

COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 16 JULY 2002

Present:- Councillor R W L Stone – Vice-Chairman in the Chair
Councillors E C Abrahams, Mrs C A Bayley, Mrs C A Cant, Mrs M A Caton, R P Chambers, Mrs J F Cheetham, R J Copping, Mrs D Cornell, A Dean, Mrs C M Dean, R C Dean, Mrs C D Down, Mrs S Flack, M L Foley, M A Gayler, Mrs E J Godwin, D W Gregory, M A Hibbs, D M Jones, P G F Lewis, Mrs J I Loughlin, Mrs J E Menell, R A Merrion, D M Miller, D J Morson, R J O'Neill, G W Powers, Mrs S V Schneider, R C Smith, Mrs E Tealby-Watson, A R Thawley, R B Tyler and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- Mrs E C Forbes, J B Dickson, A Forrow, B D Perkins, M J Perry and M T Purkiss.

C21 UTTLESFORD FUTURES

Councillor Mrs M A Caton, Chairman of Uttlesford Futures, presented Mr A Botfield with vouchers to the value of £100 for his winning vision for Uttlesford. His winning vision was “a safe and pleasant environment to live, grow and prosper”.

C22 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W F Bowker, R A E Clifford, R D Green, A J Ketteridge, Mrs C M Little, A R Row, G Sell and A C Streeter.

C23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 14 May 2002 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. The Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 17 June 2002 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the deletion of the word “further” in the third line of the second paragraph on page 439 of Minute C20 and to the substitution of the word “communication” for the word “letter” in the penultimate line of that paragraph.

C24 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute C4 (i) Notice of Motion - Policing

Councillor R C Smith congratulated Councillor Chambers on his appointment as Chairman of the Essex Police Authority. He asked if Councillor Chambers could comment on why the Chief Constable had felt it inappropriate to talk to his partners and elected Members on rural policing issues but had considered it appropriate to discuss the same matters with the Dunmow Chamber of Trade. He said that the hierarchy of Essex Police had not been brought to

account in the past and he hoped that Councillor Chambers would bring changes.

Councillor Copping also congratulated him on his appointment and asked what measures he would implement to deal with the apparent complacency of the Police in relation to providing police presence in this rural area.

Councillor Chambers declared an interest in so far as he was Chairman of the Essex Police Authority. He said that he would take these matters of concern up with the Chief Constable and he was hoping to be able to ensure that there would be a better partnership between the Police and local authorities. He said that he had met with John Denham, the Home Office Minister, to discuss issues relating to high visibility policing which was one of the main priorities that he would like to address. However, he pointed out that, despite increases in crime figures, Essex was still a comparatively safe place to live and it was sometimes difficult to attract extra funding for policing this area.

(ii) Minute C16 - Saffron Walden Town Centre Management Scheme

In response to a question from Councillor Tyler the Assistant Chief Executive gave an assurance that a meeting of the Saffron Walden Town Centre Management Scheme Working Group would be called before the next Council meeting.

(iii) Minute C4 (ii) - Removals Centre

In answer to a question from Councillor Mrs Cheetham, the Chief Executive said that the Home Office was attempting to arrange a meeting with BAA to discuss a possible location for a removals centre at the airport. She added that it was unlikely that recommendations for a preferred site would emerge before mid August at the earliest. She said that she had advised the Home Office of the strong local opposition to the Smiths Farm site.

(iv) Minute C4 (i) - Raves

The Chief Executive said that she and Sir Alan Haselhurst MP had met the Home Office Minister, Bob Ainsworth, and confirmation had been received that the Government was actively looking to amend legislation to make the control of unlicensed public events more effective. In the meantime, authorities should make maximum use of existing legislation.

(v) Minute C4 (iii) - Road Safety

In response to a question from Councillor R C Dean it was confirmed that the issue of the procedure for dealing with minutes of the Road Safety Advisory Committees would be considered by the Environment and Transport Committee at its meeting on 10 September 2002.

(vi) Minute C17 - Eastern Arts Forum

Councillor Powers reported that the Eastern Arts Forum would shortly be wound up and residual funds would be passed to Essex County Council to help fund arts projects throughout the County.

(vii) Minute C20 – Office accommodation

Councillor Copping said that he had received conflicting advice as to whether the marketing of surplus accommodation at the Great Dunmow offices would need to go back to Council. The Director of Resources confirmed that Financial Regulations did not require a decision on this matter to go back to Council and he would arrange for a letter confirming this to be sent to Councillor Copping.

Councillor A Dean said that he would be closely monitoring the office accommodation situation to ensure that services were maintained and that staff were treated correctly. He also said that he had read notes of a PCT board meeting which had been held approximately one month before the Extraordinary Council Meeting on 17 June. The notes said that the PCT were looking at three options, with the preferred option being at Haslers Mill, Great Dunmow and that the Chief Executive of the PCT should make the Leader of this Council fully aware of the options being considered.

Councillor Mrs Cheetham declared an interest as her husband was a lay member of the PCT Board.

The Leader said that he had had no communication or correspondence with the Chief Executive of the PCT. He had had one telephone conversation with the Chairman of the PCT who had explained the options to him. He had also seen him twice since that conversation but had not discussed the matter on either occasion.

C25

CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Vice-Chairman said that he was delighted that Great Chesterford had won the Calor Gas Essex Village of the Year competition and that Widdington had been the runner-up. He congratulated both Parish Councils on this achievement.

He reminded Members that some sponsorship was still outstanding for Councillor Mrs Flack's fundraising activities.

The Vice-Chairman said that Councillor Morson was organising a quiz night at the Mountfitchet School, Stansted on Saturday 20 July in aid of famine relief in Malawi.

C26

LEADER'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Leader of the Council said that the Deputy Prime Minister was intending to make an announcement on 18 July concerning the possibility of 200,000 new homes in the South East including an allocation of 50,000 new homes in the Stansted area.

He said that an announcement concerning the SERAS Report about airport capacity over the next thirty years would be made on 22 July 2002.

C27

MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEES**(i) Resources Committee: 20 June 2002 – Minute RE8 – Treasury Management**

RESOLVED that the recommendations contained in this Minute be approved.

(ii) Scrutiny Committee 2: 3 July 2002 – Minute S2.4 – Internal Audit Reports

RESOLVED that the recommendation contained in this Minute be approved.

C28

COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

The Chief Executive presented a report on progress with the Uttlesford Community Strategy and invited Members' views on the document called Essex "Challenges and Visions" and the potential for a Local Service Agreement with Essex County Council. She added that the Public Service Agreement had not yet been signed due to delays with the Government and it was expected that it would be signed in September.

Councillor Powers said that he was concerned at the paucity of information on what had happened with the Strategy over the last few months. He asked for an assurance that the Strategy could now move forward and said that he understood that progress in Braintree and Tendring Districts was more advanced than in Uttlesford. The Chief Executive said that Uttlesford's own Community Strategy was reasonably well advanced, particularly having regard to the limited resources available. She said that another Community Conference would be held in November and suggested that the Member workshop in September could be used to discuss the matter further.

Councillor Gayler said that he supported the need to pursue the Service Agreements with the County Council, particularly in relation to issues such as Highways, Youth Service and Libraries. He suggested that a working group should be set up to explore issues further. Councillor A Dean agreed with this and said that he felt that services could be delivered better if best use was made of partnerships and this would also lead to less duplication. He said that it was important that Uttlesford established what its objectives were before entering into further discussions. He added that if a working group were set up he would like himself and Councillor Hibbs to be included in its membership.

Councillor O'Neill said that he found the comments in the document "Shaping the Future of Essex" to be too defensive. The facts illustrated that Essex had an excellent record in many fields and it was a good place to live. He said that a balance needed to be struck between retaining an attractive and acceptable environment and providing additional housing which could lead to further encroachment of urban development. He said that the Agreement

must deliver something to Uttlesford and should not just be an exercise where the County Council was passing on its responsibilities. He suggested that in the first instance priority should be given to one issue such as Highways and Transportation. Councillor Mrs Caton added that she felt that there was some contradiction between comments made in the document about the importance of Stansted Airport and pressure on rural roads.

Councillor Mrs Tealby-Watson said that there was no mention of the connection between Uttlesford and Cambridge and the M11 Corridor. She also stated that there was nothing specific which addressed the provision of pre-school care and the document was not specific about vulnerable people including the elderly, mentally ill and those in residential care.

She declared an interest in respect of the latter issue as a member of Homecare.

Councillor Chambers said that the document was excellent in principle but Uttlesford needed to get something worthwhile from it for its residents. Councillor Powers said that a more explicit statement was needed about residential care for the elderly which also had an impact on health services. Councillor Foley said that he would like to see more effective direct consultation from Essex County Council with local communities and referred to examples such as the proposed selling off of Clarence House, the privatisation of services at Humfrey Lodge and changes to library services in Thaxted, which had not been dealt with particularly well. Councillor Wilcock said that there was a lack of acknowledgement and understanding of the great diversity of the areas within the County and their needs.

