

**To: All Members of the County Council
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S
DEPARTMENT**

Ask for: Nikki Patient

Ext: 25560

My Ref: /np

Your Ref:

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION & PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2002**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

P T J Channell, M D Colne, G M Cook, K Emsall (Chairman), B N W Hammond,
J A Hobday (Vice-Chairman), D R McManus, M H O'Neill, P A Ruffles, J A W Usher.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

D A Ashley (Community Information and Development), D Beatty (Resources), G D Game (Protection and Registration) D B Lloyd (Best Value).

Other Members in Attendance

M V Bayes, B J Lamb, A M R Searing.

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Community Information & Protection Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15 January 2002, as circulated, copy annexed, action was taken or decisions were reached on individual items as recorded below.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Membership Changes

Gary Cook had replaced **Keith Crout**

(ii) Ex Deputy Chief Fire Officer Don Kent

The Scrutiny Committee joined the Chairman in congratulating ex Deputy Chief Fire Officer Don Kent on being awarded and OBE in the Queen's New Years Honours. Don, who lives in Berkhamstead, joined Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in 1972 where he served until he retired in 1993. He then took up a position a position with the Fire Service Inspectorate as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Fire Services from which he retired in May last year.

The award is recognition of his years of service to the Fire Service, during which time he did a great deal of work in support of the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund, both nationally and locally.

(iii) Adult Learning Skills

The Chairman was pleased to announce that Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service had received one of the highest ratings in a recent inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. The Adult Learning Inspectorate reports to the Secretary of State for Education and the public on the quality of education and training received by adult learners. An inspection team of three spent a total of 12 days examining the Service's training provision and support early in September 2001. They have now produced their final report which has awarded the Service three Grade 1's (outstanding), two Grade 2's (good) and one Grade 3 (satisfactory).

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman congratulated the Chief Fire Officer and members of the Service, in particular those involved with Training and Development, on the achievement of this award.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 October 2001 were confirmed as a correct record.

PUBLIC PETITIONS

None.

QUESTIONS

None.

PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS

1. FUNCTIONS AND REMIT OF THE COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

[Officer contact: Nikki Patient Tel: 01992 555560]

- 1.1 Members noted the functions and remit of the Community Information and Protection Scrutiny Committee, following the adoption of the new Constitution by County Council on 27 November 2001.

2. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2002/03

[Officer contact: Geoff Brown Tel: 01992 555370]

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Committee was advised that the Best Value Performance Plan was still in draft format and that any comments made by the Committee would be considered by Cabinet on 28 January 2002.

ACTIONS

2.2 Members who attended a scrutiny workshop on the Performance Plan, held on 7 January, had made comments relating to the late start of the 'Safe Havens' initiative and numbers of false alarms. In response to these comments, members were advised that the late start was due to the commitment of operational staff to complete other initiatives and because commencement of 'Safe Havens' had to fit with school term dates. Officers expected the project to be on target within six to nine months. In relation to false alarms, Steve Seaber reported that officers were not aware of a particular problem from residential security companies within the county and that the Service worked hard to reduce the number of false alarms from commercial premises and malicious calls.

2.3 In considering the Best Value Performance Plan 2002/03, the scrutiny committee made the following comments:-

- i) the involvement of the Fire and Rescue Service in the efforts to reduce youth crime was welcomed;
- ii) the extent of the role played by the Library Service in the promise to 'help people to continue learning throughout their lives' needed to be clarified;
- iii) the Committee would have liked to see a more complete version of the Best Value Performance Plan recognising that the draft before them was the official version that had been referred by Cabinet and that work was currently underway to update the plan, which version they would not be able to scrutinise;
- iv) it was regretful that some members had been unable to attend the scrutiny workshop to discuss the Performance Plan.

2.4 Comments to Cabinet

- 1) The Scrutiny Committee noted the response to the comments made at the Best Value Performance Plan scrutiny workshop;
- 2) That the work contributed by the Library Service to the Promise, 'We will help people to continue learning throughout their lives' should be clarified.

3. **PROPOSED RESOURCE BUDGET 2002/03 - 2005/06 FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION PORTFOLIOS**

[Officer contact: Andrew Nightingale Tel: 01992 555331]

3.1 Andrew Nightingale introduced this item and explained that the proposed budget incorporated the Cabinet proposals, as made on 17 December 2001. The County Council's Resource budget would be agreed by County Council on 14 February 2002.

David Roberts to
note
Andrew Robertson
Steve Seaber
Anne Fisher

3.2 Comments to Cabinet

- 1) The Scrutiny Committee were concerned about the extent to which the budget was adequate in respect of:
 - a) the ability to achieve the promised improvements within a cash limited budget;
 - b) additional regulatory conditions placed on the Fire and Rescue Service by National Government;
 - c) additional pressures placed on Emergency Planning in recent months;
 - d) the possibility of a full Coroner's Inquest into the Hatfield rail crash;
 - e) the ability of the Library Service to meet the requirements of DDA.
- 2) That in the event that additional resources being available, they should be made available for the material fund following the good use made of the additional funding previously contributed.
- 3) Cabinet should note that the Executive Member was asked to make representations to the National Government Cabinet Office about the funding of Emergency Planning, in particular in light of the increased workload placed on the service by the events of September 11 and the uncertainty of the grant allocation.

David Roberts to
note
Andrew Robertson
Steve Seaber
David Moses
Tom Hawkyard

4 HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES AND LOCAL STUDIES (HALS) ACCOMMODATION - UPDATE

[Officer contact: Andrew Robertson Tel: 01992 555605]

- 4.1 Bob Breakey updated the Committee as to progress made in finding a solution to the problems being experienced with HALS accommodation since the last Committee. Bob advised that the HALS user group had been involved in discussions about the problem and had expressed a need for any possible new sites to be easily accessible and well serviced by public transport.
- 4.2 Bob Breakey advised that in looking at the possible solutions, talks were being held with Cambridgeshire County Council about the possibility of a joint Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme.

4.3 Scrutiny Committee Conclusions

- 1) The Scrutiny Committee re-iterated it's concern that HALS should not lose its status as a place of public deposit and that the eventual solution to the accommodation problems should be located within Hertfordshire.
- 2) The Committee requested that a progress report on this issue should be submitted to every meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Andrew Robertson
Bob Breakey
Nikki Patient to note

5 REPORT ON PROGRESS TO DATE OF THE RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES TOPIC GROUP

[Officer contact: John Boulter Tel. 01992 555951]

- 5.1 An oral update was given on the progress made at the first meeting of the Responding to Emergencies Topic Group, held on 14 January. Members were advised that the meeting had provided background information which had helped to clarify the grey areas of responsibility when responding to emergencies, particularly those related to flooding. An outline of the work programme for future meetings was provided.

5.2 Scrutiny Committee Conclusions

The Scrutiny Committee AGREED that a further report on this matter should be submitted when the Topic Group had formulated its recommendations.

John Boulter
Nikki Patient to note

6 COMMITMENT CEREMONIES

[Officer contact: Tom Hawkyard Tel. 01992 555499]

- 6.1 Tom Hawkyard introduced this report and explained what commitment ceremonies were and advised that a number of local authorities were proposing to pilot these ceremonies later in the year.

6.2 Scrutiny Committee Conclusions

The Scrutiny Committee AGREED that at the current time there was not enough information or evidence available to decide whether or not to scrutinise the matter. The Committee requested that Tom Hawkyard should monitor the pilots and report back when they had been running for six months.

T Hawkyard
N Patient to note

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

No items were reported to the County Council.

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary