

**COMMUNITY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 16 MARCH 2006**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.

Councillors H D Baker, C A Bayley, M A Gayler, M A Hibbs,  
E W Hicks, R M Lemon, A Marchant, J Menell, M J Miller,  
J P Murphy, G Sell and F E Silver.

Also present:- Councillor A M Wattebot.

Tenant Forum Representatives:- J Bolvig-Hansen and A Cove.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, D Burrige, R Chamberlain, S Clarke,  
S McLagan, R Millership, P Snow and A Stewart.

**CM15 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Boland.

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor Menell as non-Executive Director of the Uttlesford PCT.  
Councillor Murphy as a Member of Great Dunmow Town Council.  
Councillor Gayler as a Member of Great Dunmow Town Council.

**CM16 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2006 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the reference to Councillor Menell in Minute CM1 being amended to read "Chairman of Buffy Bus".

**CM17 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute CM9 – First Aid – First Responder**

The Chairman reported that he had attended a recent meeting on Health and Safety in Chelmsford, together with the Principal Environmental Health Officer (Commercial Team) and he expected that a report on this matter would be submitted to the June meeting of this Committee.

**(ii) Minute CM11 – Allocations Process**

It was noted that eight or nine Members had requested that they continue to receive monthly details of allocations/nominations within their ward following the change of policy made at the last meeting. The Executive Manager (Housing Services) reported the receipt of a letter from the Rural Housing Trust highlighting a change in stair-casing arrangements from the beginning of April. He said that a letter was being drafted to send to the Government

regarding the suggestion that all shared ownership properties in rural areas would be subject to a change of ownership. The Committee agreed with the course of action being taken.

**(iii) Minute CM14 – Great Dunmow Primary School – Eastern Boundary Housing Land**

The Executive Manager (Housing Services) advised Members that he had suggested to the East Area Panel that the strip of housing land concerned should be fenced at both ends to prevent it being used for access to the school and he was presently consulting with local residents regarding this proposed course of action. The period for consultation/objections would close on Monday, 20 March.

Councillor Murphy expressed concerns that the land in question was now in a muddy and poor condition and he felt there was a danger that the Council could become liable in the event of an accident.

Councillor Hicks said that it was not made clear at the Area Panel Meeting whether the decision was being made by that Panel or was being recommended to this Committee.

CM18

**PCT, STRATEGIC HEALTH AUTHORITY AND AMBULANCE TRUST RECONFIGURATION**

David Barron and Melanie Walker were present for the consideration of this item as, respectively, Chairman and Chief Executive of the Uttlesford Primary Care Trust (PCT).

There was a brief introduction from the Community Development Manager, outlining the outcome to date of the consultation procedure and the options presented for consideration. Four options were now on the table for the reconfiguration of PCTs within Essex and it had been made clear that the option of retaining the status quo had been deleted from the consultation process. The four options were:

- Option 1 – 2 PCTs for North Essex and South Essex
- Option 2 – 3 PCTs for Essex County, Southend and Thurrock
- Option 3 – 4 PCTs for North Essex, South Essex, Southend and Thurrock
- Option 4 – 5 PCTs for Mid Essex, North Essex, Southeast Essex, Southwest Essex and West Essex.

Mr Barron said that the present consultation was in pursuance of the Government's manifesto pledge to channel an extra £250 million into front line health services. The Government's intention was that this extra money would be found at the expense of local management and administration.

Options 2 and 3 had been rejected because of the disparity of size between the unitary council areas and the remainder of the county. He explained that Option 4 for five PCTs in the county was the preferred option of most existing PCTs. Only four PCTs, including Uttlesford, had expressed support for

Option 1 for two PCTs based on a North and South Essex split. This was not an easy process and strong feelings had been expressed on all sides. In the West Essex area, Harlow and Epping Forest had both supported the five PCT option but Uttlesford PCT was holding to its position in support of Option 1.

A meeting of all PCTs in Essex would shortly take place at the Hilton Hotel at Stansted Airport and it was hoped that this would produce a recommendation from the county that would be submitted to the Secretary of State. It was hoped that the new strategic health authorities would be in place by July this year and the new PCTs would begin to operate by October.

Melanie Walker said that three key areas had been put forward by the Government to justify the proposed reforms. These were the ability to develop a good understanding of population and patient needs, the ability to have sufficient flexibility to support local partnership working and practice based commissioning, and the ability to have a critical mass of resources to support strong commissioning and contracting. She hoped that the new PCT organisations would be big enough to perform a strategic function but sufficiently local to respond to local needs and concerns. It was considered that small local PCTs would not have a sufficient level of managerial expertise to drive local health services towards foundation trust status. In broad terms, that is why Uttlesford PCT had decided that the best option would be to move towards the provision of two PCTs in the county.

The Chairman said that he was sorry that the Uttlesford PCT would be lost but the reality was that this was no longer an option. He considered that the most important factors in determining the Council's view were the provision of the best possible health services for the population of Uttlesford while at the same time minimising any remoteness that might occur following the loss of the local PCT. The views of Uttlesford PCT would clearly help to shape the Council's representations in this matter.

Councillor Silver said that he agreed with the PCT's view and that the Council should look to support Option 1 in the report. This was also the unanimous view of staff at the surgery in Great Dunmow which he said was the largest practice in Uttlesford.

Councillor Sell expressed concerns about the trend towards the provision of more remote services. If local patients wanted to influence the decision over the reconfiguration of the PCT boundaries, how could they do this? He also asked how many redundancies there were likely to be resulting from the loss of the Uttlesford PCT.

Melanie Walker said it was clear the new PCT would have a local management structure and would be able to work with the District Council on public health matters. She hoped that the reorganisation would free up more money to put directly into local structures. She also said that practice based commissioning groups would have to include public representation and would work in consultation with local strategic partnerships. On the question of redundancies, she was not in a position to say how many posts were likely to be affected, but reductions in staffing levels were unlikely to affect clinical staff and would be concentrated primarily in the area of senior management.

Councillor Sell responded that this answer did not allay his concerns as the Council would be bound to have less influence than it did at present and he was worried about the trend towards “big is better” in Government thinking. Councillor Gayler said that he shared these concerns and proposed an amendment to Councillor Silver’s proposal that “the Council express regret for the loss of the Uttlesford PCT as this had enabled the Council to work more effectively and develop better working relationships with local health bodies; it was important to maintain the flexibility to support local partnership working and commissioning in liaison with the health services, particularly as any of the options presented would lead to more remote services”.

Councillor Murphy felt that Uttlesford would be the small relation if it were to be included in a grouping with Harlow and Epping Forest and would be more likely to receive greater attention if included within a larger PCT block. He had no confidence that the reconfiguration would save money.

Councillor Lemon said that size was not important but the critical factor was the availability of proper resources.

Melanie Walker said that it was particularly important to look to extend partnership working because of the democratic mandate of the local authority and the health service was not generally seen as being strong in this area. She felt that greater local influence in strategic decision making could be achieved through practice based commissioning groups. These might have to be organised on a north/south division in recognition of the nature of the Uttlesford district.

Councillor Hibbs said the District Council had had no role in health service provision a few years ago and had now been given a limited scrutiny role. As a result of this development he felt the District Council was able to forge better links with local health service providers. He proposed a further amendment that “the Council should seek to establish a local health forum to work with the new PCT, and with local practice based commissioning and patient groups, in helping to deliver local health services, and to endorse the recommendation in the consultation document that current PCT resource allocations be protected until at least 2008”.

The original proposal, and the two amendments, having been seconded, Councillor Silver agreed to incorporate both amendments within his original proposal and it was seconded accordingly.

RESOLVED that:

- 1 the Council’s response to the Department of Health’s Consultation on the reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts be sent on the basis of support for the option of two PCTs for Essex (North Essex and South Essex);
- 2 In its response, the Council express regret for the loss of the Uttlesford PCT as this had enabled the Council to work more effectively and develop better working relationships with local health bodies; it was important to maintain the flexibility to support local partnership working and commissioning in liaison

- with the health services, particularly as any of the options presented would lead to more remote services; and
- 3 the Council seek to establish a local health forum to work with the new PCT, and with local practice based commissioning and patient groups, in helping to deliver local health services, and to endorse the recommendation in the consultation document that current PCT resource allocations be protected until at least 2008.

CM19

## **GRANT MAKING DECISIONS**

The Community Development Manager reminded Members that the recently adopted delegation scheme gave Area Panels the power to allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council. His report suggested a new approach to accommodate the role of the Area Panels. This would involve delegating the authorisation of grant provision under the Community Project Grant Scheme, split equally between the three Area Panels, taking into account the allocation of £4,000 to each of the four main centres of Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted and Thaxted. This would mean a provision of approximately £9,300 from the original allocation of £28,000 to each area panel.

Councillor Menell said that she had made representations to the Environment Committee on behalf of Arkesden Parish Council who wished to extend the 30 miles per hour limit in the village at an estimated cost of £3,000. The Parish Council wanted to apply for funding under the Community Project Grant Scheme but she was concerned the criteria set down in the report did not provide a match with this project.

Councillor Murphy said that he supported what Councillor Menell was trying to achieve and proposed that the words "Area Panels be given the necessary discretion to vary the criteria subject to exceptional circumstances" be added to the criteria set out.

The Chairman was concerned that the grant criteria had been set for specific purposes and felt that grant applications should be determined within a preconceived structure. However, the Leader said that it was within the Committee's remit to change the criteria in appropriate circumstances and the wording suggested by Councillor Murphy was in accordance with this remit.

