

**COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 20 JULY 2004**

Present:- Councillor E J Godwin – Chairman  
Councillors K R Artus, H D Baker, C A Bayley, P Boland,  
W F Bowker, C A Cant, R J Copping, A Dean, C M Dean,  
C D Down, S Flack, M A Gayler, M A Hibbs, E W Hicks,  
B M Hughes, S C Jones, A J Ketteridge, V J T Lelliott,  
R M Lemon, J I Loughlin, A Marchant, J E Menell, D J Morson,  
J P Murphy, V Pedder, M J Savage, S V Schneider, G Sell,  
F E Silver, E Tealby-Watson, A M Wattebot,  
P A Wilcock.

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

C21

**MEMBERS' QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

Councillor Copping asked the Chief Executive if it was possible to receive a report on the costs since May 2003 of performance measuring and its tangible benefits to Council Tax payers. The Chief Executive undertook to provide a report to the next meeting on this issue.

Councillor Menell said that she had put her name forward for some of the actions in the Quality of Life Corporate Plan but had heard nothing since. The Performance Manager said that all projects which were due for completion by the end of the year were up and running and others were being revised and would be considered at a Members' workshop on 13 September. He said that he would write to Councillor Menell concerning her involvement in any projects.

Councillor Hicks said that the rest areas on the A120 at Dunmow were to be closed to enable toilet blocks to be constructed. He asked for an assurance that any environmental issues would be the responsibility of this Council and the Chief Executive said that he would arrange for the Executive Manager Environment and Culture to contact him regarding this matter.

Councillor Ketteridge said that he had noted that the Leader had met with Committee Chairmen to agree objectives and he questioned how decisions were being taken. He expressed concern that there appeared to be a move towards a cabinet system. The Leader said that informal discussions had been held between the Chairs of Committees and Executive Managers and the issues arising from these would be brought to Committees and other groups for discussion.

Councillor Flack asked if Committee Chairmen could receive a copy of the Minutes for their Committee prior to the Minutes going public. Officers would look at the feasibility of this. She also referred to the weekend session which had been held involving the Executive Management Team and the Leadership Liaison Group which she understood had cost in excess of £5,000. She asked the Leader which Committee had authorised this meeting and how such an event could take place when the Council had cut grants, reduced

services and increased Council Tax. She also asked for details of the outcomes of this session. The Leader said that the outcomes of the workshop were being used to draw up and drive forward an action plan and this would be discussed with all members of the Council. He confirmed that the workshop had cost £5,563 excluding VAT and said that 50% of this related to external support. He considered that the workshop was justified and did not require Committee approval.

In answer to a question from Councillor Wilcock, Councillor Pedder said that the Member workshop on 21 July would provide details of progress with waste management and the outcome of the Annual Waste Management Conference which had been held on 14 July.

It was noted that this was the third of three experimental question time sessions and Members were asked whether they wished to abandon the process, continue for a further trial period or establish question time as a permanent standing item on all ordinary Council agendas.

RESOLVED that Members' question time be established as a permanent standing item on all ordinary Council agendas.

## **C22 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E C Abrahams, R P Chambers, J F Cheetham, K J Clarke, D Corke, M L Foley, R F Freeman, D W Gregory, A R Row and A R Thawley.

The Chairman said that Councillor Row had recently been in hospital and she circulated a card for all Members to sign. Members expressed their best wishes to Councillor Row for a speedy recovery.

## **C23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Menell declared an interest as a non executive director of the Uttlesford Primary Care Trust.

The following Councillors declared interests as members of SSE:  
Councillors K R Artus, C A Bayley, P Boland, W F Bowker, C A Cant, A Dean, C M Dean, C D Down, S Flack, E J Godwin, R T Harris, B M Hughes, A J Ketteridge, A Marchant, J E Menell, D J Morson, J P Murphy, V Pedder, M J Savage and P A Wilcock.

## **C24 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April, the Annual Meeting held on 11 May and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 22 June 2004 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman subject to the reference to Councillor Flack in the seventh paragraph of Minute C18 being amended to Councillor Foley.

**BUSINESS ARISING****(i) Minute C98 - Members Question and Answer Session**

Councillor Ketteridge declared an interest in this matter insofar as it related to Uttlesford Crossroads and left the meeting during the discussion thereon. Councillors Hughes and Sell declared interests in the matter insofar as it related to Uttlesford CAB and took no part in the discussion thereon.

Councillor Morson responded to the issues which had been raised in this Minute. He said that the decision not to fund Uttlesford Crossroads had been taken as part of the Best Value Review as the organisation did not meet the criteria. However, he had met with the Chairman of Crossroads to review the situation. He also referred to progress with youth events and said that the U2004 event would be held in Great Dunmow on 7 August. There were also a number of events at Fairycroft and grants for music tuition were being sought. He also referred to the holiday sports programme and events at the High Barn Recording Studios. He said that he had also met with representatives of Uttlesford CAB in relation to possible three year funding programme and would be reporting upon this to the next meeting of the Community and Leisure Committee.

**(ii) Minute C100(iv) – Future Development of Air Transport at Stansted Airport**

Councillor Wilcock said that two policy documents had now been received and would be discussed at the next meeting of the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel to which all Members were invited to attend.

**(iii) Minute C14 – Appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies**

Councillor Menell thanked the Chairman for attending the launch of the new Buffy Bus which would be in service from September and asked Members to contact her if they were aware of any unmet needs for the under fives in their area.

**(iv) Minute C18 – Best Value Performance Plan 2004/05**

Councillor Sell asked when the vacancy for the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance would be advertised. The Chief Executive said that the Executive Manager Corporate Governance was currently looking after the responsibilities in a caretaker role but he hoped to readvertise the post in September. He was also talking to neighbouring councils and agencies to assess whether there was any scope for working together on some of the issues.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chairman reported that she had attended the RPG Stakeholder Seminar with Councillor Savage. She reported that there seemed to be a feeling that the proposed new housing could best be located in the Uttlesford/Harlow area. However, whilst Uttlesford did not wish to see large scale development

she understood that Harlow would welcome this as it would assist in the regeneration of the area. Whilst the M11 corridor was likely to be earmarked for development she considered that the A120 corridor could be safeguarded. She said that it was unlikely that there would be a new town but a settlement of 10,000 people had been suggested. She also said that she understood that the Green Belt would be used and it was unlikely to be replaced.

Councillor Copping said that it was unfortunate that Uttlesford's future was in the hands of regional planners and said that if the Council was to make an impact it could not rely on making written representations. It needed to be stronger and demand greater representation on the regional bodies. Councillor Morson concurred with this view and supported the view of Councillor Clarke that a forward planning task group should be set up to look at the strategic issues and channel this Council's views.

The Chairman also reported that she had attended a reception at the Museum to launch the exhibition of finds from the Transco pipeline excavations. She said that an enormous amount of material had been recovered and this would present the Museum with the problem of storage in the future. She urged Members to visit this fascinating exhibition.

The Chairman then thanked all those who had helped with the Chairman's lunch which had raised in the region of £1,000. She said that tickets for the Chairman's Dinner were now available and asked Members to make every effort to attend.

C27

## **LEADER'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Leader said that he felt that Uttlesford had started to turn the corner and he was pleased that the CPA rating had been at the top point of the fair category. He said that at the LGA Conference he had discussed with the Leader and Chief Executive of East Herts District Council ways that the two authorities could work together more closely. He said that the Council needed to work with its neighbours particularly in relation to the suggested second runway at Stansted Airport. He added that he would continue to press for support on this issue at the Regional Assembly. He also said that one of the challenges facing the Council was the provision of affordable housing. He said that the Council needed to define its destiny and bring it about.

The Leader said that he had met with the Chairs of Committees and Executive Managers to define key objectives which would be discussed more widely. He referred to the away day where five key areas of developing the capability of the Council had been agreed. He said that the most important issue was to ensure that the Council was more customer focused.

The Leader then referred to the impact of the growth at Stansted, boosting recycling, decriminalisation and the Council's new powers under the Licensing Act. He said that he had received a letter from Keith Hall, the Minister for Housing and Planning, concerning the Council's Development Control performance. He said that the Council had employed more staff and he hoped that the situation would be closely monitored by the Scrutiny Committee. He referred to the need to involve marginalized members of the

community. He said that the review of the democratic structure was now underway and the new management structure was working well. He paid credit to the Executive Management Team for the seamless transition to the new arrangements.

C28

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEES**

### **(i) Amendments to Financial Regulations – Resources Committee 24 June 2004 – Minute RE9**

RESOLVED that the recommendation contained in Minute RE9 be adopted and the changes to the financial regulations as contained in that Minute be approved.

### **(ii) Member/Officer Relationships – Standards Committee 12 July 2004 – Minute S4**

Members considered a detailed report from the Standards Committee providing supplementary guidance on Members and Officers working together on designated projects.

Councillor Wilcock said that initiatives of this type would help move the Council from a fair to a good and then to an excellent Council. He was pleased that suggestions were coming forward from staff for improvement and stressed the need to involve staff and meet customer expectations.

Councillor Copping said that the Council needed to give priority to dealing with development pressures on the District. He said that the Council was under an obligation to protect the area on behalf of its residents and said that it must commit resources to development control.

RESOLVED that the recommendation contained in Minute S4 be approved and the supplementary guidance as detailed in the Minute regarding Member/Officer working relationships be adopted by the Council.

C29

## **DELEGATION SCHEME AND PROCEDURE FOR FINANCE/CONTRACTS/ LEGAL MATTERS**

Members considered a report which recommended some minor changes to the Council's delegation scheme and procedure for finance, contracts and legal matters which were required as a consequence of the management restructuring.

RESOLVED that the changes to the delegation scheme and procedures for finance, contracts, legal matters as set out in the report submitted to the meeting be adopted.

## PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Councillor Pedder, the Chairman of the Procurement Task Group, reported on the need to develop a new strategy to meet the needs of the requirements of the Byatt Report “Delivering Better Services to Citizens” and to ensure that the Authority was obtaining the maximum return on all spending.

The Performance Manager reported on the key themes of the strategy and the benefits which had accrued to the Council in using the expertise of Essex Marketplace to ensure that effective and up to date procurement procedures were in place. He also explained the transition which would allow electronic ordering and the monitoring of the procurement process. He said that this was linked into the new financial management system and during 2004/05 a combination of Essex Marketplace and the Financial Management System would ensure that the Authority applied effective and up to date procurement procedures. He said that the remaining strand of the strategy was to ensure that new procurement procedures produced efficiency and cash savings to help deliver the key corporate objectives of the authority. This included comparing costs between firms the Council used at present and potential savings by changing some suppliers. This exercise was now underway and savings were being identified. He concluded that the Council was looking for cash savings but this needed to be balanced against speed of delivery, quality, range of products and local suppliers.

He said that the Council was introducing a range of performance measures to ensure that new procurement strategy was delivering.

The Performance Manager then answered Members’ questions and confirmed that it would also relate to the use of supplies by Councillors and that a summary of the costs and savings would be reported to the Procurement Task Group and could also be looked at by the Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED that the Council agree the Procurement Strategy which is based on :

- Adopting the lifecycle approach to the assets or contracts of the Council.
- Applying effective and up to date procurement procedures.
- Ensuring procurement helps deliver the nine corporate themes from the Quality of Life Plan.
- Monitoring procurement processes on a regular basis to ensure efficiencies are ongoing.

## ALCOHOL AND DRUGS STRATEGY GROUP

It was noted that Councillor Lelliott had resigned from the Alcohol and Drugs Strategy Group of the Uttlesford Community Safety Action Team.

RESOLVED that Councillor Murphy be appointed to serve on the Alcohol and Drugs Strategy Group.

C32

### **LEGAL CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF AVIATION**

The Executive Manager Corporate Governance updated Members on the legal challenge to the Government White Paper on the Future of Aviation. He said that he had attended the Directions Hearing of the three applications. The next stage would be for the partners to file detailed reasons for the applications and the Government would then file its evidence. The Council would then have the opportunity to consider this. He said that the Hearing would be on the first available slot after 29 November and had been set aside for six days. The Judge had asked that the matter be listed as one of urgency.

C33

### **JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AND THE MONITORING OFFICER**

Members received a report from the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer concerning payments to an employee which were ultra vires. It had not been possible to prepare a full report at this stage as the employee concerned needed to be interviewed. It was proposed that a fully detailed report should be presented to the Council meeting on 19 October 2004.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and Officers be asked to continue to pursue this matter and report to the Council meeting on 19 October 2004.

C34

### **REPORT ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE**

The Chief Executive reported on the main issues that were under discussion at the recent Local Government Association Annual Conference in Bournemouth. He said that many district councils had felt that the issues they faced were not well represented at national level and were not given prominence by the LGA. He suggested that district councils needed to be more proactive and promote the issues they were facing in a more positive way. He also suggested that the Council might take a stand at the exhibition in future years.

Councillor Sell said that the Council still faced the problem of many people not knowing where Uttlesford was. He referred to some of the issues considered at the conference including Community Support Officers and European Integration and said that healthy disagreement between the political parties on such issues was a good thing.

Councillor Wilcock suggested that there should be more opportunity for other Councillors to attend the conference and referred to the speech which had been made by Dame Shirley Williams concerning development pressures which had been widely reported. He said that he had attended the Essex Local Government Association meeting and considered that this could be used to drive the local government agenda more effectively.

Councillor Copping referred to the comments in the report that a senior police officer was sceptical about local strategic partnerships and said that it was essential that partners in groups, such as Uttlesford Futures, must be able to commit their organisations to action on top level decisions.

RESOLVED that

- 1 in future years, at least three Member places be booked to attend the conference to enable opposition as well as majority group members to attend the conference, and
- 2 the Chief Executive consider opportunities to increase the profile of Uttlesford District Council within the LGA, including the possibility of participating in the exhibition or running a fringe meeting next year.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.