

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**27th January, 2011**

Present:- Councillor The Mayor (Councillor McNeely) (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Blair, Cutts, Ellis, Havenhand, Hodgkiss, Nightingale and Walker.

Also in attendance was Andrew Roddison and Derek Corkell (Rotherfed) and Jack Carr (Environment Protection UK).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P. A. Russell and Jenny Andrews.

**55.           DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

**56.           QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

There were no questions from any members of the public or the press.

**57.           COMMUNICATIONS**

Reference was made to Minute No. C149 (Housing Rent Increase 2011/12) of a meeting of the Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2011 and concern expressed that this matter had never been submitted to this Scrutiny Panel.

Whilst it was acknowledged that the proposed housing rent would increase, there had been no discussion on the increases proposed for garage rents, heating charges and communal facilities for 2011/12 with this Panel.

It was suggested that whilst the decision was to be considered by the Council on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2011, a report be included on the agenda for this Panel's next meeting and that the Cabinet Member be asked to attend and explain the rationale as to why there had been no discussion by Scrutiny.

**58.           ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS - EFFECT ON HEATING IN COUNCIL PROPERTIES**

Consideration was given to a report circulated by Dave Richmond, Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods, which set out the circumstances which resulted in a loss of heating and hot water on a major scale for residents across the Borough as a result of central heating failures due to frozen condensate pipes.

The Chairman referred to Minute No. 112(b) of a meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2011 where it was reported that the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel was to set up a joint scrutiny review to look at the response to the snow events in November and December, 2010 and which should include the disturbance to residents as a result of the central heating failures.

A date had been proposed for the full day scrutiny review involving Members of both the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panels, but the central heating elements were to be considered at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2011 at the Town Hall.

Anyone wishing to be involved in this Scrutiny Review or provide any information should contact Sioned-Mair Richards, Scrutiny Adviser.

Dave Richmond pointed out that Wilmot/Dixons also had a member of staff who sat on a national panel and was in a position to report on Government guidelines into the installation of condensing boilers and who could be invited as part of the Scrutiny Review to provide information.

The Scrutiny Panel expressed their concern for the vulnerability of residents in Rotherham who had suffered through the cold weather without heating and suggested that consideration be given to inclusion of these kind of elements in the Emergency Plan.

Resolved:- (1) That anyone wishing to be involved in the joint scrutiny review into the snow events of November and December (primarily the central heating elements) should contact the Scrutiny Adviser.

(2) That Wilmot/Dixons be contacted to ensure the member of staff's availability to provide information.

## 59. CREMATORIUM SERVICES

The Chairman welcomed Alan Pogorzelec, Business Regulation Manager, to the meeting who gave a brief summary of the responsibilities of Bereavement Services in Rotherham prior to the visit to Rotherham Crematorium by the Scrutiny Panel.

Alan Pogorzelec circulated a briefing note, funeral director customer satisfaction results and a bereavement services fee benchmarking sheet for 2010.

It was noted that Dignity Funerals Ltd., had taken over cemetery and graveyard maintenance and management and clarification was provided on the role. Dignity Funerals Ltd. had concentrated their efforts on making sure Rotherham Crematorium was completely compliant with new legislation, unlike the other South Yorkshire Local Authorities, but would now be diverting their resources to other cemeteries.

Reference was made to the benchmarking fees and the comparisons with other Local Authorities and whilst it was noted that some areas' cremations and burials were inclusive of some elements, attempts were made to pro rata the figures accordingly.

With regards to the funeral director customer satisfaction surveys, it was noted that these were telephone surveys undertaken by the Council. Whilst there were no surveys done with bereaved families at this stage due to the need to be sensitive at difficult times, there was an intention to include in the performance framework an element of customer testing by mail.

The Scrutiny Panel welcomed this information and opportunities would be provided on the visit to ask any questions of the Manager at Dignity, Georgina Bembridge, who would be available at the Crematorium.