

**COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 17 DECEMBER 2002**

Present:- Councillor A J Ketteridge – Chairman  
 Councillors E C Abrahams, Mrs C A Bayley, W F Bowker, Mrs C A Cant, Mrs M A Caton, R P Chambers, Mrs J F Cheetham, R A E Clifford, R J Copping, 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, R D Green, D W Gregory, M A Hibbs, D M Jones, P G F Lewis, Mrs C M Little, Mrs J I Loughlin, Mrs J E Menell, R A Merrion, D M Miller, D J Morson, R J O'Neill, A R Row, Mrs S V Schneider, G Sell, R C Smith, R W L Stone, A C Streeter, Mrs E Tealby-Watson, A R Thawley, R B Tyler and P A Wilcock.

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

**C58 MRS MARGARET ROWENA DAVEY**

The Chairman informed the Council of the recent death of Margaret Rowena Davey. She had been the first Chairman of Uttlesford District Council and had been a formidable councillor during her period of office from 1974 to 1991.

Members stood in silent tribute in her memory.

**C59 STATEMENT BY A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

Before the meeting Mr Brian Ross made a statement and a copy of this is attached to these minutes.

**C60 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2001/2002**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr S Cookson, who would be the District Auditor from January 2003 and Mr M Hodgson, the Audit Manager.

Before the District Auditor made his report Councillor Mrs Caton referred to the cashflow statement which had now been completed and audited. She proposed that the cashflow statement, incorporating some minor auditing adjustments, be accepted.

Councillor Hibbs considered that the matter should have been included with the agenda papers so that it was in the public domain and he would abstain from voting on this matter.

On being put to the vote there were 17 votes for, none against and 17 abstentions.

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 RESOLVED that the cashflow statement be approved.

Mr Cookson said that following the above decision he would now be in a position to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the 2002/03 accounts. He said that the key action points in the letter were:

- Develop the ability to demonstrate more clearly the benefits and outcomes that the Authority is deriving from best value.
- Use the development of the community strategy to enable the Authority to determine the way it responds to new initiatives.
- Continue to develop the Authority's approach ahead of the introduction of comprehensive performance assessments for district councils.

He said that the Council's overall arrangements for ensuring the legality of financial transactions were sound and there were effective systems of internal financial control in place together with adequate arrangements for maintaining standards of conduct and for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption.

He expressed appreciation of the assistance he had received from Members and officers during the course of the audit work. He added that due to a change in the operational year of the Audit Commission, the next audit plan would cover the two audit years 2002/03 and 2003/04 and would be timed to run from November 2002 to March 2004. Mr Cookson then answered a number of questions from Members.

The Chairman thanked the District Auditor and his team for their hard work and for the comprehensive report.

C61

## **REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

Mr Martyn Fiddler, the Chairman of the Panel, and Mrs Ruth Whitlam, a member of the Panel, attended the meeting and presented their report.

Mr Fiddler outlined the work undertaken by the Panel and said that particular attention had been given to the role of the Chairman of the Council and the work of the Development Control and Licensing Committee. He said that, as in the previous report in April 2002, the Panel had used, as the basis for its calculation, the most recent Local Government Association daily rate national median white collar salary. This equated to an increase of 4.6% on the previous year.

Mr Fiddler said that the Government had just published papers on new proposals for travel and subsistence allowances and member access to the local government pension scheme and the Panel would prepare a supplementary report for the Council meeting on 15 April 2003.

Councillor A Dean asked which Members had been involved in the Panel's work as he had not been approached. The Chairman said that it had been open to all Members to approach the Panel at any time with comments or suggestions.

Councillor Hibbs said that Members should not be looking to increase their allowances at a time of public finance constraint and he wished that his vote against the proposal should be recorded. Councillor Copping also asked that his vote against the proposal should be recorded. Councillor Clifford said that the recommendations of the Panel were misguided and would attract the wrong people to stand for election. He said that he would abstain from voting.

The Chairman thanked officers, and in particular Su Whiston, for their assistance in the Panel's work. The Chairman thanked the Panel for carrying out this difficult task and reiterated that any Member could approach the Panel on these issues.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Members' allowances for 2003/04 be as follows:

Basic Allowance	£4,386
Chairman of the Council	£4,386 + £3,290 (SRA) + £2,500 (civic role)
Vice Chairman of the Council	£4,386 + £1,645
Leader of the Council	£4,386 + £6,579
Deputy Leader of the Council	£4,386 + £1,645
Chairman of Committees	£4,386 + £3,290
Group Leaders	£4,386 + (£100 x group membership as at 1 May) subject to a minimum group size of 2 members
Carers Allowance	£10.00 (max hourly rate)

- 2 the Panel be asked to consider the Government papers on travel and subsistence allowances and pensions for Councillors and report back to the Council meeting on 15 April 2003.