The Committee discussed the timetable for the submission and awarding of grants and the Community Development Manager advised Members that applications should be submitted by June of this year. The general feeling of Members was in favour of granting Area Panels the power to make decisions even where these did not exactly match the criteria decided by the Council. It was therefore

RESOLVED that the authorisation of the Community Project Grant Scheme be delegated to the Area Panels and that they be given the necessary discretion to vary the criteria subject to exceptional circumstances; the sum of £4,000 would be allocated to each of the

four main centres with the remainder of the budgetary provision for 2006/07 split equitably between the three areas.

**CM20 DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACES ORDER**

A report was submitted requesting the Committee to endorse the request of Elsenham Parish Council for a designated public places order to be placed on the Recreation Ground, the Memorial Gardens and The Spinney in Elsenham to deal effectively with alcohol related incidents of anti-social behaviour that had occurred within these areas. It was noted that this matter had been discussed, and the principle agreed, by the South West Area Panel and the Leader proposed that the decision of the Area Panel should be supported without further discussion.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve a request for a designated public places order to deal with anti-social behaviour related to alcohol at the Recreation Ground, the Memorial Gardens and The Spinney in Elsenham.

**CM21 MUSEUM SERVICE ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY**

The Museum Curator submitted a detailed report setting out, in full, the proposed acquisition and disposal policy for the period from 2006 to 2011 as required by the Government's new accreditation scheme for museums. She highlighted the key areas set out in the proposed policy and emphasised the importance of monitoring the status of collections held by the Museum and the relevance of the policy to future management.

Members were in agreement with the overall terms of the proposed policy and felt that the museum staff should seek to be flexible and selective in terms of which parts of the collection should be retained for display and which parts should be offered for disposal.

RESOLVED that the Saffron Walden Museum/Uttlesford Museum Service Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2006/11 be approved as submitted to this meeting.

**CM22 LEISURE AND CULTURAL STRATEGY 2006-2010**

The Leisure Manager reported on the outcome of the decision to appoint consultants to prepare a leisure and cultural strategy for the Uttlesford district for the period 2006-2010. She said that no actions included in the proposed strategy had been costed at this stage but these would be brought before Members on a project basis.

There was a brief discussion about the Saffron Walden Cinema Project and it was confirmed that the target was to achieve a break even position. However, it was noted that the economic viability of the scheme was in the hands of the Cinema Trust and was outside the Council's responsibility.

Members commented upon various aspects of the proposed leisure and cultural strategy including provision for the arts in parts of the district other than Saffron Walden, swimming facilities in Stansted and the inclusion of leisure facilities for the over 60's. Councillor Menell said that, in her view, paragraph 3.2c, referring to work with the Friends School to develop a community use agreement for a performing arts centre, should be deleted. It was agreed to add the words "and look at other opportunities" in paragraph 3.2o referring to the maintenance of sufficient swimming pool water space for the district.

RESOLVED that the Leisure and Cultural Strategy 2006–2010, as prepared by Strategic Leisure Ltd, be adopted, subject to minor changes being incorporated as agreed at this meeting.

## CM23 **SUMMER HOLIDAY PROVISION**

Councillors Gayler and Murphy both declared a prejudicial interest in this item as members of Great Dunmow Town Council, left the room and took no part in the voting or discussion thereon.

The Leisure Manager reported on a proposed change to the summer holiday programme to incorporate multi-activity provision for as little cost as possible to the participant. The report recommended that a pilot scheme should operate during the 2006 summer holiday period in Great Dunmow to establish the demand for an extension to the programme.

The report presented three options for consideration. During the discussion, Members ruled out Option C that would involve an additional charge per child being levied on the assumption that the venue hire fee would not be waived and no subsidy to meet this cost was provided.

It was also agreed that the Leisure Manager would explore whether a play bus could be incorporated within the scheme.

RESOLVED that a summer holiday pilot scheme be approved for multi-activity sessions on two days per week between the hours of 10.00 am and 1.00 pm based on Option (a) presented in the report as a first preference and Option (b) as a standby course of action.

## CM24 **THAXTED DAY CENTRE**

The Executive Manager (Housing Services) reported the views of the East Area Panel regarding their preferred option for the refurbishment of Thaxted Day Centre. Of the three options presented, the Panel had concluded that the Day Centre should be demolished, rebuilt and extended. The estimate for this work was in the region of £225,000.

It was noted that the building had suffered subsidence in recent years and did not comply with current standards. It was also operating at maximum capacity.

Councillor Hibbs suggested that the Council's architect should be instructed to liaise with the Council's energy consultant to make the new building as energy efficient as possible. The Chairman agreed and said that the new build scheme for the day centre should be seen as a flagship for sustainability within Uttlesford.

