

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES
POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD,
ON 13 MAY 2011**

Membership:

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

(* present)

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

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am.

22. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported apologies from Councillors E Hart, R Howard, E Johnson, J Knapman and M Skeels.

23. Declarations of Interest

Councillor C Pond declared a non-prejudicial interest as a Vice-President of the Walthamstow Historical Society.

24. Minutes of the Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2011 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman reminded Members that, as of the Full Council meeting of 10 May, the Safer and Stronger Communities Committee (SSCPSC) had formerly ceased to exist as an individual Policy and Scrutiny Committee. However, it had been agreed that this Committee meeting should go ahead as its arrangements had already been put into place, and an agenda had been published. Furthermore the Chairman indicated that it was going to be proposed to the new Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee that the SSCPSC be re-established as a Task and Finish Group. As a number of SSCPSC reviews were already underway it was considered preferable for the same membership to complete investigations, and refer any conclusions for approval to the new Committee.

25. Scrutiny Review on the Sustainable Environment and Enterprise Specialist Services Consultancy Project

The Committee considered report SSC/09/11 concerning this Scrutiny Review on proposals on the way that the specialist services currently provided by the Council's Sustainable Environment and Enterprise (SEE) Service may be provided in future. Evidence was heard from the following witnesses:

- David Forkin, Head of Highways Maintenance, Essex County Council
- John Neale, English Heritage
- Martin Stuchfield, Essex Society for Archaeology and History
- Graham Thomas, Tendring District Council and Essex Planning Officers Association
- Lesley Stenhouse, Minerals and Waste Planning Manager, Essex County Council

The Committee adjourned for lunch at 12.35 pm and reconvened at 1.30pm, when it heard further evidence from:

- Owen Bedwin, Branch Manager, Historic Environment and SEE Change Manager
- Barry Shaw, Head of Built Environment, SEE.

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. This report would then be submitted to Members for their consideration prior to its submission to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture, and the Cabinet meeting on 21 June when the Consultancy Project proposals were due to be determined.

In summary the Committee agreed that the following matters be highlighted for the attention of Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture:

1. Based upon the evidence considered, the Committee supports the creation of a Local Authority Trading Company as a way forward for the Sustainable Environment and Enterprise Specialist Services Consultancy Project.
2. That, in taking the Project forward, critical consideration should be given to:
 - The safeguarding of the high quality approach to transmitting knowledge throughout the Services
 - The benefits of close working among the specialist teams as well as with their customers in the County Council complex at County Hall, Chelmsford
 - The ways of retaining goodwill of existing staff who may not necessarily be employed on a full time basis by a new trading

company, but who may be recruited on a contract basis for individual cases.

3. That the Committee (Safer and Stronger Communities Task and Finish Group) be afforded an opportunity to comment upon the Business Case for the new Trading Company in the summer before a final decision is made by the Cabinet.

26. Scrutiny Review on the Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements around COMAH Sites in Essex (Minute 10/February 2011)

The Committee received report SSC/10/11 on the progress of its review on the off site emergency planning requirements around COMAH sites in Essex, including an interim scrutiny report based on the evidence received by the Committee to date.

The Chairman confirmed that further investigation by the Committee was still necessary to complete this review, and consideration would be given to obtaining information on the following matters:

- The manner in which the Port of London Authority has exercised its powers in respect of planning on Canvey Island.
- The findings and consequences of the Buncefield Inquiry.
- The views of the Health & Safety Executive.
- The outcomes and potential follow-up of the Schools Project (including production of the DVD)

27. Forward Look

The Committee noted report SSC/11/11 setting out its work programme.

It was noted that, in view of the Committee's change in status to that of a Task and Finish Group, its schedule could change over the coming months. However, the Chairman confirmed that the dates already reserved for its meetings (viz, second or third Friday of each month) should be retained in Members' diaries, at least for the time being.

28. Dates of Future Meetings

The Committee noted that the next meeting would take place on **Friday 17 June 2011**.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 2.40 pm

Chairman

