

**COMMUNITY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 PM on 1 NOVEMBER 2007**

Present:- Councillor S V Schneider – Chairman.
Councillors E C Abrahams, E L Bellingham-Smith,
R Chamberlain, S J Howell, J E Hudson, J E Menell,
D J Morson, D J Sadler, G Sell and C C Smith.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, D Burrige, W Cockerell, M Cox,
J Dear, R Millership, J Snares and A Webb.

C25 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E W Hicks, M J Miller,
J A Redfern and A C Yarwood.

C26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Hudson and Sell declared prejudicial interests in item 8, lease of
land for a multi use games area, as members of Stansted Parish Council.

C27 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2007 were agreed,
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C28 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute C19 – Saffron Walden Skate Park

Councillor Menell said that at the North Area Panel there had been mention of
problems between the users of the Saffron Walden Skate Park and the
Turpins Indoor Bowls Club and asked for an update on the situation. The
Leisure and Community Development Manager said that there had been
some issues between the two groups, particularly in relation to the use of the
car park. Negotiations were ongoing and it was hoped that a solution would be
found.

(ii) Minute C18 – Lead Officer's report – Thaxted Day Centre

The Committee was advised that tenders had just been received for the
revised specification for the Thaxted Day Centre. It was hoped that the final
figure would be within the original budget figure of £325,000. In answer to
Members concerns, it was confirmed that the new specification would not
result in a loss of any of the facilities that were planned for the centre.

(iii) Minute C24 – Notice of Motion

It was reported that the letter had now been sent to the Secretary of State and a reply was awaited.

C29 LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT

The Director of Operations updated the Committee on matters arising from the Minutes that were not otherwise on the agenda and information items arising since the last meeting of the Committee.

The report mentioned four post offices in Uttlesford that had been proposed for closure – Mole Hill Green, Quendon, Little Hallingbury and Rowntree Way, Saffron Walden. Members stressed the importance of retaining small post offices and it was

RESOLVED that the Committee make a formal representation expressing concern about the proposed closures.

C30 BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT 2007/08

The Acting Chief Financial Officer presented a report which gave details of the Committee's spending and income compared to budget for the period 1 April to 31 August 2007. It was noted that this information had been reported to the Finance and Administration Committee on 20 September and some of the figures had been updated since then. There would be a full report on the budget situation to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Chamberlain asked for a report on the position of the HRA account. He was concerned at the number of staffing vacancies in the Housing Department and felt that if the HRA account was satisfactory, and there were technical post that could not be dealt with by redeployment, then these posts should be filled as soon as possible. Councillor Sell asked if the Committee could be provided with details of the existing vacancies and the impact on the services provided.

Councillor Howell queried the overspend shown on the budget figures for Community Safety and Management and Administration. The Acting Chief Financial officer said he would reply to Members with the detailed information.

C31 DOG CONTROL ORDERS

The Committee was advised that following the report to the June meeting, details of the proposed orders had been advertised and various responses had been received. The changes had been included in the amended orders which were attached to the report. Members were asked to decide a suitable date to bring the orders into force to allow sufficient time for publicity and to erect appropriate signs. It was suggested that laminated signs be used in the first instance with permanent aluminium signs being put up on a rolling basis. In answer to members' questions, it was confirmed that although the Parish

Council's paid for the dog fouling bins, the District Council bore the cost of emptying of the bins.

The play area at Church End, Ashdon be included in the list of sites and it was suggested that officers should be authorised to include other appropriate sites in the order, if necessary.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Council make the three dog control orders as detailed in Schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the report, with the addition of the play area at Church End, Ashdon and the orders come into force on 1 April 2008.
- 2 the Principal Environmental Health Officer be authorised to add additional areas to the order, if necessary.

C32 **ALLOCATION SCHEME**

The Committee received details of the Council's new Allocation Scheme which had been revised prior to the introduction in November of a new Choice Based Lettings Scheme for the allocating of social housing in Uttlesford. The new scheme had been discussed in detail at the Housing Initiatives Working Group and some amendments had been made, which had been incorporated into the final scheme attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the new allocation scheme be approved and adopted

C33 **LEASE OF LAND FOR MULTI USE GAMES AREA**

Councillors Hudson and Sell left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

Members' were asked to approve the lease of land at Mountfitchet Green, Stoneyfield Drive to Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council for the construction and future maintenance of a multi-use games area.