The voting was 29 for and 3 against, including Councillors Copping and Hibbs, and 5 abstentions.

C62

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs D Cornell and G W Powers. It was noted that Councillor Wilcock would be arriving late at the meeting.

C63

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs Cheetham declared an interest as a member of NWEHHPA and SSE and added that her husband was a member of the PCT. Councillor Chambers declared an interest as Chairman of the Essex Police Authority. Councillor Gregory declared an interest as an employee of Airportcarz.

Councillor Mrs Menell declared an interest as a member of the PCT. The following Councillors declared interests as members of SSE: Councillors Mrs C A Bayley, W F Bowker, Mrs C A Cant, A Dean, Mrs C M Dean, Mrs C D Down, Mrs S Flack, M L Foley, M A Gayler, Mrs E J Godwin, P G F Lewis, Mrs C M Little, Mrs J I Loughlin, Mrs J E Menell, R A Merrion, A R Row, Mrs E Tealby-Watson and A R Thawley. Councillor Mrs Caton clarified that she was not a member of SSE.

## C64 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2002 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillors Mrs Bayley, Mrs Down and Mrs Little in the list of those declaring an interest as members of SSE and to the deletion of Councillor Hibbs from that list. Councillor Smith asked that it be minuted that in relation to Minute C46 (vii) he had been prevented from speaking further by the Chairman of the Council.

## C65 **BUSINESS ARISING**

### (i) **Minute C47 – Chairman’s Communications**

Councillor Mrs Menell declared an interest insofar as she was Chairman of the Buffy Bus Association. She clarified that due to problems with the battery and generator on the bus it had been prevented from attending all stops.

### (ii) **Minute C46 (vii) – Government Announcements on Aviation and Housing**

In response to a question from Councillor Foley the Head of Legal Services confirmed that the issue of the Section 106 Agreement in relation to Stansted Airport had been deferred to a special meeting of the Development Control and Licensing Committee to be arranged early in January 2003. The Chairman of the Committee and Officers had been authorised to meet further with the applicant and report back to that meeting. Councillor Tyler added that Members were asked to pass any views on the draft agreement to the Head of Planning and Building Surveying in advance of the meeting in January. All Members would be kept informed of progress.

### (iii) **Minute C51 – The Future Development of Air Transport in the South East**

Councillor Clifford asked if his suggestions about QC representation and PR support would be taken seriously on board. The Leader said that all suggestions had been taken into account and the Council would be in a position to make any appointments that were necessary at the appropriate time.

Councillor Mrs Caton said that the current MORI questionnaire on Council Tax included a question on whether residents would support paying extra Council Tax to fight against further runways at Stansted Airport. Councillor A Dean

said that other more informal surveys had been undertaken on whether residents would be prepared to pay £5 on their Council Tax to fight the Stansted proposals and there had been a 2:1 ratio in favour of this.

**(iv) Minute C47 – Chairman’s Communications**

Councillor Mrs Menell suggested that there would be advantages in amalgamating the Council’s Carol Service with that of the Primary Care Trust.

C66

**MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING**

The Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 28 November 2002 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the deletion of Councillors Hibbs, Jones and Sell as members of SSE.

At this stage of the meeting, the Chairman said he had decided to take the notice of motion referring to Stansted Airport. Since the preparation of the agenda papers Councillor D W Gregory had amended his notice of motion as follows and this was duly seconded:

“That this Council recognises the value of the campaign being carried out by SSE against the Government’s proposals to enlarge Stansted Airport by up to 3 further runways.

Furthermore, whilst recognising the difficulties in establishing the legal status of the NWEHPA and SSE, Council acknowledges the real financial difficulties of SSE.

