

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES
POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD,
ON 15 January 2010**

Membership

Councillors:-

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| * K. Bentley | * C. Pond (Vice-Chairman) |
| * J. Deakin | C. Riley |
| * M. Fisher | * M. Skeels |
| * J. Knapman (substitute for D Abrahall) | * S. Walsh (Chairman) |
| R. Howard | |
| * M. Garnett | * L. Webster |

(* present)

also present

The following officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:-

Graham Redgwell Governance Officer
Janet Mills Committee Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am

1. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported as follows:

Apology	Substitution
Councillor D. Abrahall	Councillor J. Knapman

2. Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of personal interest were recorded:

Member	Personal Interest as:
Councillor S Walsh	Member of the Police Authority Resides in a Grade Two Listed Windmill
Councillor M Fisher	Member of the Police Authority
Councillor K Bentley	Member of the Fire Authority
Councillor J Knapman	Member of the Fire Authority
Councillor D Morris	Member of the Fire Authority
Councillor E Webster	Member of the Fire Authority
Councillor R Howard	Trustee of the Cleanaway Trust Fund

	Member of the Royal British Legion
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3. Minutes

With one minor amendment to record Councillor Knapman as being in the category of 'also present ' rather than present as a full Member of the Committee, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2009 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Two Wheeler Road Safety

The Committee received report SSC/01/10 from Graham Redgwell Governance Officer, stating the position so far in the Committee's two wheeler road safety scrutiny. Members were asked to give their comments on the first draft of the report.

The Chairman reported on his attendance at a recent National road Safety Conference. A note of the main issues discussed was circulated at the meeting. The main points were

- In general there needed to be more police officers on the roads

The problem with the number of KSIs in the over 40 year old rider's category was recognised as being related to:

- This category of rider usually rode larger more powerful motor bikes
- Some riders had no instruction
- Most had a false sense of security whereby believing that they were safe drivers.

With regard to the smaller population of younger riders category the problem with the number of KSIs was recognised as being related to:

- The need to impress their peer groups

Members questioned whether there should be national legislation to prevent manufacturers producing motor cycles that could reach speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour. It was noted that European legislation had not prevented the production of 'super bikes'. Members suggested that there should be national legislation to allow the fitting of speed restriction devises.

The use of Internet advertising to promote illegally organised motorbike scrambles and meetings of 'off road' motorbikes was discussed. A number of examples where this had taken place on Canvey Island and how it had been addressed by police positive enforcement, introducing a 50 mile per hour speed limits and by closing off lay-by meeting places, were outlined to Members. The effects upon wildlife from off road bikes being used on open

'public' land, was raised by Members. The Committee was advised that the matter had been recognised by the Natural England organisation. The problem of off road bikes being used on the roads in and around the Harlow area was also discussed.

Members raised concerns that these types of off road bikes did not meet the legal standards to be driven on the highway. It was recognised that in some cases parents purchased 'off road bikes' for their youngsters. The tragic case whereby children had been accidentally killed whilst riding off road bikes during an outing with their parents was cited as a point in case. Although it was recognised that most sellers were reputable and authorised, Members raised concerns that there was a potential for these vehicles to be sold in large numbers. In particular Members were concerned that some sellers advertised on the internet and set up a temporary business accommodation, leaving no avenue for inspection by statutory bodies or parental redress. The need for parent education was suggested.

Members questioned the role of Trading Standards in this matter and suggested that the final road safety scrutiny report, which would highlight key issues, should be forwarded to them.

Members recognised the need for young people to encounter a certain 'controlled' amount of danger in order to gain 'life skills. A balance between being over cautious and allowing young people pleasure in riding motor cycles of all kinds needed to be found. The benefits of introducing a recognised scheme to train young 'mini bike 'riders at the earliest possible age was briefly discussed.

Moving through the draft report Members again discussed the places where it was known that motor cycle riders frequently visited in large numbers. Members again noted what preventative measures were in place. Whilst commending the actions already taken Members concluded that the introduction of a lower speed limit on local unrestricted roads surrounding the 'troubled areas' could only be beneficial.

A problem with large numbers of riders meeting in High Beech in Epping Forrest district (not included in the draft report), was highlighted to the Committee. The Committee was advised that up to 200 motor cycle riders regularly met on Sundays at the 'Hut' Royal Oak. The venue was considered to have a nostalgic appeal especially to older riders as it was close to the oldest speedway motorcycle track in the UK. The main problem was that riders, as a tradition, seemed to consider that the local roads were also a race track. Concern was raised that the police were aware of the riders but there appeared to be no police engagement with riders or positive law enforcement. Members questioned why, when these meetings were widely known locally, there could not be a police presence in identified motor cycle meeting days. It was suggested that the matter be raised at a future meeting of the West Essex Area Forum.

It was noted that both High Beech and the Epping forest was very close to the Metropolitan Police area. Members considered that a more co-ordinated, systematic cross border policing approach was required.

Councillor Pond advised the Committee that meetings between the Essex County Council and the Corporation of London were currently ongoing. In future Councillor Webster would be invited to attend the meetings.

The matter of noise created by large gatherings of motor cycles was discussed, Members wondered if manufacturers could be lobbied by environmental health officers to introduce quieter machines or at least exhaust pipes.

With regard to an Essex wide co-ordinated approach to dealing with this road safety issue, Members suggested that meetings should be held with appropriate Members and officers from the Essex Unitary Authorities.

The conservation of ancient woodland meant it was not being viable to fell ancient trees to create a 'safe buffer' zone between the roadside. The trees alongside the smaller roads within 10,000 acres of the Epping forest was again

discussed. Members concluded that the introduction of a lower (40 miles per hour) speed limit in these areas would be beneficial.

Members updated the Committee regarding any local visits which they had undertaken related to the road safety issues since the November Committee meeting. It was noted that some planned visits by Members had not proceeded due to the exceptionally bad weather.

Councillor Walsh advised the Committee that there was to be a Road Safety GB Powered Two Wheeled Seminar which was to be held on Wednesday 3 February 2010. Members should advise Graham Redgwell by Tuesday 19 January should they wish to attend.

As a related matter, and in particular because of the current exceptionally bad weather (deep and prolonged snow), a Member highlighted to the Committee the need to quickly report pot holes and ruts in the road to the Highways Department. A Members recent experience had shown that the Highways Department had acted very quickly to repair the road surface particularly if the damage was deemed to be a danger to motor cycle users.

Members requested information regarding the number of people undertaking motor cycle training schemes.

Members continued to have concerns regarding the proposed scheme whereby police officers could enforce and collect money from the public in the way of on the spot fines. It was suggested that the Chief Constable of the Essex Police Force be invited to explain the scheme. Graham Redgwell advised the Committee that this action would be captured in the recommendations of the final report, when it would be requested that the Chief

Constable attend to answer questions on road safety and other related matters.

Members were also asked to consider whether any further witnesses needed to be heard before the Committee formed its recommendations for the Cabinet Member and drafting its final report.

It was agreed that no further witnesses were required and that an updated final report should be considered at the next meeting.

5. Scrutiny Review of Essex Heritage

The Committee received report SSC/02/10 a scoping document from Graham Redgwell, Governance Officer. The document set out proposals for considering different aspects of Essex's heritage.

Graham Redgwell advised the Committee that he had met with Councillor Pond to develop the proposed scoping document. It was explained that the Committee had previously accepted the proposal from Councillor Pond that the topic of Essex heritage should form the basis of a scrutiny,

Councillor Pond outlined the main details of the scoping document to the Committee and asked Members for their comments and suggestions.

General discussion took place Member's comments and suggestions were as follows:

- With regard to the scope of the review Members suggested that the matter of buildings being allowed to fall into disrepair so that it became possible to sell the property for redevelopment should be included.
- Members welcomed the inclusion of War Memorials in the heritage scrutiny. The Committee was advised regarding a recent initiative to renew War Memorials in South Benfleet and Hockley. It was envisaged that the initiative would be repeated on Canvey Island. The initiative had been funded via the South Essex Area Forum.
- There appeared to be no single answer to Members questions regarding who owned or who was legally responsible for the preservation of War Memorials. Members agreed with a suggestion that a member of the Royal British Legion be invited to attend the Committee.
- The Committee discussed whether churches should be included within the scope of the scrutiny review. Councillor Pond advised the Committee that the diocese of Chelmsford had a large component of historical buildings; the Church Conservation Trust undertook church preservation

and restoration. Further to discussion it was agreed that due to the size of the subject, the matter of churches would not be included at this time.

Members then reviewed the proposed sources of evidence and witnesses as set out in the scoping document.

Further to discussion Members agreed that the following additional organisations be added to the list of potential witnesses.

- Essex Archaeological Association
- The National Trust
- English Heritage (a Regional Inspector to be invited)
- Essex County Council (David Andrews Team Leader Historic Buildings and Conservation to be invited)

Heritage in private ownership, such as the Roman Circus in Colchester, was discussed. Members agreed that, in order to gain an alternative view point, an owner/resident of a heritage property should be invited to put their views to the Committee.

Members reviewed the work plan as set out in the scoping document and agreed the suggestion by Graham Redgwell that the April committee meeting would consist of a visit to the conservation area of Waltham Abby. It was proposed that an open then meeting be held locally, with members of the public being invited to give their views.

6. Date of Future Meetings

Members noted that the following dates had been reserved for this committee as activity days, and may comprise:

- Meetings in private
- Meetings in public
- Working groups
- Sub-committee meetings
- Outside visits

Friday 12 February 2010

Friday 19 March 2010

Friday 16 April 2010

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.20 am

Chairman