Councillor Mrs Flack said that one of the County Council's five key pledges was to restrict the number of new homes in the County and that Uttlesford's Administration Group had a priority of providing appropriate affordable housing. She apologised to Councillor Powers for not including him on her e-mail list on this subject. She added that Lord Hanningfield had said that the County Council was looking for fresh ideas from Districts.

RESOLVED that

- 1 a response be made to Essex County Council on the "Challenges and Visions" document as set out in the report, and incorporating Members' comments made at the meeting.
- 2 the Council pursues a Local Service Agreement with the County Council which might cover Highways and Transport, Youth Service and Libraries and such other issues as are identified by the working group referred to in 3 below.
- 3 a working group be established to pursue the issue of Local Service Agreements, the membership of the group to be determined by Group Leaders.

Members were asked to approve the recommendation of the Resources Committee contained in Minute RE20, that the Council approve the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2002/03.

Councillor Copping expressed some concern that not all Members had had a reasonable opportunity to digest the final document. Councillor Wilcock agreed and said that some of the content in the plan was not clear. Councillor Hibbs felt that elements of the plan should have been considered in more detail by individual committees.

Councillor Mrs Flack asked whether it was possible for the Council to approve the plan subject to the correction of any inaccuracies. The Director of Resources replied that he had invited comments from Members and had given an opportunity to discuss the matter with any Member. However, very few Members had taken up this opportunity. The Chief Executive said that many of the processes relating to the BVPP had changed during the year and the introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessments would have an impact on the process and it was intended that a report would be submitted to the Resources Committee in the autumn. She also referred to the difficulty of preparing the Plan in the absence of a Policy Officer. Councillor A Dean said that there were problems with lack of corporate resources in dealing with matters such as the BVPP.

RESOLVED that the Best Value Performance Plan 2002/03 be approved.

Councillor Gayler said that it was unfortunate that the Council had not had an opportunity to consider the BVPP until after the required publication date. He suggested that a special meeting should be scheduled in next year's calendar of meetings to enable the BVPP to be considered and agreed within the allotted timescale.

RESOLVED that a special meeting be scheduled in the calendar of meetings for 2003/04 to enable the BVPP to be considered and agreed within the allotted timescale.

C30 **COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY**

It was noted that the Community and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 28 May 2002 had considered a revised Community Safety Strategy for 2002/05. The Committee had decided that in order to support partnership arrangements to reduce crime and the fear of crime in Uttlesford the Council should be recommended to endorse the Strategy.

RESOLVED that the Uttlesford Community Safety Strategy 2002/05 be endorsed.

C31 **COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND BUDGET STRATEGY**

Councillor Chambers introduced the updated Coalition Policy priorities for 2002/03 as set out as an Appendix to these Minutes. He said that the priorities would help to improve still further the quality of life for all Uttlesford residents. He said that the list of priorities was a living document and stressed the need for more consultation with the public, particularly in relation to the budget process. He moved that the Coalition Policy priorities be adopted and this was seconded by Councillor Tyler who stressed the need for flexibility.

Councillor Hibbs said that he felt a deep sense of depression over the priorities. Government announcements over the next few days would have dramatic impact on the Council and he hoped that Members could have more imaginative priorities. He also said that many Councillors did not have any input into the decision making process and backbench Councillors were being marginalised.

Councillor Copping said that he could accept the list of priorities if it was not included in a resolution relating to the budget. Councillor A Dean presented the Liberal Democrat group priorities as set out as an Appendix to these Minutes and said that many items on both lists were similar. He moved an amendment that a special meeting of Scrutiny 2 Committee should be convened in July or August to look at all priorities that had been tabled and identify where there was common ground and where there were differences of opinion.

Councillor Gayler referred to the District Open Meeting at Leaden Roding where Members had been berated by the public for being too party political and splitting on party lines on important issues. He suggested that both lists of priorities should be carried forward into the next cycle of meetings.

Councillor Powers said that there was a lack of financial framework on the Administration's proposals and he saw some of them as a threat to agreed strategies and policies. He said that he needed to be assured that there was a rationale behind the priorities. He was also concerned at the reference to keeping Council tax low and stressed the need to raise sufficient revenue to meet established policies and objectives.