Mindful of the decision taken by the Council on the 13th August and reinforced by the meeting on the 28 November “to work with.....local and national action groups” and “work together with SSE and provide funds.....” this Council resolves to

- 1 Allocate £15,000 towards the costs of 3 projects namely (i) to research and explore offshore options and press for their inclusion, (ii) to reinvigorate the broader campaign and motivate the local community by means of a local conference open to all and (iii) to continue to lead the debate by organising a major conference involving participants from all other affected areas. Invoices relating to these 3 projects (up to the proposed amount) to be sent to Uttlesford District Council for settlement.
- 2 Encourage officers and senior councillors to meet regularly with representatives of SSE.
- 3 Seek representation of 3 Councillors on the management committee of NWEHPA.”

The Director of Community Services said that the Council had been working closely with SSE to clarify how best the Council could assist its work. Some

constitutional and financial matters needed to be resolved but three projects had been identified which could be supported and which complemented Council activity. He expressed gratitude for the help, understanding and hard work of the SSE colleagues.

Councillor A Dean said that he was pleased to support the amended motion and had discussed this with the Leader of the Council who was also in agreement. Councillor Mrs Cheetham said that the Council was accountable to all residents and it had to do things the right way. She was pleased with the outcome but questioned whether including Council representatives on the management committee of NWEHHA would be right.

Councillor O'Neill asked who would organise the projects and issue invoices. The Director of Community Services said that all appropriate procedures would be followed.

Councillor Smith said that clarification was needed as to what SSE meant by stop stansted expansion. The Chairman said that the Council's response to Government was to oppose any further runways at Stansted. However, Councillor A Dean said that current Council policy was not to support expansion beyond 15mppa.

Councillor Gayler said that the Council should continue to work with SSE and provide support to them. Councillor Mrs Flack congratulated Members and officers on enabling this matter to be considered without Members having to declare interests which would require them to leave the meeting. She felt that if Councillors were represented on the management committee it would politicise the work of NWEHHA.

Councillors Mrs Caton and Tyler said that there was a need for clarification of the legal and financial position and Councillor Mrs Caton said that the matter would be closely scrutinised by the District Auditor. The Director of Resources said that he had spoken with the Treasurer of SSE and an independently audited financial statement and balance sheet were being prepared. He felt that it was a constructive way forward for the Council to support specified projects.

The Leader expressed his admiration for the work of SSE and said that its Chairman was respected by all those who knew him. He felt that NWEHHA should continue to be a non-political organisation.

Councillor Gregory and his seconder agreed to amend item 3 of the motion to read "discussions be held on whether it would be possible for Uttlesford Councillors to serve on the management committee of NWEHHA".

The motion, as amended, was then put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

C67

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chairman reported that the Council had received an award through the Tree Council's National Grid Tree Warden Scheme for its commitment to the

co-ordinated network of tree wardens. The Chairman said that he would thank all wardens for their invaluable assistance. Councillor Mrs Flack asked that an up to date map be provided for tree wardens showing the protected trees within their parish.

## C68 LEADER'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Leader reported on proposals to replace the East of England Local Government Conference with a Regional Assembly. He would report on this matter to a future meeting.

## C69 MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEES – BUDGETS

Members considered the relevant Minutes of the last cycle of committee meetings relating to budgets, together with a comprehensive report submitted by the Director of Resources.

It was noted that because of the uncertainty regarding certain items of expenditure, eg the Stansted Airport campaign, the Resources Committee on 21 November had recommended that further savings and additional income be sought from the Environment and Transport and Community and Leisure Committees. This was in order to meet their cash savings targets agreed by the Council on 22 October 2002 to help to achieve the Council's agreed priority of keeping the increase of Council Tax at a sustainable level.

In effect, the Resources Committee recommendation was requesting that further savings and additional income be sought as follows:

Community and Leisure	-	£116,000
Environment and Transport	-	£99,000

With regard to the new Formula Grant provisional settlement, the Director of Resources said that the position for 2003/04 was as follows:

2.3% increase included in Council's financial projection	£ 87,000
Lastest Government information as at 12 December	<u>£132,000</u>
Additional grant above projection	<u>£ 45,000</u>

He said that the sum of £45,000 had not been known and therefore not included in the base figures presented to the last cycle of committee meetings when the various budgets had been considered. It therefore increased the sum available for manoeuvre from £29,000 to £74,000. However, even allowing for this additional sum there was still a shortfall of £144,000 compared with the overall total target approved by Council on 22 October. This was based on a Council Tax increase of 2.5% which had been updated by the Resources Committee on 21 November to keep the increase of Council Tax at a sustainable level. For information, the Government had announced a national District Band D Council Tax (including parishes) for 2003/04 of £181.32 for assumed grant distribution purposes only. Uttlesford's actual Council Tax for 2002/03 was £139.08, including the average parish precept.

Councillor Chambers said that he did not agree with the Government's figure and if the Council could provide services for less it should do so. Committees still needed to examine budgets further and Members needed to be aware of the possible implications of the Stansted Airport campaign. Councillor Gayler, whilst agreeing that it was necessary to look at providing value for money, stated that care needed to be taken when identifying reductions. Councillor Sell referred to the problems experienced by the Community and Leisure Committee in identifying savings. Councillor Mrs Menell agreed that the savings identified for that Committee were not realistic.

*Councillor Hibbs declared an interest insofar as this item related to the budget of the Development Control and Licensing Committee.* He referred to the problems experienced by Committees in identifying further savings and said that if further cuts were made, particularly in relation to grants it could destroy community development. Councillor Tyler said that those Members who found it difficult to achieve savings should not be critical of the budget which would need to be set in 2003/04.

Councillor O'Neill pointed out that the gap between the Council's actual Council Tax and the Government's projection was 30%.

RESOLVED that further savings and additional income be sought from the Environment and Transport and Community and Leisure committees in order to meet their cash savings targets agreed at the meeting of the Council on 22 October 2002, to help to achieve the Council's agreed priority of keeping the increase of Council Tax at a sustainable level.

## C70 **COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATION 2003/04**

Members were advised of the calculation of the Council Tax Base 2003/04.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the report of the Director of Resources for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2003/04 be approved.
- 2 pursuant to the Director of Resources' report in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 the amounts calculated by Uttlesford District Council as a Council Tax base for each part of its area for the year 2003/04 are as listed in Appendix 3 attached to these Minutes.

## C71 **DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR UTTLESFORD**

The Chief Executive informed Members of progress with the draft Uttlesford Community Strategy which had been widely circulated. She said that responsibility for its development rested with the Uttlesford Futures Partnership. It was not a Council strategy but should inform the plans of the Council and other partners. The consultation period of the draft Strategy



would run until 14 February 2003 and Members were invited to submit comments on the document to the Chief Executive by that date.

She added that a workshop was due to be held on 20 January 2003 on the Essex Community Strategy and asked for Members to be nominated to attend.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Members note the draft Community Strategy
- 2 Councillors Mrs Caton, Mrs Dean, Lewis and Mrs Menell be appointed to attend the workshop on the Essex Community Strategy.

C72

## NOTICES OF MOTION

(i) Members considered the following Notice of Motion which had been proposed by Councillors R J Copping, Mrs C A Bayley, G Sell and P A Wilcock:

“that the Council notes with concern the absence of the Council’s Leader, Councillor R P Chambers, from all the meetings of the Council’s committees during the period 14 August to 21 October and, furthermore, his absence from meetings of the Council’s policy committees during the subsequent cycle of meetings; and that Council believes that such absence, particularly from debates on important budget-setting business, is prejudicial to the political leadership the Council needs at this time.”

Councillor Copping introduced this motion. He said that there had been 20 meetings during the period from 14 August to 21 October and the Leader had been a permanent absentee. He questioned how the work of the Council could be undertaken without the Leader being present and said that it was an insult to electors. He said that the Leader had the procedural right to attend more meetings than other Councillors but had not chosen to exercise it. He said that it was extremely difficult for committees to debate the savings which had been identified by the Leader without him being present to explain them.

Councillor Chambers said that he was flattered that the Liberal Democrats had missed him. He felt that the motion implied that only one member of the Council mattered and this was not the case. He had full confidence in the Chairmen of committees and his deputy Leader who had attended three of the four committee meetings. He said that he visited the Council Offices on most days and kept in touch by telephone. He had served on the Council for 20 years and had never missed a Council meeting. He concluded that he felt passionately about Uttlesford and its residents.

The motion was then put to the vote with 17 votes for and 21 against (Councillor Mrs Loughlin abstained from voting). The motion was therefore lost.

(ii) Members considered the following Notice of Motion which had been

proposed by Councillor R P Chambers and seconded by Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham.

“Uttlesford District Council calls on the Government to investigate all options on the future of Air Transport in the South-East in light of the result of the Judicial Review put forward by Essex County Council, Kent County Council and Medway Unitary authority including other long term off shore sites, so that should the estimated passenger demand be needed, neither residents nor the environment will be adversely affected.”

On being put to the vote the motion was carried unanimously.

(iii) Members considered the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor R P Chambers and seconded by Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham.

“Uttlesford District Council requests the Government to consult all electors of Uttlesford by issuing a questionnaire on the future of Air Transport in the South-East.

This to happen because of the Government’s decision to further the public consultation process in view of the Judicial Review success of Essex, Kent and Medway.”

An amendment to the motion was suggested by Councillor A Dean and was seconded by Councillor Foley in the following terms:

“This Council deplores the unqualified support by the Leader of this Council for the commitment by Essex County Council to accept growth at Stansted Airport to maximum runway capacity of 40mppa in contradiction of the policy of this Council to restrict growth to 15mppa.

It reaffirms its request that the Government consults all electors of Uttlesford on the future of Air Transport in the South-East by issuing a questionnaire that addresses all possible options, including the impact of 40 mppa using Stansted Airport.

This to happen because of the Government’s decision to further the public consultation process in view of the Judicial Review of Essex, Kent and Medway and in order to measure public reaction to the environmental and social impact of growth to 40mppa at Stansted Airport.”

Councillor A Dean said that Essex County Council had resolved to object to the predict and provide approach to airport provision, to object to further runways at Stansted but to accept full use of Stansted to 40mppa.

Councillor Chambers said that at the County Council meeting he had believed he was voting for capacity on the existing runway at Stansted without any figures being included. Councillor Mrs Flack declared an interest as a County Councillor and confirmed that there had been 17 recommendations and there had been confusion at the meeting as to whether numbers were included. At this stage of the meeting Councillor A Dean withdrew his amendment and a further amendment was proposed by Councillor Gayler and duly seconded in the following terms:

“This Council opposes the commitment by Essex County Council to accept growth at Stansted Airport to a maximum runway capacity of 40mppa.

It reaffirms its request that the Government consults all electors of Uttlesford on the future of Air Transport in the South-East by issuing a questionnaire that addresses all possible options, including the impact of 40mppa using Stansted Airport.

This to happen because of the Government’s decision to further the public consultation process in view of the Judicial Review of Essex, Kent and Medway and in order to measure public reaction to the environmental and social impact of growth to 40mppa at Stansted Airport.”

On being put to the vote the amended motion was carried unanimously.

(iv) Members considered the following Notice of Motion which had been proposed by Councillor G Sell and seconded by Councillor M A Hibbs.

“This Council notes that, although Government funding on the police service has increased by 25% since 2000, many communities in Uttlesford are dissatisfied with the totally inadequate levels of policing in the District and require a more visible police presence. For example, Saffron Walden has only two officers on duty at night, whilst Stansted’s establishment has been reduced to just three officers.

The Council calls upon the chairman of the Essex Police Authority to use his position to ensure genuine increases in both resources and numbers to Uttlesford. It further instructs its officers to explore ways in which this Council can help the police, for example by providing local warden schemes and trained operators for CCTV.”

Councillor Sell introduced the motion and said that residents were not satisfied with police cover in the District. He suggested that the Council should investigate how it should support the police and referred to partnerships which had been formed by Daventry and Mid Suffolk District Councils in their areas. Councillor Gregory added that he would lobby the Community Safety Action Team on the issue of CCTV. Councillor Smith said that rural policing had been a failure and suggestions about community wardens were no substitute for having a full quota of police officers on duty. Councillor Ketteridge added that CCTV had been a very valuable tool in crime prevention and had been successful in bringing about convictions.

Councillor Tyler said that rural crime was escalating but the reporting of it was going down. He also said that morale in the police force was at an all time low and Government needed to take action. Councillor Chambers said that visible policing was high on the Police Authority’s agenda and rural policing had become a major issue. He said that if it was possible to get specials and community wardens it should be welcomed. He hoped it would also be possible for the District Council to work in partnership with the Police Authority.

Councillor Mrs Cheetham asked Councillor Sell and his seconder if they would be prepared to accept an amendment to the motion in the following terms:

“The Council calls upon the Home Secretary to release more funds to the counties to enable more police officers to be on the beat.”

This amendment was accepted.

On being put to the vote the motion, as amended, was carried unanimously.

**C73**

**SEASON'S GREETINGS**

The Chairman of the Council thanked Members and Officers for their hard work during the past year and wished them a happy Christmas.

The meeting ended at 10.45 pm

## Appendix 3

**Council Tax Base for 2003/04**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Tax Base</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Tax Base</b>
Arkesden	178.3	Leaden Roding	234.7
Ashdon	344.9	Lindsell	105.6
Aythorpe Roding	102.8	Littlebury	384.3
Barnston	380.2	Little Bardfield	124.5
Berden	212.3	Little Canfield	143.1
Birchanger	395.2	Little Chesterford	102.4
Broxted	229.1	Little Dunmow	345.9
Chickney	24.0	Little Easton	212.0
Chrishall	241.6	Little Hallingbury	701.1
Clavering	565.1	Manuden	288.2
Debden	365.6	Margaret Roding	75.6
Elmdon & Wendon Lofts	286.0	Newport	888.8
Elsenham	933.0	Quendon & Rickling	251.5
Farnham	186.6	Radwinter	245.2
Felsted	1196.6	Saffron Walden	5897.5
Great Canfield	187.2	Sampfords, The	354.5
Great Chesterford	604.8	Stansted	2275.8
Great Dunmow	2984.0	Stebbing	610.5
Great Easton	384.4	Strethall	12.6
Great Hallingbury	316.2	Takeley	974.4
Hadstock	153.7	Thaxted	1116.2
Hatfield Broad Oak	548.8	Tilty	51.0
Hatfield Heath	817.9	Ugley	197.9
Hempstead	209.6	Wendens Ambo	187.4
Henham	546.4	White Roding	166.0
High Easter	316.1	Wicken Bonhunt	103.5
High Roding	198.0	Widdington	237.8
Langley	164.7	Wimbish*	482.9
Sub Total	13073.1	Sub Total	16770.9
		<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>29844.0</b>

\*Wimbish includes 173.3 M.O.D. Band 'D' equivalent properties

## **SUMMARY OF STATEMENT BY MR BRIAN ROSS**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

As some of you may know, I have resigned from the Stop Stansted Expansion campaign so that SSE cannot be held responsible for anything I may now say.

I believe this Council should be ashamed at its failure to support the community campaign spearheaded by SSE. It should be ashamed that its Leader and key officials have looked for one excuse after another to avoid being helpful – while pretending that they were. Every time that SSE have overcome one obstacle, another has been found to take its place.

The Council's "bulldog with a bone" approach towards negotiations with SSE over funding took me quite by surprise and promoted me to delve deeper into the Council's negotiating approach towards BAA. Here the analogy of "lapdog" seems more appropriate:

For example, in relation to the current BAA planning application, this Council provisionally approved the application three months ago when a number of key issues – including night flights – were still unresolved. It is frankly not surprising that BAA now believe they are home and dry. Having given very little away during the course of the negotiations, they will hardly be inclined to make any significant concessions at this stage.

Still on the subject of the legal agreement, this council has repeatedly stated in public that BAA will be a party to this but that is not the case at all. The agreement is with Stansted Airport Limited – a subsidiary company. BAA is not a counterparty to the agreement and not even a guarantor. The golden rule in contractual negotiations that you lock in the parent company. And if you think this is a minor issue – go speak to the Football Association, or Carlton and Granada – or just ask BAA why it does not wish to be a party to the agreement.

Approval to expand Stansted to 25 MPPA is worth upwards of £30 million a year in additional operating profit to BAA. In this context the package on offer is thoroughly unimpressive. I personally would much rather take our chances at a Public Enquiry. The Terminal 5 enquiry imposed 700 conditions upon BAA in order to mitigate the impact upon the environment and local communities. Why should the people of Uttlesford be denied the same?

On the question of expansion beyond 25 MPPA on the existing runway. The Council has a policy vacuum in this area. There is a risk that this vacuum will be filled by default if the Leader of this Council and others are seen to be endorsing the principle of expanding Stansted to 40 MPPA outside of this Chamber.

I quote from the Audit Commission Report on UDC last year:

"The Council does not actively promote its role as a community leader, being explicit about what it stands for, and what it wants to achieve. Nor does it make its position clear about key issues facing the area such as the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport."

Equivocation – prevarication – perhaps even ambivalence. Either way this Council is failing in its duty to the people of Uttlesford.

When a Council either has no policy – or a confused policy – or a policy where words are not matched with deeds – on the most important issue ever to face this District – it is small wonder that many people in the local community are asking the question.

Whose side are you on UDC?

Only you can answer that – but rhetoric is not enough.

Thank you.

Brian Ross