

**COMMUNITY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN AT 7.30 pm on 9 NOVEMBER 2006**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.
Councillors H D Baker, P Boland, M A Gayler, E W Hicks,
A Marchant, J E Menell, J P Murphy, S V Schneider and G Sell.

Tenant Forum Representative:- Mr P Simpson and Mrs J Bolvig-Hanson.

Also present:- Councillor S Flack.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, R Chamberlain, S Clarke, W Cockerell,
A Stewart, R Millership, L Petrie, C Roberts, J Snares and
S Walker.

C32 COUNCILLOR C A BAYLEY

The Chairman referred to the recent sad death of Councillor Bayley and reminded Members of the substantial work she had carried out on the Community and the Health and Housing Committees and also in Supporting People. Members remained silent for a while remembering Councillor Bayley.

C33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Hibbs,
R M Lemon, M J Miller and F E Silver.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Paul Simpson as a representative on the Tenant Forum.

Councillor J Murphy declared a personal interest as a member of Great Dunmow Town Council. Councillor J E Menell declared a personal interest as a member of Littlebury Parish Council. Councillor A Marchant declared a personal interest as a member of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council. Councillor G Sell declared a personal interest as a member of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council. Councillor M Gayler declared a personal interest as a member of Dunmow Town Council and in so far as his mother was a tenant of a council-owned garage. Councillor H Baker declared a personal interest as a recipient of a grant from Supporting People and as a member of the Almshouses Association.

C34 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2006 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C35

BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute C21 Housing Policy

Councillor G Sell informed the Committee that he was aware of two empty houses in Stansted and he asked that these be brought back into use as soon as possible. As regards the land at Great Dunmow School, a report on this matter had been considered by the East Area Panel and it had been agreed that no further action be taken in respect of the closure of the strip of land in question.

C36

HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE

The Committee considered the report of the Museum Curator on progress to date with fundraising for the Heritage Quest Centre and the proposed timetable for making an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Heritage Quest Trust was being established to enable the Museum Society to apply for large grants from landfill tax credits. Once the outcome of these applications was known, the project team would make a formal request early in 2007 for an appropriate capital contribution from the Council so that the application to the HLF could be made.

By 13 October 2006 a total of £85,110 had been raised, mostly from local donations and grants, and with donations and fund-raising continuing. This demonstrated a very good spread of funding partners and local support. Other potential sources were being investigated and it was hoped that these would bring in over another £100,000 minimum. The project team intended to report in early 2007 on the results of further fund-raising and with a project budget. Committees would be asked to approve a capital contribution and give permission for the application to be made to HLF.

In answer to a question the Chairman explained that donations would be refunded if the moneys raised did not reach the target amount. He also explained that the HLF criteria placed weight on catering for young people and that the Museum Curator wished the report to be received at the next meeting of the Operations Committee for their information in advance of the application in February. Members did express concern, however, that the Museum's core market should not be neglected.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the progress made and that the report be forwarded to the next meeting of the Operations Committee with the Committee's comment that in making the new Museum provision they do not wish to neglect any part of the community and look to include all in the benefit of the facilities, but that for the time being the focus must be on the Heritage Lottery Fund application criteria.

C37

RENT DEPOSIT SCHEME

The Committee received the report of the Housing Manager and the Senior Housing Officer (Homelessness) advising the Committee about the progress

made to date since the introduction of the Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) in April 2005.

Members felt that the Scheme had been shown to be a very good one.

RESOLVED that the Committee approves the continuation of the Rent Deposit Scheme.

C38

HOUSING POLICY UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Housing Strategy Manager advising Members of the progress made on Housing Policy issues. The Committee had received previous reports and approved a policy regarding Council owned sites identified for affordable housing or possible sale.

Four sites had been agreed, in the first tranche, for affordable housing:

- Broadfield, High Roding (rural scheme)
- Waldgrooms, Great Dunmow
- Broomfields, Hatfield Heath
- Manor Road, Stansted (for proposed short stay managed accommodation)

and Officers had further consulted Great Dunmow Town Council. Their response was appended to the report and details were given of comments received from High Roding Parish Council.

Members discussed issues relating to this part of the report at length and it was

RESOLVED that officers continue to make progress on proposals for the sites including looking at the availability of any recreational facilities, and that the next meeting of the Committee be held at Great Dunmow after a visit to Broadfield and to Waldgrooms had been undertaken by Members.

Councillor Murphy left the meeting at this point.

Holloway Crescent

The Executive Manager (Housing Services) then gave a verbal update on the unsatisfactory dealing with this matter by the selected housing association. Officers intended to continue to take up this matter with the housing association but to aim for a further bid for funding to be submitted in July 2007.

Sheltered Housing

The Executive Manager (Housing Services) informed the meeting that there had been productive discussions with the tenants at the sites in question and with Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council.

RESOLVED that the Committee's appreciation of officers' hard work be recorded.

C39 TENANT FORUM MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the meetings of the Tenant Forum held on 15 May 2006 and on 18 September 2006.

It was noted that the Minister had delayed unacceptably in replying to the Tenant Forum on the Rent Policy issue and that the reply eventually received had been unsatisfactory and evasive.

RESOLVED that the Chairman of the Committee and the Chair of the Tenant Forum meet to discuss the proper course of action in this matter.

C40 MUSEUM AUDIT REPORT: CONTEXT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the Museum Audit Report prepared by the Museum Curator which dealt with matters of financial security and police checks in the context of a volunteer-supported service. Members felt that these issues had been well and thoroughly considered in the report. It was understood however that Council policies for use of volunteers and child protection would require separate approval when completed.

RESOLVED that implementation of the report's recommendations at the Museum be approved as described in the report.

C41 GRANTS

The Committee considered the report of the Community and Development Manager detailing requests from Area Panels in the Community Project Grant allocation round for 2006/7. The report also referred to the Panels' view that it would be appropriate to consider increasing the amount of money available to each Area Panel by a further £10,000 p.a. This would mean that the budget required would increase from £40,000 to £70,000 per annum. It was noted that this would form part of the budget process.

RESOLVED that

1. the East Area Panel's request for the outstanding balance of £3,351 be carried forward to the next financial year, ring fenced for the "other settlements".
2. the Committee agree to the South West Area Panel's proposal that £4,000 is no longer ring fenced for the larger settlements (i.e., Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet, Great Dunmow and Thaxted).

3. the Operations Committee consider increasing each Area Panel's allocation for grants by £10,000 per annum.
4. the Grants and Strategic Partnership Officer offers proactive support in the preparation of any applications that are being made and that all Parish and Town Councils are provided with regular information on how to access information on potential grant opportunities for large scale applications (over £100,000).

C42 **SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMISSION BODY – INTERIM REPRESENTATION**

The Committee received the report of the Executive Manager (Housing Services) which stressed the importance of filling the current vacancy on the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

RESOLVED that Councillor A Marchant be appointed the Council's representative on the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

C43 **CHANGES TO THE CRITERIA FOR HOME RENEWAL ASSISTANCE**

The Committee considered the report of the Principal Environmental Health Officer recommending that the criteria for Homes Renewal Assistance be expanded to include thermal insulation and energy efficiency measures in mobile homes which are occupied as permanent residential dwellings. This type of accommodation did not qualify for Warm Front financial assistance.

RESOLVED that the criteria for Homes Renewal Assistance be expanded to include thermal insulation and energy efficiency measures in mobile homes, and that the maximum grant in circumstances where repair works are also undertaken be raised from £3,000 to £5,000.

C44 **GREAT DUNMOW AND STANSTED SKATE PARKS**

Councillors Gayler, Marchant and Sell left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

The Committee considered the report of the Leisure & Community Development Manager seeking a decision from Members regarding the distribution of funding to be allocated to Great Dunmow and Stansted Skatepark

At the Council meeting held on 17 October 2006 it had been resolved that the sum of £40,000 in total from the capital programme be allocated to the Community Committee and that Committee be authorised to determine the level of grant to the Dunmow and Stansted Skateboard Park Schemes. Members of the Committee were to decide on the method of allocating the earmarked £40,000 to the above skateparks

Members debated this matter and decided that it would be appropriate to allocate these funds pro rata to the cost of the projects being undertaken bearing in mind that Stansted had already received funding and had a newer skate park whereas Dunmow's skate park was in greater need of refurbishment.

RESOLVED that the funds be allocated in the proportion £24,000 to the Great Dunmow skate park and £16,000 to the Stansted Mountfitchet skate park, and the Full Council be requested to make such provision in the Council's Capital Programme.

C45

URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman drew to Members' attention a workshop on 4 December on affordable housing which would take place at 6.00 pm.

It was also noted that the next meeting would be held at the Council Offices at Great Dunmow.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.