The request had arisen from a need to address a number of anti-social behaviour issues in Stansted Mountfitchet. A series of multi-agency meetings had identified that further facilities were needed to enable children and young people to participate in regular games and sporting activity. Consultation had taken place with local residents and young people regarding the siting of a games area on the recreational green at Stoneyfield Drive. The proposal had been endorsed by the South West Area Panel.

Quotations for the proposal had been sought from four companies and the parish council had chosen its preferred option for further investigation. This project had been incorporated into the Play Strategy as a portfolio project with the aim of securing a Big Lottery contribution. Other funding sources were also being pursued. The Parish Council would need to submit a planning application for this development and in preparation for this work it was now

requesting that approval be given for the required area of land to be leased to the Parish Council.

Members expressed some concern that the residents of the surrounding area might have some objections to the scheme. The Leisure and Community Development Manager explained that approval was being sought at this time, so that the project could be in place if funding was forthcoming. It was intended that there would be more detailed consultation with local residents when the scheme had been drawn up.

RESOLVED that the Committee approved, in principle, the request from Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council to lease the area of land shown hatched on the plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to

- i) further consultation with local residents
- ii) the site being used solely for the construction of a multi-use games area;
- iii) the Parish Council assuming responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the multi-use games area, and
- iv) the land being leased on a peppercorn rental for a minimum period of 15 years.

C34

HOUSING INITIATIVES TASK GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the Housing Initiatives Task Group held on 17 September 2007.

Councillor Chamberlain, Chairman of the Task Group, suggested that it would be helpful for the Task Group to consider the HRA account and the rent setting in detail prior to consideration by the Community Committee.

At minute HIG8, Councillor Sell, asked if a stock condition survey would be required and how much would it cost the Council. The Head of Housing advised that the last survey had been carried out 5 years ago and a new survey would soon be needed. The last survey had cost £24,000 and it was hoped that the next survey would be of a similar sum. The survey would be funded from the HRA account.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations be approved.

- i) Minute HTG4 –
 - 1 the draft Housing Allocations Scheme be approved for adoption, (this recommendation was approved in a separate report at minute C32)
 - 2 arrangements be made for quarterly update reports to be given to the Community Committee or this Task Group as appropriate, and for a full evaluation of the CBL system after 12 months of operation.

ii) Minute HTG7

- 1 A formal representation to be sent to the Government on the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system, as a follow up to that Committee's motion; and
- 2 that a letter written in plain English be sent to all Council tenants explaining the effect of negative housing subsidy, and incorporating a tear off slip which tenants would be invited to sign and return as part of a petition deploring the loss of this rent income.

C35 **FLOOD SUPPORT FOR PARISH COUNCILS**

The Committee received a report from the Emergency Planning Officer on the current flood arrangements for the District. The contents of the report were noted. A flood fayre had recently been held at Saffron Walden Town Hall and it was confirmed that it was intended to hold an annual event at other locations around the district. Members asked that, in future, information should be collected on who had attended to ensure that the events were reaching the target audience.

C36 **LEBANESE REPORT**

The Committee received a copy of a document that had been put together by the Scrutiny Committee Task Group as a result of the Lebanon Evacuation in July/August 2006 when it became clear that a specific policy was necessary. It would be used as guidance in event of a similar situation occurring in the future. The Scrutiny Committee had recommended that it be approved.

Councillor Morson asked if information was available on the destinations of the evacuees. He was advised that the Council held details of people that were still in the district and these would be provided for the next meeting.

Councillor Chamberlain pointed out the huge amount of work that the Council had undertaken in dealing with the crisis and he was horrified that there had been no financial assistance from the Government. He said that Stansted Airport was still the nominated airport for this type of emergency and it was essential that the Council maintained its pressure on the Government to provide financial help for future incidents.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the response plan for dealing with evacuations or refugee crisis from abroad be approved and included in the Council's Emergency Plan.
- 2 Further representations are made to the Government asking for a commitment to provide financial assistance for future incidence of this nature.

C37

TENANT FORUM MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of Forum held on 1 October 2007.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.