18 March 2011.

The Chairman reminded Members that when they were unable to attend a meeting, they should try to get a substitute whenever possible.

8. Death of Former Cricketer and Broadcaster Trevor Bailey

Before the meeting closed, the Committee noted with sadness the death of former cricketer and broadcaster Trevor Bailey CBE, the Essex and England all-rounder who had been such an outstanding ambassador for his sport and country for many years. Mr Bailey died in a fire at his retirement flat at Westcliff-on-Sea on 10 February 2010.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.20 pm

Chairman