Councillor O'Neill felt that some Members were confused between priorities and the budget setting exercise. He stressed that there was nothing in the priorities that would prevent the budget setting exercise going forward. He also said that it was not the role of Scrutiny Committee to agree policy and priorities. Councillor Mrs Flack added that the Council's key priorities were to provide the best possible services at a reasonable price; to make affordable housing available and to control the growth of Stansted Airport. She also referred to the problems caused by the Government's withdrawal of negative housing subsidy.

Councillor Smith congratulated Councillor Gayler on his sensible statement. Councillor Mrs Caton said that not all the items on the list of priorities were new. She had attended a Local Government Association seminar on budget consultation and it was clear that Councils must consult the public on their budgets. Other authorities had had to bring forward their budget exercise to meet this requirement and she urged Members not to delay the matter any

further. The Director of Resources supported this statement and said that there were new procedures this year which meant that consultation should be before the November/December cycle of meetings.

As an amendment to Councillor Chambers' proposal, Councillor Copping moved that the recommendations contained in Minute S2.6 of the Scrutiny Committee 2 meeting on 3 July 2002 should be approved, subject to the word "list" being amended to read "lists". Councillor A Dean then withdrew his amendment to enable a vote to be taken on this proposal. The amendment was carried and it was then

RESOLVED that

- 1 the lists of Council Policy priorities for 2002/03 as considered and updated at the meeting of the Council on 16 July 2002 be used as a basis on which Officers could prepare reports; each Committee to have the opportunity to amend the lists and set targets during the following Committee cycle and a final decision on the Council's Policy priorities be made at the Council meeting on 22 October 2002.
- 2 the following issues be added to the lists of Council priorities
 - the removals centre
 - decriminalisation of parking
 - the Public Service Agreement
 - cycleways in the District.

C32

FINANCIAL PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS OF THE COUNCIL

The Director of Resources reminded Members that new financial regulations had been approved at the Special Council Meeting on 28 August 2001. Officers had now developed procedures relating to these new regulations largely based on CIPFA's model arrangements which had been endorsed by the Audit Commission. The only outstanding procedures which were not included were the revised standing orders relating to contracts which would be presented to the Council meeting on 22 October 2002.

RESOLVED that Members

- 1 note the various financial procedures.
- 2 approve the revised financial limits included in Appendix F as attached to the report of the Director of Resources.

C33

NOTICE OF MOTION – TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS

Members received the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Mrs C A Bayley and duly seconded:

- (i) This Council views with concern the increasing number of telecommunication masts being applied for and given permission throughout the country.
- (ii) It notes that there is considerable concern over possible effects on health from the emission from these devices. In certain areas there appears to be a correlation between the occurrence of cancer and the proximity of such masts.
- (iii) Although no effects on health have been scientifically proven, great doubts are expressed by ordinary people.
- (iv) This Council calls upon the Government to change the regulations regarding the installation of telecommunication masts, in respect of their allowed proximity to residential properties and educational establishments, until such time as it has been proved beyond doubt that there are no risks to health from these.

The Chairman forwarded the Motion to the Environment and Transport Committee for consideration.

C34 **QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 8.2**

Councillor A Dean said that he had prepared a question under this item concerning whether the Leader of the Council had been involved in any form of direct or indirect communication on the subject of the PCT's interest in the Dunmow Council Offices. However, the matter had been addressed earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Chambers reiterated that on 21 May he had had a telephone conversation with the Chairman of the PCT board who had informed him of the options being considered. He added that he had not had any written communication with anyone from the PCT.

C35 **URGENT BUSINESS - ESSEX ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

The Vice-Chairman had agreed to take the following item as a matter of urgent business so that any necessary action could be taken before the Council's next meeting.

It was reported that Uttlesford was one of three District Councils, the others being Epping Forest and Harlow, which had until now been represented as a West Essex grouping on the Essex Economic Partnership by Councillor Young of Harlow District Council. At the AGM of the Association of Essex Authorities on 11 July it had been informally suggested that the grouping's representation on the Partnership should rotate and that for this year the representative should come from Uttlesford. Councillors A Dean and Mrs J F Cheetham were nominated and, following a vote, it was

RESOLVED that, subject to the agreement of Epping Forest and Harlow Councils, Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham be appointed to serve on the Essex Economic Partnership.

Councillor Foley thanked Councillors for their support of the Young Musician of the Year competition and said that following the competition the winner had been approached to play at the Royal Concert Hall.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm.

APPENDIX**COALITION POLICY PRIORITIES**

- ❖ Provide a CIC in Dunmow to the highest standard in partnership with the Police and any other interested organisations.
- ❖ Introduce public consultation on the Budget process.
- ❖ Implement PFI schemes in Dunmow, Stansted and Saffron Walden.
- ❖ Prepare the Council for the impending Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- ❖ Set reduced targets in all four policy committees and the consequent effect that this would have on the services.
- ❖ To make the new streamlined committees system efficient, effective and customer friendly.
- ❖ Aim to keep the Council Tax to inflation or as low as possible.
- ❖ Examine activities and areas of expenditure which could be transferred to Town or Parish Councils.
- ❖ Rigorously scrutinise all appointments of replacement staff.
- ❖ Encourage more partnership working with other local authorities and the private sector.
- ❖ Review the Council's Arts Development and Youth Sports programmes.
- ❖ Look at the Community Safety function with a view to increasing funding from outside partners thus reducing the cost to the Council.
- ❖ Press for 20, 30, 40 and 50 mph speed limits where traffic management and safety justify them.
- ❖ To pursue the Council policy on Stansted Airport in co-operation with neighbouring authorities.
- ❖ Complete and adopt the draft Local Plan.
- ❖ Extend recycling in a cost effective manner.
- ❖ Encourage sales of Council houses.
- ❖ Enable more affordable housing.
- ❖ Pursue sponsorship opportunities.
- ❖ Prepare a Community Strategy to the advantage of the residents of Uttlesford.
- ❖ Make sure Best Value works so that financial gains come out of the reviews.
- ❖ Press Essex County Council for more funding for the locally determined Budget in Highways.
- ❖ Improve links with the Business Community.
- ❖ Should an Asylum Seekers Removal Centre be forced on Uttlesford District then it must be located within the perimeter of Stansted Airport.
- ❖ Centralise all Grant Schemes.

APPENDIX

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PRIORITIES

1. The planning department will be restructured before the start of 2003/04 to achieve management savings and to inject extra resources into front-line service delivery to deal with performance improvements needed by the community.
2. The Council will step up initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing in the district. New sources of funding, such as BAA, will be sought. The Council will also look again, through an open and objective consultation and financial analysis exercise, at whether the Council's own housing stock can be a catalyst for greater overall availability and affordability of housing in the District for those people in need of housing now and in the future.
3. Investment in recycling will be stepped up to ensure that the Council achieves the Essex target of 40% by 2004 and, if also achievable, restore the district's rating in Essex from fifth position to third position or better. Collection of green waste will begin. Initiatives will be begun to reduce total waste levels.
4. Resources will be rebalanced so that more emphasis is placed on informal countryside leisure, cultural capability and initiatives for children and young people in towns and villages and less is expended on activities that are established and can continue to run with less resource.
5. Members will take the lead in strengthening the capability of the Council to achieve significant sponsorship for some of its non-statutory activities on a continuing basis.
6. The Council will put more effort into engaging with all sections of the local community through better communications and by taking its consultative and scrutiny activities into the community so that it ranks with the best Councils in Essex. Village appraisals through the RCCE will be given active encouragement so that villages that have not conducted appraisals can learn from the example of those who have.
7. The Council's methods of scrutiny will be adapted to become more effective and flexible by getting away from traditional meetings and becoming more member-led and investigative and challenging. Priority will be given to establishing effective scrutiny of the local health services, in particular the district's Primary Care Trust.
8. The corporate policy resource within the Council will be strengthened so that change, including best value, is managed more effectively. This resource will help enable the changes described in this document to be achieved effectively. The Council will also create a dedicated resource outside the planning process to oversee sustainable management of and investment in the local economy and to advise and empower the Council and community to deal with the impact of Stansted airport and other regional pressures. These matters will be Member-led to ensure that Uttlesford has strong voices in all the key and relevant economic and political forums.
9. Training for Officers and Members will be increased to provide the skills and cultural change required to get the best through its people for Uttlesford from the changing national political environment. This will also help ensure that the Council achieves a high performance classification amongst small, rural districts in comprehensive performance assessments by the Audit Commission. Action will be needed during 2002/03 to get this underway. Designated Members from all groups, who will be supported by a member of staff, will lead the direction of Members' training. Both Members and Officers will follow Investors in People principles.
10. Priority-based budgeting techniques will be introduced to set the budget for 2003/04.