

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 15 JULY 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)

Matthew Waldie, Committee Officer, was in attendance throughout the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am.

29. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported apologies from Councillors R Howard, J Knapman and J Schofield.

The Chairman added that Councillor Knapman had informed him that he wished to resign from the Committee, owing to the pressure of other commitments, so this was noted as being effective from this meeting.

30. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

31. Committee Status

The Committee noted that:

- 1) at the Scrutiny Board meeting of 20 May (Minute 18/ May 2011) at the request of Councillor Walsh, the Board agreed that the outstanding scrutiny items from Safer and Stronger would be taken forward under the auspices of the new Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee; and
- 2) at its first meeting on 16 June 2011 (Minute 18/ June 2011) the new Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this Committee should be set up as a Task and Finish Group.

32. Minutes of the Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2011 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the insertion of the following at the end of Item 23, Declarations of Interest: “ – as was Martin Stuchfield, one of the witnesses.”

33. Two Wheeler Road Safety

The Committee considered report SSC/12/11 concerning this Scrutiny Review and including responses to the Committee’s 24 recommendations in the scrutiny report. The Committee had received a copy of the report.

The Chairman welcomed Nicola Foster, Group Manager Road Safety, and asked her to address the meeting. Ms Foster made a few brief points. She informed the meeting that the government had issued its casualty reduction targets, which represented a 20% reduction in those Killed or Seriously Injured by 2020.

“Shiny side up” signs had been introduced. These were temporary road signs aimed at motorcyclists and car drivers with regard to motorcyclists, placed at specific points in the road. They were not large (A0), but their distinctive design made them stand out to road users.

In October, a “no excuse” campaign would be launched, which had demonstrated good results when carried out by other authorities.

Recently, a day of carrying out random checks on HGVs, under Operation Mermaid, had been very successful, exposing a substantial number of offences. A significant problem was with firms who regarded drivers driving too many hours as part of their business plan – ie any fines imposed were just accepted as another economic factor in running the business.

The Committee then considered developments, etc, of each recommendation

The activities of the partners under Recommendation 1, supporting the cross agency approach to this, and 2, welcoming the level of work being carried out by all agencies, were noted.

It was noted that the Bike Safe courses, covered under Recommendation 3, were actually Police initiatives, although the Roadrunner programme was Highways led.

With regard to Recommendation 4, encouraging the introduction of state-of-the-art speed camera technology when possible, it was acknowledged that the present financial conditions made swift progress unlikely. However, Ms Foster

informed Members that they were intending to put a case forward for rear facing cameras on the A127.

There were no comments forthcoming on Recommendation 5, which proposed legislating to allow speed governing devices on motor cycles.

It was noted that the Essex Casualty Reduction Board, as per Recommendation 6, would be updating and republishing the Essex Two Wheeler Strategy by February 2012.

Regarding Recommendation 7, on input to the County Council's Speed Strategy, it was noted that this data was not necessary for this speed limit review.

The imposing of speed limits on certain roads, as per Recommendation 8, had already taken place on several roads. Shiny side up signs were also to be used. It was agreed that the Committee should receive statistical data on the impact of these restrictions for a period after the changes, eg 6 months afterwards.

The Committee noted the positive response to Recommendation 9, taking the needs of motor cyclists into account when making changes to road layouts.

The intended activity with regard to Recommendation 10, encouraging educational establishments to require training of new motor cyclists coming onto their premises, was noted.

Recommendation 11 asked the Cabinet Member for Education and the 2012 Games to consider how two wheeler road safety could be incorporated into schools' work on road safety issues; the potential inclusion in Road Runner events was noted.

The potential for working with other parties, such as the Police and District Councils, was noted for Recommendation 12, encouraging Trading Standards to run a campaign advising parents on the restrictions on the use of off-road bikes

Recommendation 13, proposes that the Chief Constable be encouraged to set clear parameters for his officers, with respect to Two Wheeler safety. The Committee noted that Essex Police already operates in such a manner, which has produced positive results.

Regarding Recommendation 14, inviting confirmation from the Chief Constable on how the Essex and Metropolitan Police Forces liaise in respect of motor cycle gatherings in the Epping Forest area, the Committee noted the need for all relevant parties to be kept fully informed of each other's actions. The existing arrangements were noted.

Regarding Recommendation 15, proposing selective cutting back of secondary growth, it was noted that requests would be made to the

Conservators after relevant site visits (scheduled for May/June). Ms Foster would confirm whether these had been carried out.

No response had yet been forthcoming in respect of damage to flora and fauna by off-road vehicles (Recommendation 16).

Regarding Recommendation 17, concerning impact on environment and local residents of off-road bikes, the success of Harlow Council's "Catch & Crush" initiative was noted.

In response to Recommendation 18, suggesting that VOSA set up testing points for motor bikes near known accident black spots, the Committee noted VOSA's response that they had no mandate or equipment to carry out such checks.

It was noted that many road safety issues in respect of HGVs, as per Recommendation 19, were being carried forward. It was particularly noted that Hackney Council ran a course for HGV drivers, in respect of cyclists, and Essex had asked to borrow it.

Regarding Recommendations 19, 20 and 21, it was noted that Operation Mermaid sessions were carried out regularly and were generally regarded as successful. Ms Foster agreed to confirm details of these to Committee Members.

Regarding the dangers of potholes, as per Recommendation 22, the Committee noted the significance of the resources allocated to winter damage to highways: £9 million.

With regard to Recommendation 23, concerning the imposition of roadside fines, the Committee noted the limited scope of these powers.

Regarding Recommendation 24, about the involvement of neighbouring authorities, the Committee noted the County's efforts to work with Southend and Thurrock, as well as the Metropolitan Police.

The Committee noted that the Report had now been signed off, should be recommended to the Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy & Scrutiny Committee, and should be reviewed in a year's time.

The Chairman thanked Ms Foster for her contribution.

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

The Committee noted SSC/13/11, the interim report on this scrutiny review. The Chairman pointed out that the business case was not yet ready, but the new timetable would allow the Committee to consider the full proposal at its September meeting.

There was some concern that putting back the timetable to 1 April 2012 might have a negative impact on the new company's viability. However, it was pointed out that 1 April was good for tax purposes, etc, being the start of the financial year.

The Chairman confirmed he would make enquiries of Councillor Lucas concerning the effects of the new timing on this project.

35. Flood and Water Management

The Committee, having noted report SSC/14/11 concerning this Scrutiny Review, **Agreed** to recommend to the Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee that the following matters be considered as a part of its Forward Look:

(i) That the Essex Partnership for Flood Management be requested to submit an annual report on its activity to the Committee, together with notification of the publication of important documents such as the FLOODCOM report.

(ii) That the Committee be advised upon the final funding arrangements for the Council's LLFA responsibilities.

The Committee also agreed to reconsider this matter in a year's time.

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

The Committee noted that there have been no further developments recently, but that it intended to visit the Port of London Authority on the 14 October. It was suggested that this should be combined with a visit to a COMAH site in Kent.

37. A Board Policy on the Publicly Maintainable Highway

The Committee was informed that Trading Standards and Highways had made some movement on this issue, although responses were still not forthcoming from certain districts.

However, the Committee noted that it would be on the agenda for the September meeting.

38. 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.

39. Dates of Future Meetings

It was suggested that Members keep meeting days free at least till the end of 2011, if possible, as it was likely that the Committee would have projects in hand at least till then.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would take place on **Friday 9 September 2011**.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 10.50 am

Chairman