

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL held at 7.30 pm at  
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 22 JUNE  
2004**

Present:- Councillor E J Godwin – Chairman  
Councillors E C Abrahams, K R Artus, H D Baker, W F Bowker,  
J F Cheetham, D Corke, R J Copping, A Dean, C D Down,  
S Flack, M L Foley, M A Gayler, R T Harris, M A Hibbs,  
B M Hughes, S C Jones, A J Ketteridge, V J T Lelliott,  
R M Lemon, J I Loughlin, J E Menell, D J Morson, J P Murphy,  
V Pedder, A R Row, M J Savage, F E Silver, A R Thawley,  
A M Wattebot and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird, D Burridge, J Mitchell, P O'Dell, I Orton,  
M J Perry and M T Purkiss.

**C16 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Bayley, P Boland,  
C A Cant, R P Chambers, K J Clarke, C M Dean, R F Freeman, D W Gregory,  
E W Hicks, A Marchant, S V Schneider, G Sell and E Tealby-Watson.

**C17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Councillors declared interests as members of SSE:

Councillors K R Artus, W F Bowker, J F Cheetham, D Corke, A Dean,  
C D Down, S Flack, M L Foley, E J Godwin, R T Harris, B M Hughes,  
A J Ketteridge, J E Menell, D J Morson, J P Murphy, V Pedder, A R Row,  
M J Savage, A R Thawley and P A Wilcock.

Councillor Flack declared an interest as a member of Essex County Council,  
Councillor Menell declared an interest as a non-executive director of  
Uttlesford Primary Care Trust and Councillor Baker declared an interest in  
relation to the Saffron Walden Day Centre. Councillor Hibbs declared a  
prejudicial interest in relation to the Uttlesford Local Plan as he was an  
architect working in the District.

**C18 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2004/05**

The Performance Manager gave a presentation on the draft Best Value  
Performance Plan for 2004/05. He said that under Section 6 of the Local  
Government Act 1999 the Council was required to produce the Plan and it  
needed to be available for public inspection by 30 June 2004. The format of  
the BVPP was linked to the scoring mechanism from the CPA and as a "fair"  
authority the content of the plan was required to be more comprehensive than  
those for excellent or good authorities.

As a "fair" authority Uttlesford was required to include within the BVPP:

- A summary of the strategic objectives and priorities of the authority.
- Arrangements for addressing the improvement priorities of the authority.
- Details of past, current and planned performance.
- A brief statement of contracts awarded during the year, involving a transfer of staff.
- Information about the publication and distribution of the BVPP.

The Performance Manager said that the BVPP was subject to external audit by District Audit and the CPA Team within District Audit. He then gave a full explanation of the content of the draft Plan and details of current and future performance of the Council.

Members then made a number of comments on the content and format of the BVPP and the Performance Manager answered Members' questions. Councillor Hibbs suggested that some of the initials and abbreviations in the Plan needed to be explained for the public. Councillor Corke expressed some concern at the short amount of time which Members had been given to consider the Plan and felt that the document needed to be clearer so that the public could read and understand it. He said that he had looked at the document produced by North Dorset District Council which was much clearer and easier to read.

Councillor Copping said that of the 41 improvement measures identified in the document 22 were the responsibility of the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance. He had noted that it was unlikely that an appointment would be made to this post until at least the Autumn and asked how these matters could be progressed. The Chief Executive said that he was disappointed that the Council had not been successful in appointing an Executive Manager Strategy and Performance but said that the references to executive managers in the document did not mean that that person had sole responsibility for progressing the issue and much of the work would be undertaken by other colleagues.

Councillor A Dean said that he was disappointed that there was not a higher ambition than achieving 45% of those satisfied with handling of complaints and suggested that this should be increased to 65%. He also referred to the target for answering letters within 10 days and suggested that, as this could not be adequately measured across the Council, the target should be reduced from 100% to 95%. The Performance Manager undertook to make these amendments.

Councillor Flack said that she was disappointed at the percentage of staff receiving appraisals and said that this was a key issue which needed addressing. The Chief Executive agreed with this comment and said that the Executive Manager Human Resources had been asked to give priority to this matter.

Councillor Ketteridge said that he was concerned at the time spent on preparing the statistics in this document and questioned how much it actually impacted on the Council's performance. He said that managers were being bogged down with statistics. However, Councillor Hibbs said that it was useful to have key issues identified and considered that it was a constructive

exercise. Councillor A Dean said that he recently attended the CIPFA conference where targets had been discussed and it was emphasised that targets should be about the things that mattered to the local authority. He hoped that the number of targets would be reduced in the longer term.

Councillor Copping said that the document needed to be made clearer in future years and Councillor Gayler agreed that the Council could do better. He said that next year it was intended that a workshop would be held to deal with the draft plan and the Council meeting would be asked to sign off the final document prior to submission.

It was then

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Council adopt the Best Value Performance Plan for 2004/05 subject to any changes to the text that may be agreed by the group of Members referred to below,
- 2 the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Resources Committee and the Leaders of the Conservative and Independent Groups, or their representatives, be authorised to act as a reference point for any additional changes that might be required to the Best Value Performance Plan.

C19

## **UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN - MODIFICATIONS**

Councillor Hibbs declared a prejudicial interest and left the Council Chamber for the remainder of the meeting.

Councillor Thawley reported that the Plan had been considered at a Member Workshop and at the meeting of the Environment Committee on 8 June 2004. He said that at the Committee meeting, the report had been approved subject to the following two amendments:-

**Modification 32, Page 24 Policy GEN 7 Line 1** – delete the word “significant”.

**Modifications 85 and 86, Para 6.20 and Policy H8** – delete the words “up to”.

It was noted that once the modifications had been approved the Council had to prepare three documents which were then made available for public inspection and comment for a period of six weeks. It was proposed that this period should commence on 22 July 2004. At the end of the six week consultation period Members would consider any objections and representations of support for the proposed modifications. Provided that there were no material objections leading to a second inquiry the Plan could then be adopted early in 2005.

Members then considered each chapter of the Local Plan. In relation to the Takeley and Little Canfield Inset, Councillor Cheetham said that 700 houses had originally been allocated to the Priors Green site and this had now risen to 815. She said this would double the amount of housing in the village and asked for an assurance that this would be the final ceiling for properties in Priors Green. The Executive Manager Development Services said that the Inspector had said that there should be no more properties at Priors Green and this would assist officers in robustly defending these figures.

RESOLVED that the proposed modifications to the Plan be approved subject to the changes agreed by the Environment Committee on 8 June 2004 and Officers be authorised to prepare the statutory documents required for public consultation.

C19

## **RECYCLING PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS**

Prior to the consideration of this item, it was moved and seconded that the press and public be excluded for the consideration of this item on the basis that it involved the consideration of Exempt Information under Paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. However, on being put to the vote this motion was lost and the item was considered in the open part of the meeting.

The Executive Manager Environment and Culture presented a detailed report on the current recycling arrangements and performance and proposals to achieve an increased performance and an earlier implementation of the Best Value recommendations.

She said that the Council had an excellent record of recycling and was 12<sup>th</sup> in a league table of 350 English Local Authorities. In the Best Value Review of Refuse and Recycling Services it was accepted that 90% to 95% of residents were currently covered by the recycling teams and that the extra vehicle which was now available made it potentially possible to cover everyone. However, given that only around 65% of residents used the service, increased participation was vital to move recycling forward significantly.

The Executive Manager Environment and Culture said that the means of making the next step changes possible was planned by the use of the new twinned body refuse vehicles being introduced. This would enable both weekly residuals and fortnightly recyclables to be collected on the same day. It would also simplify systems for residents, encourage use of green/black boxes and make monitoring easier. Potentially, the combined system should be less expensive.

These progressive fleet changes had now resulted in 7 of the 12 refuse/recycling vehicles being of the twin bodied type. Initially, it had been planned to change the whole District over to the new single pass system when contracts were renewed in 2006/07. However, this would not achieve the 2005/06 target from DEFRA or assist in gaining future grants to boost the performance. Also, changing the District incrementally to single pass would be easier to manage and significantly minimise the inevitable customer problems in collection day changes which were potentially necessary for

everyone. The Executive Manager Environment and Culture said that it was now believed that these changes were required and could only be delivered by the consolidation of the 3 existing recycling rounds with the 8 domestic refuse rounds to ultimately produce 11 to 12 single pass weekly rounds. This could be brought about by the transfer, with full employment protection, of the existing recycling vehicles and crews to Verdant PLC. An initial approach had been made to Verdant who had indicated agreement subject to further detailed negotiations. Also, an extension to the main contract would be required for two years to allow for the complete harmonisation of all collection rounds. The funding for the recyclables transfer system would come from an approved DEFRA grant to Essex County Council and could be in place before the end of 2004 and therefore linking well with these proposals.

Councillor Copping said that Members needed further information on the capital and revenue implications of the proposals and asked that a report come back to Members following the negotiations. The Executive Manager Environment and Culture gave an undertaking to do so. Councillor Thawley said that the proposals were part of a continuing improvement process and he said that he had met with waste management industry representatives who had indicated that the proposals fitted into their expectations. He hoped that the financial report would show that savings could be achieved.

Councillor Cheetham said that she would also welcome a more comprehensive report and said that the Council needed to be clear about whether it was carrying out kerbside or backdoor collections. Councillor Murphy said that prior to the changes being implemented there needed to be a comprehensive publicity campaign. Councillor Loughlin asked that lids should be provided for recycling bins to prevent materials being blown around and officers undertook to look at this issue. Councillor A Dean said that he understood that the proposals would provide better working conditions for those staff working on the recycling rounds.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the principle of transferring the recycling vehicles and staff to Verdant by the end of 2004 subject to further negotiations and staff protection arrangements be agreed, and
- 2 the incremental change over to single pass refuse and recyclables collections be introduced from January 2005 and fully implemented by a two year extension to the existing contract, and
- 3 the above decisions be subject to a further report following negotiations and before implementation.

C20

## **BRIAN PERKINS**

The Chairman reminded Members that Brian Perkins would be retiring from the Council at the end of the week. She said that all Members had the utmost respect for him and he was always welcoming, had a dry sense of humour and would always find the answers to Members' questions. She said that it

was particularly sad that he was left feeling that there was no role for him in the Council. She said that there should be a role for everyone in this Council and urged everyone to ensure that all Officers and Members were valued. She said that she respected his wishes that he did not want a collection but had decided to circulate a card for all Members to sign. She said that the Council owed a huge debt to Brian Perkins and valued and appreciated everything he had done. He had always worked with the best interests of Uttlesford at heart and would be missed by all those who knew him.

Councillor Menell agreed with everything that had been said and said that he had served the Council beyond the call of duty and office and his work should be recognised. Councillor Cheetham said that she had joined the Council in 1991 and Brian had been a fantastic source of information and she was also sorry that he had decided to go as he felt that he had no role in the Council. She said that she would miss his expertise and deep knowledge and asked the Chairman to write to him on behalf of all Members wishing him a happy retirement. Councillor Row said that the Council would really miss Brian and paid tribute to the excellent work he had carried out particularly with regard to the Airport. Councillor A Dean said that he valued the support from Brian particularly during the period when he was Acting Chief Executive and he wished him well for the future.

Councillor Godwin also reminded Members that the summer lunch in support of Crossroads would be held on Friday 25 June and she urged Members to let her know as soon as possible if they intended to attend.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.