RESOLVED that the view of the East Area Panel be endorsed that Thaxted Day Centre be rebuilt and extended at an estimated cost of £225,000 and that a scheme be prepared for consideration by the Area Panel in due course.

## CM25 **TENANT FORUM MINUTES**

Members received, for information, the Minutes of the Tenant Forum meetings held on 23 January and 6 February 2006.

Mrs Bolvig-Hansen said that she had received an acknowledgement card from Sir Alan Haselhurst MP in response to the letter sent regarding this year's rent setting settlement but that no response had yet been received from the Secretary of State. The proposed letter to tenants explaining this matter was being redrafted so that it was couched in terms more likely to be understood by tenants.

## CM26 **HOLLOWAY CRESCENT LEADEN RODING**

Members received a report outlining progress made towards the possible redevelopment of Holloway Crescent to overcome difficulties encountered in letting a number of units. It was being suggested that the adjoining garage site should be incorporated in the review of the redevelopment scheme. Discussions had taken place with two housing associations specialising in extra care facilities and it was reported that one of the associations concerned had indicated the scheme could possibly be adapted for this use provided the garage site was incorporated into any feasibility proposal.

Both the Chairman and Councillor Hibbs congratulated the Housing Strategy Manager on the work she had carried out to prepare the groundwork for this scheme to proceed. There was a general feeling that the Council would have to embrace more innovative schemes as the type of care required for elderly people was likely to change dramatically in the future.

The Holloway Crescent site was seen as a green lung in the village centre of Leaden Roding and was likely to exemplify the Council's presence within the local community.

RESOLVED that further research be conducted in conjunction with an appropriate housing association to prepare a viable scheme to provide an extra care facility at Holloway Crescent, incorporating the adjacent garage site.



**GARAGE SITES REVIEW**

The Committee received a report outlining the recommendations made by the Housing Strategy Working Group regarding the future use of 27 ad hoc garage sites in various parts of the district, together with the minutes of the Working Group meeting held on 1 March 2006. It was explained that the Working Group had been set up by the former Health and Housing Committee to consider any detailed proposals for potential development on the sites concerned and to make recommendations. It was noted that parish councils and ward members had been consulted in each case and their views taken into consideration by the Working Group. Planning officers had advised on development potential.

The recommendation from the Working Group had divided the 27 sites into those where it was felt future development should be considered, either for affordable housing or to generate a capital receipt, and those where no further action was being proposed at the present time. In the latter case, it was suggested that the sites would be tidied up and environmental improvements made where appropriate.

A number of Members expressed considerable unhappiness that sites within their ward had been identified for potential development use without their knowledge or agreement. Councillor Hibbs referred to the detailed background information that had been submitted to the Working Group meeting on 1 March and it was agreed that this report should be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Councillor Gayler initially proposed that the list of those sites proposed to be retained for parking use in paragraph 5(c) of the report should be confirmed but he questioned the need to authorise the list of those sites recommended for further consideration in paragraph 5(a) of the report as work on those sites would be likely to proceed in any event. He felt also that Area Panels should be invited to examine any proposals coming forward on these sites.

The Executive Manager (Housing Services) confirmed that details of any proposals being prepared for consideration would be submitted to the relevant Area Panel as well as to this Committee.

Mrs Bolvig-Hansen asked that consideration be given to a scheme to allow tenants to access the car parking area at St Martin's Close, White Roding directly from their houses.

Councillor Gayler then revised his earlier proposal so that the recommendations of the Housing Strategy Working Group under Minute HSWG8 would be approved on the proviso that local ward members were made aware of any precise proposals relating to their own ward.

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Housing Strategy Working Group be approved in relation to the future use of those 27 sites listed where garages had been constructed on an ad hoc basis by previous tenants; detailed proposals would be brought back to the Committee (and Area Panels) for consideration in due course.

**ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Executive Manager (Housing Services) reported that an approach had been received from an organisation called Felsted Aid for Deprived Children for the Council to provide storage space for their use. The organisation assisted children in Ukraine and parts of Africa as well as the United Kingdom.

There were presently eight empty units at Golds Enterprise Zone, Elsenham, and he advised Members that it was unlikely the Council would be in a position to let all of these in the foreseeable future. He had already suggested to the Environment Committee that one of the units should be provided free of charge to this organisation as a storage unit.

Members wished to assist this organisation but a concern was raised that a precedent might be set by this action and it was acknowledged that the Council might have to devise a policy to deal with future such cases.

RESOLVED that a vacant unit at Golds Enterprise Zone, Elsenham be offered for use to Felsted Aid for Deprived Children, without cost and subject to appropriate terms and conditions.

The Chairman said that, in his judgement, the new Community Committee was working well with a good level of input from Members but it was a large Committee and it might be better to mix future agenda items between housing and community and leisure based items.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm.