

COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 19 FEBRUARY 2008

Present:- Councillor C M Dean – Chairman.
Councillors E C Abrahams, K R Artus, S Barker, E L Bellingham-Smith, C Cant, R H Chamberlain, R Chambers, J Cheetham, R Clover, A Dean, C Down, K L Eden, M A Gayler, E J Godwin, E Gower, E W Hicks, S J Howell, J E Hudson, D M Jones, A Ketteridge, T P Knight, R M Lemon, H J Mason, J E Menell, D G Perry, J A Redfern, H S Rolfe, D J Sadler, J Salmon, S Schneider, G Sell, R D Sherer, C C Smith, A D Walters, A M Wattebot, L A Wells and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird (Chief Executive), R Auty (Head of Community Engagement), D Bradley (Interim Head of Finance), D Burrige (Director of Operations), S Martin (Head of Corporate Support and Revenue Services), J Mitchell (Director of Development), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive), P Snow (Committee and Electoral Services Manager) and A Webb (Acting Chief Financial Officer).

Also in attendance:- C Rockall (Audit Commission)

C71

AWARD TO SEWARDS END PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF QUALITY STATUS

The Chairman welcomed Peter Stocking, Chairman of Swards End Parish Council, and Joy Sheppard, Chief Executive of the Essex Association of Local Councils, to mark the achievement by the Parish Council of quality parish status.

Joy Sheppard said that it gave her great pleasure to make the award. Swards End Parish Council had only been created in 2004 and was the newest parish council to receive national accreditation. The award had been approved by an independent panel established for this purpose to maintain the highest standards. She was pleased to say that Michael Perry had joined the panel in 2007.

The criteria for achieving the quality standard included having an 80% electoral mandate, and a clerk qualified in more than twenty tests of competency. The Parish Council served its electorate well by providing monthly reports, as well as an annual report, and had recently completed the purchase of a new playing field in the parish. The Parish Council had been involved in a number of other initiatives, including the imminent installation of traffic calming measures.

Peter Stocking then accepted the award on behalf of the Parish Council.

C72 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Prior to the meeting, statements were made by two members of the public and a summary of those statements is attached to these Minutes.

C73 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Stephen Bennett presented the report and conclusions of the Independent Remuneration Panel in his capacity as panel chairman.

He said it was a privilege to chair the panel and he wished to place on record his appreciation and thanks to Martyn Fiddler, who was standing down after this meeting, following a period of service lasting since the panel was first established in 2001.

Mr Bennett emphasised the independent role of the panel in offering advice to the Council on the appropriate level of allowances and it was a matter for the Council to decide whether to take that advice. The panel had looked carefully at allowances applied in other local authorities and had recommended rates that would enable Uttlesford to attract good quality representatives from all sections of the community.

In doing this, the panel had been mindful of the Council's present financial circumstances and had taken account of the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee that Member allowances in 2008/09 should be frozen at current levels. The panel had nevertheless concluded that it was important for the panel to maintain its independent position and to recommend what its members considered to be the rate for the job.

The recommendation before Members was for the Council to apply an across the board increase of 2.475%, reflecting the annual pay award to Uttlesford staff, except for the carer's allowance and travel rates which would stay the same. He had been advised that the total cost of implementing this increase would be a little over £7,000.

A particular concern of the panel had been that a deferment of the recommended increase would lead to a log-jam that would be difficult to resolve in future years.

The panel has also noted the position relating to the G2 application, the LSP and the LDF, and the possibility of a reconfiguration of the committee structure leading to a revision of member responsibilities. Accordingly, the panel was prepared to reconvene, if invited to do so, to reconsider the appropriate level of allowances.

In presenting the recommendations, Mr Bennett advised members that the panel intended to undertake a more fundamental review next year that would involve a detailed examination of comparable data.

The Chairman said that she wished to place on record the Council's appreciation for the work undertaken by Martyn Fiddler since 2001 and

welcomed David Murtagh as a new panel member, and David Barron who would replace Mr Fiddler as from the beginning of May.

Councillor Chambers thanked the panel for the work it had undertaken and asked the Chairman to write to Martyn Fiddler in appreciation of his record of service. He said that he had read the report and understood the reasons for the increase being proposed. However, he had proposed that allowances be frozen at the Finance and Administration Committee and felt strongly that Members should contribute directly towards the savings required to be made. As a result, he wished to propose that the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel be set aside and the Council agree to freeze allowances at the current level, as recommended by the Finance and Administration Committee. He also urged the panel not to recommend that the deferred increase be added back to the recommended level of allowances for the following year.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat group, Councillor Sell said that he supported the proposal tabled by Councillor Chambers as it was the right thing to do. He was mindful of the fact that it was the first time that the Council would have voted not to accept the recommendation of the panel but felt there was no other choice given the circumstances.

Councillor Lemon also supported the proposal on behalf of the Independent group.

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel to increase Member allowances by a figure of 2.475%, be set aside and that allowances remain at their present level in 2008/09.

C74

MEMBERS' QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Councillor Godwin urged Members to agree that a separate budget setting meeting should be scheduled for next year. She also asked that thought be given to member training in budget setting and sought an assurance that monthly budget reports would be prepared in future.

The Leader agreed that a specific budget setting meeting would be better than the present arrangement and that more training should be provided.

Councillor Menell referred Members to the Minutes of the Extraordinary Standards Committee meeting on 18 January. She said that the meeting had cost a great deal of time and money and had resulted in no sanction being applied. This had reflected on a Member who had devoted a lifetime to helping and supporting the community and she questioned the mindset of those individuals who had made the complaint.

She asked the Assistant Chief Executive for some clarification of the code of conduct to make the settlement of such cases a less distressing experience for those concerned, including providing the option for a resolution of minor infringements by discussion with legal officers.

The Chairman said that questions to officers were not permitted under the question and answer procedure and asked Mr Perry to respond in writing to Councillor Menell.

Councillor Walters referred to the unintentional collateral damage caused to other services and organisations by the need for budget savings, with particular reference to the Tourist Information Centre. He said he was confident that the Town Council would operate the service efficiently and this would follow the example set by the late Stephen Neville who fought tenaciously to preserve a tourism service in the district. He asked for further details of the agreed arrangements and for how long it would operate?

In responding, the Leader declared a personal interest as a member of the Town Council. He confirmed the terms of a tapering grant to be offered by the District Council, consisting initially of £30,000 reducing to £10,000 in the third year. He hoped that there would be a seamless transition so that the public would not notice any difference in the level of service provided.

The Town Council had already contacted a number of other parishes, including Thaxted, with a view to extending the scope of the service to other parts of Uttlesford.

Councillor Wilcock asked the Chairman of the Environment Committee about a representation from a resident of White Roding complaining about the time taken by the Director of Development to respond to his letter.

Councillor Barker confirmed that a letter of apology, copied to all Members, had now been sent and the matter was regarded as closed.

Councillor Howell raised the discussion of cemetery charges at the Environment Committee meeting on 22 January. At that meeting, Members considered, and decided to reject, a proposal to set the exclusive right of burial lease at 50 years and exclusive right for cremated remains at 20 years. He said that the Minutes were silent on this decision and thought that there should be a correction to explicitly record the decision made at that meeting.

Councillor Barker agreed with this analysis and said that she would arrange for a correction to be made.

Councillor Rolfe asked for details of a campaign by the County Council to save local post offices from closure.

In responding, Councillor Barker declared a personal interest as a county councillor. She confirmed that Lord Hanningfield had pledged a sum of up to £1.5m towards the cost of operating post offices under threat of closure in North Essex and it was hoped this initiative would help those business to survive for the benefit of the community.

Councillor Hudson referred to the waste of a valuable housing resource caused by more than 400 houses in the district standing empty. Councillor Schneider said that she would respond to Councillor Hudson in writing.

Councillor Gayler asked about existing plans for the Great Dunmow Eastern Sector and the proposed move of the Dunmow office facility to the new library. He said that a Member steering group had been established and asked for another Dunmow Member to be appointed from the Liberal Democrat group. He also asked for some terms of reference to be drafted for agreement.

The Leader said that he was happy to agree to both requests and would make arrangements accordingly. The customer services unit would eventually move to the library but no firm plans for that move were yet in place.

Councillor Cant reminded Councillor Barker that the Environment Committee had agreed that a meeting of the LDF group should be arranged and asked for an indication of when this might happen? Councillor Barker apologised for not following up on this matter and said that she would speak to the appropriate officer.

In view of the statements made earlier by Mr Woodcock and Mr McDonald, Councillor A Dean raised the concerns included in the report prepared by Bill Roots. He specifically asked the Leader to explain why no information had been given to Members in advance of this meeting concerning the interim arrangements to be put into place following the departure of the Chief Executive.

The Leader responded that most of the arrangements that would be proposed under item 14 on the agenda had been agreed since the last Council meeting and that all group leaders had been kept informed of the progress being made. This was in spite of the impression created in a recent press release on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group.

Councillor A Dean then said that his point was that there was no information available in the papers for this meeting on which a decision could be made. The Chairman said that this matter would be discussed in detail under the relevant item.

C75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anjum, Foley, Miller, Morson and Yarwood. Councillor Knight had been delayed and would be late.

C76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C Dean declared an interest as a member of SSE and the National Trust.

Councillors Godwin, Gayler, A Dean, Hudson and Sadler declared their interest as members of SSE.

Councillor Cheetham declared her interest as a member of SSE, NWEHHPA, the National Trust and Hatfield Forest Management Committee

Councillors Lemon, Bellingham-Smith, Rolfe and Redfern declared their interest as members of the National Trust.

Councillor Barker declared her interest as a member of the County Council, SSE and the National Trust.

Councillor Chambers declared an interest as Chairman of the Essex Police Authority and an Essex County Councillor.

C77 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2007, having been received, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C78 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute C56 – Members’ Question and Answer Session

Councillor Hicks referred to the reference to possible help from Great Dunmow Town Council to progress the pedestrianisation of the Eastern Sector development. Councillor Barker confirmed that she had raised this matter with the relevant bodies and had ascertained that the County Council had promised funding of up to £30,000 towards the creation of a market square.

Councillor Gayler thanked Councillor Barker for her persistence in this matter and asked for further details of the work to be carried out. Councillor Barker replied that the Council’s engineer (Mr Hunt) was working closely with the Town Council and this was now a matter to be resolved locally.

C79 CHAIRMAN’S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman drew attention to a request from the Heart Foundation for a collection to be made at this meeting. A bucket was passed around during the meeting for Members to make contributions to this charity.

She reminded Members that it had been the intention to make a charitable donation in lieu of the decision not to send Christmas cards but that had never been done. She now proposed to make a donation of £50 to the Heart Foundation from the Chairman’s budget.

A number of events had taken place to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, including a successful exhibition first at the Helena Romanes School in Dunmow, and then at the Friends’ meeting house in Saffron Walden. Pupils from Helena Romanes, as well as Saffron Walden County High School and Rickling Primary School, had visited the exhibition and a lady who had been liberated from a concentration camp had spoken to pupils about her experiences.

Michelle Hatwell had helped to stage the exhibition, as well as providing a book for visitors’ impressions, following Jane McKie’s departure in December, and she thanked Michelle, who would shortly be leaving the Council’s employ.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the carbon neutral conference funded by Uttlesford Futures due to take place at the London Road offices tomorrow. The Community Achievement awards would be held at the same venue on Thursday of this week and her reception would take place this year on Thursday, 24 April.

Finally, as this was the last Council meeting the Chief Executive would attend, she thanked Alasdair Bovaird for his efforts on Members' behalf and wished him well for the future.

C80

LEADER'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Leader said that he wished to respond to the comments made by Messrs Woodcock and McDonald during the public session, and he thanked Mr McDonald for supplying his text in advance.

He gave an assurance that nothing in the Roots' report had been ignored. The Administration had commissioned the report in an attempt to secure the Council's financial position. It had been his, and the Administration's, absolute priority since taking over last May. He agreed with the sentiments expressed by both speakers about the lack of reserves and balances and this also remained a priority.

The intention was to consider the report in detail, and in Mr Roots' presence, at the next scheduled meeting of Finance and Administration on 27 March.

As for the statement that a Council Tax increase of more than 5% should be considered to help stabilise the Council's financial position, he said that strong signals had been sent that such an increase would not be considered acceptable. There was a major risk that, if the Council's budget was capped, the cost of rebilling local taxpayers would be in the region of £60k.

The cost of the G2 inquiry had been taken into account and he was satisfied that the proposed budget was sufficiently robust to take the Council through the next year.

Monthly budget control meetings would be introduced and this would have implications in terms of internal auditors' time and in extra meetings with external auditors.

He particularly wished to emphasise that Mr Roots' remarks about over-promoted officers did not relate to any of the current finance team.

Mr Woodcock had stated that Members had not yet grasped the seriousness of the Council's financial plight. This was an incorrect reading of the report. He had personally overseen a £1m reduction in staff costs and he wished to thank the Chief Executive and the other officers involved for the role they had played in the preparation of a legal budget.

The Leader referred to an all party delegation to see Hazel Blears, Secretary of State at the Department for Communities, to make the case for a reduction

in the number of new homes to be provided in Uttlesford. The response from the Secretary of State following that meeting had been disappointing as she had stated she was unable to comment directly on the growth proposals in the East of England.

Since that meeting had taken place, an all party press release had been issued explaining the Council's case for protecting the character and nature of the district. Mrs Blears had been invited to visit the district to view for herself the special rural character of the area and he hoped that she would take up the invitation. These sentiments were echoed by the Chairman.

C81 **MATTERS ARISING FROM COMMITTEES**

(i) **Performance Select Committee – Minute PS61 – Date of the next scheduled meeting**

RESOLVED that the request of the Performance Select Committee to change the date of its next scheduled meeting from 6 May to 29 April be agreed.

C82 **REVIEW OF THE LEVEL OF RESERVES AND BALANCES**

The Acting Chief Financial Officer said that there was a statutory duty for him to report on the robustness of the estimates included within the budget, and the adequacy of the reserves and balances.

In doing so, he highlighted particularly a paragraph in the report stating that the challenges surrounding the 2007/08 budget were such that the predicted level of balances at 31 March 2008 was likely to be in the region of £100k which was below the recommended minimum 5% of General Fund expenditure. To meet this shortfall, he proposed to transfer £400k from the PFI reserve to the General Fund balance.

Members were asked to note other assumptions in the budget, including retention of the 5% savings (vacancies) factor deducted from each service, and the inclusion of prudent levels of assumed income from increased charges. He also highlighted the application for the award of G1 inquiry costs by BAA for which no provision had been made.

Councillor Wilcock asked for an assurance that the proposed financial control reporting system would be put in place. Councillor Chambers replied that the Finance and Administration Committee had agreed a monthly reporting system to be instigated from June and he had received an assurance from Mr Webb that this timetable would be met.

RESOLVED that the report on the level of reserves and balances be approved and taken into consideration in determining the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund budgets later in the meeting.

C83 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/08 – 2010/11

Members received the Capital Programme for approval as agreed by the Finance and Administration Committee on 7 February. The meeting of that Committee on 31 January had requested officers to re-examine the overall capital programme with a view to reducing the projected spend and consequently delaying the date by which borrowing would be required.

Revised proposals had been submitted to the 7 February meeting to remove in excess of £1m from the General Fund capital programme. This had been achieved in most cases by pushing back the proposed expenditure into subsequent years, but the allocation for the two depots had been removed entirely.

The delay of a number of schemes carried associated risks as highlighted in the report. Councillor A Dean asked whether an appropriate risk analysis had been carried out in each case. The Acting Chief Financial Officer responded that each item had been looked at to assess the risk of removing it from next year's programme.

RESOLVED that the Capital Programme for 2007/08 – 2010/11 be approved, as now revised.

C84 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES AND RENT SETTING 2008/09

The Acting Chief Financial Officer presented the Housing Revenue Account estimates as already considered by the Tenant Forum, the Housing Initiative Task Group and the Community Committee. Some adjustments had been made following the Community Committee meeting on 24 January and these were highlighted in full in the report.

RESOLVED that the amended Housing Revenue Account budget estimates for 2007/08 and 2008/09 be approved, including the housing rent and charging levels for 2008/09 already agreed by the Community Committee, and that the charges for warden services be set at £13.85 per week and charges for lifeline services to tenants be set at £3.07 per week

C85 DISTRICT COUNCIL BUDGET REQUIREMENT AND COUNCIL TAX 2008/09

Members received the report of the Acting Chief Financial Officer setting out the District Council Budget Requirement and the 2008/09 Council Tax. The General Fund Budget had been recommended for approval by the Finance and Administration Committee at its meeting on 7 February. The requirement of Essex County Council and Essex Fire Authority had been incorporated into the report but provisional assumptions had been made about the precept of

the Essex Police Authority which had met on the previous evening, and which was now confirmed as unchanged.

Councillor Chambers conceded that this had been a very difficult year and the Budget had been framed accordingly. He said that the Council had been fortunate in having Mr Webb in place to look after the finances. In business, or in any other walk of life, it was inevitable that some bad decisions would be made but he was sure that no mistake had been made in appointing Mr Webb to the role of Acting Chief Financial Officer and he wished to record his grateful thanks, both to him and to Mr Bradley and to all the finance office staff, for the excellent job they had done in getting the Council out of the financial mess it was in.

It had proved difficult to set a legal budget and in order to do that it had been necessary to shift money around to comply with legal requirements. It was regrettable that PFI reserves had been raided for this purpose but it was essential to have a sufficient General Fund balance in place to avoid external intervention.

All Members and officers had a duty to stick rigidly with the budget being set. In this way it should prove possible to achieve a position next year in which the Council was restored to a proper stable footing and he was determined that this would be the case.

In speaking about Police Community Safety Officers he declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Essex Police Authority. He said that public safety in Uttlesford was an absolute priority and that the PCSOs contribution should remain in place. Subject to two minor changes to the report, he proposed the recommendation.

Councillor Sell said there was a dichotomy between the need to maintain good services and the fact that Uttlesford had the lowest rate of Council Tax in Essex. This would continue to present a considerable challenge in the years ahead. He asked about the level of public consultation carried out and queried whether the intention to maintain a 5% staff vacancies saving was realistic.

Councillor Chambers said that public consultation was difficult in the circumstances pertaining this year. More would be undertaken next year and this would be more concentrated towards the formation of partnerships. The 5% savings target would be a considerable challenge as it would impinge upon the whole range of services carried out by policy committees and would be expected to produce savings of at least £800k. This was achievable if the correct approach was adopted and would lead to a more stable position next year.

The Leader commented that the 5% figure had been built into all budget assumptions last year even though it was unrealistic and it had been difficult to extract.

Councillor Gayler said that he wished to comment both upon the Roots report and on the earlier public statements. He felt that the proposed increase of

4.9% was insufficient to meet the Council's needs but conceded there were issues around capping. He had been sucked into the view last year that people in Uttlesford wanted a low rate of Council Tax and had accordingly proposed a 2% increase. He had been wrong in that assumption and should not have proposed it.

Both political parties in Uttlesford had claimed the credit in the past for Uttlesford having the lowest rate of Council Tax. This claim had been a millstone around the Council's neck and events had proven it to be wrong. The reality was that it had led to less money to provide services and Members had struggled to take this on board. The challenge was to find an appropriate level of Council Tax to enable Uttlesford's expenditure to be nearer that of other authorities.

Councillor Godwin offered her congratulations to Mr Webb. He had shown huge courage in tackling the enormous task confronting him and she now had confidence in the figures presented. Last year she had been staggered by the 2% increase and wished to salute Councillor Gayler for his frankness in accepting he had been wrong.

She would support the proposed increase and felt that Members should not risk agreeing a higher increase. It was important not to carp about the past and she urged all groups to work together. The new Administration was doing its best to sort out the problems confronting the Council. It was important that the reserves were restored to a proper level next year and that reliable monthly reports were made available.

Councillor Wilcock echoed these sentiments and added his congratulations to Mr Webb, Mr Bradley and the finance team. He had trust and faith in the budget produced although there were associated risks. He supported the Administration in its efforts to produce the required savings.

A need had been demonstrated for more financial management skills and in this context he noted that the Government had recently criticised the financial skills of their own officials. The production of the promised monthly reports was now of critical importance together with appropriate advice and support on how to interpret them. He felt that all Members would benefit from further financial training.

Councillor A Dean was concerned that the expectation of 5% savings would be difficult as policy committees operated as isolated pockets and a more corporate approach was needed.

Councillor Chambers agreed with this view and said he would discuss this need with the Leader and other Members. Partnership working was now at the core of everything the Council did. All governments expected more of local authorities and this could not be achieved in isolation. Nevertheless, it was important that all committees of the Council pull their weight in achieving further savings and he would expect them to do so.

Councillor Rolfe supported the views expressed by Councillor Godwin and thanked Councillor Gayler for his honesty. The budget setting had been

businesslike and realistic and it was not possible to go beyond a 5% increase. The residents of Uttlesford wanted and deserved firm financial management. It would have been shattering for people to read about an inflation busting budget and it was important to follow through the spirit of co-operation.

RESOLVED that

- Approval be given to the contributions from Earmarked Reserves in 2007/08 and 2008/09.
- Any amount received for 2008/09 from the new Housing and Planning Delivery Grant in excess of £200k is returned to the PFI Special Grant Reserve, up to the previously transferred amount.
- The General Fund contribution to the District Election Reserve for 2008/09 is deferred and that contributions re-commence in 2009/10.
- A figure of £19k is appropriated from the Housing Needs Survey Reserve to the General Fund in 2008/09.
- The Housing Needs Survey is closed and the balance on the Reserve of £25k is transferred to the General Fund.
- This Council's maximum net cost will be £250k for the G2 Airport costs, and if partner income falls below £250k, then the gross expenditure of £500k will be reduced by the same amount.
- A Council Tax increase for 2008/09 of £6.48 (4.97%) based on a District Council Budget Requirement of £8,431,849 plus Parish Council Precepts of £1,748,273.

And that:

1) it be noted that the Tax Base for the financial year 2008/09 has been calculated in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and associated regulations, as follows:

a. 31,914 being the amount calculated by the Council as its Council Tax Base for the year;

b. Part of the Council's area

Parish	Tax Base
Arkesden	188.5
Ashdon	357.3
Aythorpe Roding	108.6
Barnston	386.2
Berden	218.4
Birchanger	359.7
Broxted	224.4

Chickney	22.7
Chrishall	245.0
Clavering	588.2
Debden	370.7
Elmden & Wenden Lofts	293.7
Elsenham	947.4
Farnham	190.8
Felsted	1,232.7
Great Canfield	201.8
Great Chesterford	597.8
Great Dunmow	3,432.3
Great Easton & Tilty	429.6
Great Hallingbury	342.5
Hadstock	156.0
Hatfield Broad Oak	561.6
Hatfield Heath	840.9
Hempstead	209.0
Henham	561.5
High Easter	332.9
High Roding	195.4
Langley	172.4
Leaden Roding	268.5
Linsdell	112.6
Littlebury	394.8
Little Bardfield	130.4
Little Canfield	190.0
Little Chesterford	102.9
Little Dunmow	886.4
Little Easton	217.6
Little Hallingbury	712.1
Manuden	293.4
Margaret Roding	76.9
Newport	940.5
Quendon & Rickling	278.8
Radwinter	250.6
Saffron Walden	5,921.1
Sampfords, The	371.5

Sewards End	202.3
Stansted	2,371.4
Stebbing	636.2
Strethall	15.2
Takeley	1,155.9
Thaxted	1,169.2
Ugley	204.5
Wendens Ambo	195.9
White Roding	169.9
Wicken Bonhunt	103.8
Widdington	241.4
Wimbish*	532.2

Total 31,914.0

Being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations as amended, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;

*Wimbish includes 196.4 M.O.D. Band D equivalent properties

- 2) To approve that the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2008/09 in accordance with Section 32 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act, 1992:
- a) £41,681,182 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2) (a) to (e) of the Act (**The Council's expenditure, including parish precepts**)
 - b) £31,501,060 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (3) (a) to (c) of the Act (**gross income, including contributions from reserves**)
 - c) £10,180,122 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2 (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32 (4) of the Act, as its Budget Requirement for the year (**net expenditure, including Parish Precepts**).
 - d) £4,071,758 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of redistributed Non-Domestic Rates, Revenue Support Grant,

increased by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in accordance with Section 97 (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Council Tax Surplus)

- e) £191.40 being the amount at 2(c) above, less the amount at 2(d) above, divided by 1(a) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 33 (1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- f) £1,748,273 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (Parish Precepts)
- g) £136.62 being the amount at 2(e) above less the result give by dividing the amount at 2(f) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of it's Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of to which no special item relates;
- h) Part of the Council's area

Parish	£
Arkesden	175.35
Ashdon	176.57
Aythorpe Roding	155.04
Barnston	179.34
Berden	168.67
Birchanger	178.07
Broxted	176.73
Chickney	136.62
Chrishall	185.60
Clavering	152.77
Debden	171.69
Elmden & Wenden Lofts	164.37
Elsenham	183.06
Farnham	168.07
Felsted	169.07
Great Canfield	160.53
Great Chesterford	183.46

Great Dunmow	223.24
Great Easton & Tilty	180.85
Great Hallingbury	168.74
Hadstock	175.08
Hatfield Broad Oak	166.89
Hatfield Heath	161.90
Hempstead	171.55
Henham	207.86
High Easter	156.15
High Roding	171.49
Langley	165.62
Leaden Roding	157.10
Linsdell	136.62
Littlebury	191.19
Little Bardfield	155.79
Little Canfield	151.88
Little Chesterford	154.60
Little Dunmow	170.46
Little Easton	177.98
Little Hallingbury	167.51
Manuden	160.48
Margaret Roding	164.58
Newport	192.44
Quendon & Rickling	176.07
Radwinter	168.94
Saffron Walden	228.79
Sampfords, The	169.59
Sewards End	180.37
Stansted	191.02
Stebbing	181.26
Strethall	136.62
Takeley	188.53
Thaxted	196.49
Ugley	176.72
Wendens Ambo	187.41
White Roding	166.05
Wicken Bonhunt	136.62

Widdington	178.95
Wimbish	157.29

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 2(g) above to the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;

i) **Appendix 3 shows the breakdown over the valuation bands for those parts of the area in which Special Items relate, and:**

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 2(g) and 2(h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands (**Council Tax relating to the District Council and Parish Council Precepts**).

- 3) It be noted that for the year 2008/09 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Essex CC	697.74	814.03	930.32	1,046.61	1,279.19	1,511.77	1,744.35	2,093.22
Essex Fire	41.52	48.44	55.36	62.28	76.12	89.96	103.80	124.56
Essex Police	81.48	95.06	108.64	122.22	149.38	176.54	203.70	244.44
Prop. of Band D (Ninths)	6	7	8	9	11	13	15	18

Appendix 4 shows the breakdown over the valuation bands for those parts of the area in which Special Items relate, and in addition, includes the major precepting bodies, to show the full Council Tax for 2008/09.

- 4) having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2(i) and 3) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, hereby sets the amounts (shown in Appendix 4), as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2008/09 for each of the categories of dwellings for each parish area.
- 5) authorise the publication of the amounts
- 6) authorise the appropriate officer to demand the amounts in accordance with the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992.

Appendix 3

TOTAL COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH VALUATION BAND 2008-09 (Uttlesford DC and Parishes)

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Band 'D' equivalent proportions	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Arkesden	116.90	136.38	155.87	175.35	214.32	253.28	292.25	350.70
Ashdon	117.71	137.33	156.95	176.57	215.81	255.05	294.28	353.14
Aythorpe Roding	103.36	120.59	137.81	155.04	189.49	223.95	258.40	310.08
Barnston	119.56	139.49	159.41	179.34	219.19	259.05	298.90	358.68
Berden	112.45	131.19	149.93	168.67	206.15	243.63	281.12	337.34
Birchanger	118.71	138.50	158.28	178.07	217.64	257.21	296.78	356.14
Broxted	117.82	137.46	157.09	176.73	216.00	255.28	294.55	353.46
Chickney	91.08	106.26	121.44	136.62	166.98	197.34	227.70	273.24
Chrishall	123.73	144.36	164.98	185.60	226.84	268.09	309.33	371.20
Clavering	101.85	118.82	135.80	152.77	186.72	220.67	254.62	305.54
Debden	114.46	133.54	152.61	171.69	209.84	248.00	286.15	343.38
Elmdon and Wenden Lofts	109.58	127.84	146.11	164.37	200.90	237.42	273.95	328.74
Elsenham	122.04	142.38	162.72	183.06	223.74	264.42	305.10	366.12
Farnham	112.05	130.72	149.40	168.07	205.42	242.77	280.12	336.14
Felsted	112.71	131.50	150.28	169.07	206.64	244.21	281.78	338.14
Great Canfield	107.02	124.86	142.69	160.53	196.20	231.88	267.55	321.06
Great Chesterford	122.31	142.69	163.08	183.46	224.23	265.00	305.77	366.92
Great Dunmow Town	148.83	173.63	198.44	223.24	272.85	322.46	372.07	446.48
Great Easton & Tilty	120.57	140.66	160.76	180.85	221.04	261.23	301.42	361.70
Great Hallingbury	112.49	131.24	149.99	168.74	206.24	243.74	281.23	337.48
Hadstock	116.72	136.17	155.63	175.08	213.99	252.89	291.80	350.16
Hatfield Broad Oak	111.26	129.80	148.35	166.89	203.98	241.06	278.15	333.78
Hatfield Heath	107.93	125.92	143.91	161.90	197.88	233.86	269.83	323.80
Hempstead	114.37	133.43	152.49	171.55	209.67	247.79	285.92	343.10
Henham	138.57	161.67	184.76	207.86	254.05	300.24	346.43	415.72
High Easter	104.10	121.45	138.80	156.15	190.85	225.55	260.25	312.30
High Roding	114.33	133.38	152.44	171.49	209.60	247.71	285.82	342.98
Langley	110.41	128.82	147.22	165.62	202.42	239.23	276.03	331.24

TOTAL COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH VALUATION BAND 2008-09 (Uttlesford DC and Parishes)

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Band 'D' equivalent proportions	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Leaden Roding	104.73	122.19	139.64	157.10	192.01	226.92	261.83	314.20
Lindsell	91.08	106.26	121.44	136.62	166.98	197.34	227.70	273.24
Littlebury	127.46	148.70	169.95	191.19	233.68	276.16	318.65	382.38
Little Bardfield	103.86	121.17	138.48	155.79	190.41	225.03	259.65	311.58
Little Canfield	101.25	118.13	135.00	151.88	185.63	219.38	253.13	303.76
Little Chesterford	103.07	120.24	137.42	154.60	188.96	223.31	257.67	309.20
Little Dunmow	113.64	132.58	151.52	170.46	208.34	246.22	284.10	340.92
Little Easton	118.65	138.43	158.20	177.98	217.53	257.08	296.63	355.96
Little Hallingbury	111.67	130.29	148.90	167.51	204.73	241.96	279.18	335.02
Manuden	106.99	124.82	142.65	160.48	196.14	231.80	267.47	320.96
Margaret Roding	109.72	128.01	146.29	164.58	201.15	237.73	274.30	329.16
Newport	128.29	149.68	171.06	192.44	235.20	277.97	320.73	384.88
Quendon & Rickling	117.38	136.94	156.51	176.07	215.20	254.32	293.45	352.14
Radwinter	112.63	131.40	150.17	168.94	206.48	244.02	281.57	337.88
Saffron Walden Town	152.53	177.95	203.37	228.79	279.63	330.47	381.32	457.58
The Sampfords	113.06	131.90	150.75	169.59	207.28	244.96	282.65	339.18
Sewards End	120.25	140.29	160.33	180.37	220.45	260.53	300.62	360.74
Stansted	127.35	148.57	169.80	191.02	233.47	275.92	318.37	382.04
Stebbing	120.84	140.98	161.12	181.26	221.54	261.82	302.10	362.52
Strethall	91.08	106.26	121.44	136.62	166.98	197.34	227.70	273.24
Takeley	125.69	146.63	167.58	188.53	230.43	272.32	314.22	377.06
Thaxted	130.99	152.83	174.66	196.49	240.15	283.82	327.48	392.98
Ugley	117.81	137.45	157.08	176.72	215.99	255.26	294.53	353.44
Wendens Ambo	124.94	145.76	166.59	187.41	229.06	270.70	312.35	374.82
White Roding	110.70	129.15	147.60	166.05	202.95	239.85	276.75	332.10
Wicken Bonhunt	91.08	106.26	121.44	136.62	166.98	197.34	227.70	273.24
Widdington	119.30	139.18	159.07	178.95	218.72	258.48	298.25	357.90
Wimbish	104.86	122.34	139.81	157.29	192.24	227.20	262.15	314.58
Uttlesford District	91.08	106.26	121.44	136.62	166.98	197.34	227.70	273.24

APPENDIX 4

TOTAL COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH VALUATION BAND 2008-09 (includes Essex CC, Essex Police, Essex Fire, Uttlesford DC and Parishes)
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Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Band 'D' equivalent proportions	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Arkesden	937.64	1093.91	1250.19	1,406.46	1719.01	2031.55	2344.10	2812.92
Ashdon	938.45	1094.86	1251.27	1,407.68	1720.50	2033.32	2346.13	2815.36
Aythorpe Roding	924.10	1078.12	1232.13	1,386.15	1694.18	2002.22	2310.25	2772.30
Barnston	940.30	1097.02	1253.73	1,410.45	1723.88	2037.32	2350.75	2820.90
Berden	933.19	1088.72	1244.25	1,399.78	1710.84	2021.90	2332.97	2799.56
Birchanger	939.45	1096.03	1252.60	1,409.18	1722.33	2035.48	2348.63	2818.36
Broxted	938.56	1094.99	1251.41	1,407.84	1720.69	2033.55	2346.40	2815.68
Chickney	911.82	1063.79	1215.76	1,367.73	1671.67	1975.61	2279.55	2735.46
Chrishall	944.47	1101.89	1259.30	1,416.71	1731.53	2046.36	2361.18	2833.42
Clavering	922.59	1076.35	1230.12	1,383.88	1691.41	1998.94	2306.47	2767.76
Debden	935.20	1091.07	1246.93	1,402.80	1714.53	2026.27	2338.00	2805.60
Elmdon and Wenden Lofts	930.32	1085.37	1240.43	1,395.48	1705.59	2015.69	2325.80	2790.96
Elsenham	942.78	1099.91	1257.04	1,414.17	1728.43	2042.69	2356.95	2828.34
Farnham	932.79	1088.25	1243.72	1,399.18	1710.11	2021.04	2331.97	2798.36
Felsted	933.45	1089.03	1244.60	1,400.18	1711.33	2022.48	2333.63	2800.36
Great Canfield	927.76	1082.39	1237.01	1,391.64	1700.89	2010.15	2319.40	2783.28
Great Chesterford	943.05	1100.22	1257.40	1,414.57	1728.92	2043.27	2357.62	2829.14
Great Dunmow Town	969.57	1131.16	1292.76	1,454.35	1777.54	2100.73	2423.92	2908.70
Great Easton & Tilty	941.31	1098.19	1255.08	1,411.96	1725.73	2039.50	2353.27	2823.92
Great Hallingbury	933.23	1088.77	1244.31	1,399.85	1710.93	2022.01	2333.08	2799.70
Hadstock	937.46	1093.70	1249.95	1,406.19	1718.68	2031.16	2343.65	2812.38
Hatfield Broad Oak	932.00	1087.33	1242.67	1,398.00	1708.67	2019.33	2330.00	2796.00
Hatfield Heath	928.67	1083.45	1238.23	1,393.01	1702.57	2012.13	2321.68	2786.02
Hempstead	935.11	1090.96	1246.81	1,402.66	1714.36	2026.06	2337.77	2805.32
Henham	959.31	1119.20	1279.08	1,438.97	1758.74	2078.51	2398.28	2877.94
High Easter	924.84	1078.98	1233.12	1,387.26	1695.54	2003.82	2312.10	2774.52
High Roding	935.07	1090.91	1246.76	1,402.60	1714.29	2025.98	2337.67	2805.20
Langley	931.15	1086.35	1241.54	1,396.73	1707.11	2017.50	2327.88	2793.46

TOTAL COUNCIL TAX FOR EACH VALUATION BAND 2008-09 (includes Essex CC, Essex Police, Essex Fire, Uttlesford DC and Parishes)

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Band 'D' equivalent proportions	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Leaden Roding	925.47	1079.72	1233.96	1,388.21	1696.70	2005.19	2313.68	2776.42
Lindsell	911.82	1063.79	1215.76	1,367.73	1671.67	1975.61	2279.55	2735.46
Littlebury	948.20	1106.23	1264.27	1,422.30	1738.37	2054.43	2370.50	2844.60
Little Bardfield	924.60	1078.70	1232.80	1,386.90	1695.10	2003.30	2311.50	2773.80
Little Canfield	921.99	1075.66	1229.32	1,382.99	1690.32	1997.65	2304.98	2765.98
Little Chesterford	923.81	1077.77	1231.74	1,385.71	1693.65	2001.58	2309.52	2771.42
Little Dunmow	934.38	1090.11	1245.84	1,401.57	1713.03	2024.49	2335.95	2803.14
Little Easton	939.39	1095.96	1252.52	1,409.09	1722.22	2035.35	2348.48	2818.18
Little Hallingbury	932.41	1087.82	1243.22	1,398.62	1709.42	2020.23	2331.03	2797.24
Manuden	927.73	1082.35	1236.97	1,391.59	1700.83	2010.07	2319.32	2783.18
Margaret Roding	930.46	1085.54	1240.61	1,395.69	1705.84	2016.00	2326.15	2791.38
Newport	949.03	1107.21	1265.38	1,423.55	1739.89	2056.24	2372.58	2847.10
Quendon & Rickling	938.12	1094.47	1250.83	1,407.18	1719.89	2032.59	2345.30	2814.36
Radwinter	933.37	1088.93	1244.49	1,400.05	1711.17	2022.29	2333.42	2800.10
Saffron Walden Town	973.27	1135.48	1297.69	1,459.90	1784.32	2108.74	2433.17	2919.80
The Sampfords	933.80	1089.43	1245.07	1,400.70	1711.97	2023.23	2334.50	2801.40
Sewards End	940.99	1097.82	1254.65	1,411.48	1725.14	2038.80	2352.47	2822.96
Stansted	948.09	1106.10	1264.12	1,422.13	1738.16	2054.19	2370.22	2844.26
Stebbing	941.58	1098.51	1255.44	1,412.37	1726.23	2040.09	2353.95	2824.74
Strethall	911.82	1063.79	1215.76	1,367.73	1671.67	1975.61	2279.55	2735.46
Takeley	946.43	1104.16	1261.90	1,419.64	1735.12	2050.59	2366.07	2839.28
Thaxted	951.73	1110.36	1268.98	1,427.60	1744.84	2062.09	2379.33	2855.20
Ugley	938.55	1094.98	1251.40	1,407.83	1720.68	2033.53	2346.38	2815.66
Wendens Ambo	945.68	1103.29	1260.91	1,418.52	1733.75	2048.97	2364.20	2837.04
White Roding	931.44	1086.68	1241.92	1,397.16	1707.64	2018.12	2328.60	2794.32
Wicken Bonhunt	911.82	1063.79	1215.76	1,367.73	1671.67	1975.61	2279.55	2735.46
Widdington	940.04	1096.71	1253.39	1,410.06	1723.41	2036.75	2350.10	2820.12
Wimbish	925.60	1079.87	1234.13	1,388.40	1696.93	2005.47	2314.00	2776.80

Essex County Council	697.74	814.03	930.32	1046.61	1279.19	1511.77	1744.35	2093.22
Essex Police Authority	81.48	95.06	108.64	122.22	149.38	176.54	203.70	244.44
Essex Fire Authority	41.52	48.44	55.36	62.28	76.12	89.96	103.80	124.56
Uttlesford District Council	91.08	106.26	121.44	136.62	166.98	197.34	227.70	273.24
Total (excluding Parish charge)				1367.73				

C86 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT

The Interim Head of Finance reported on the treasury management strategy for 2008/09 in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice. He said that it was not envisaged that the Council would undertake any long term borrowing during 2008/09 to finance its capital spending plans. However, by the end of 2011/12 it was expected that the Council would have expended all of its capital receipts and reserves and would need to borrow £1m per year to part finance any future schemes from that date.

There was short term borrowing of £5m and this may need to be increased to cover any deficit in cash flow. He advised members that the borrowing strategy provided sufficient liquidity to meet the Council's requirements.

RESOLVED that the treasury management strategy, outlining the Council's annual investment strategy and its borrowing requirement for 2008/09, be approved.

C87 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2008/09 TO 2010/11

As part of CIPFA's Prudential Code, Members were invited to agree the draft Prudential Indicators for 2008/09 to 2010/11 and the draft revised indicators for 2007/08, details of which were set out in full in the report. The Interim Head of Finance advised that reports would be submitted on a quarterly basis in future, as part of the budget control reporting system.

Councillor Chambers said that assumptions about the amount of interest to be earned had been set at prudent levels and he hoped that more interest would accrue than budgeted for.

RESOLVED that the Prudential Indicators be approved as reported to this meeting.

C88 INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS AND STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Leader spoke in detail about the immediate future direction of the Council and proposed interim arrangements for the management of the authority, until a new Chief Executive could be appointed, and subject to the outcome of the later part II item on the agenda.

He proposed the appointment of John Mitchell as Acting Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, and the appointment of Michael Perry as Acting Electoral Registration Officer and Acting Returning Officer. He also proposed that Adrian Webb be appointed Acting Director of Central Services. Subject to the outcome of the part II item, these appointments would take effect as from Saturday, 1 March 2008.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Chambers.

The appointment of Mr Mitchell would be supported by Colin Rockall as a Mentor, for approximately ten days per month during the interim period, and this arrangement would be supported by the Improvement and Development Agency and Building Capacity East.

The Leader said that the Administration had considered the appointment of an external interim Chief Executive but had taken the view that an internal appointment was the right arrangement for the Council and its staff. This would offer a much needed period of stability after the trauma of recent weeks and he felt the proposed appointments would achieve that.

He spoke in detail about both John Mitchell and Colin Rockall. Mr Rockall had acted as a mentor under the Audit Commission's internal scheme and had worked, through a secondment to the Department for Communities, with two authorities rated as 'poor' in 2004, both of which had subsequently made significant progress.

He thanked Mark Harrison of IDEA and Jane Sullivan of Building Capacity East, who had worked to make Mr Rockall's appointment possible by providing advice and financial support. The funding made available included the retention of David Bradley, Acting Head of Finance, for a further six months.

In conclusion, the Leader said that he was sure that John Mitchell would enjoy the full support of the management team, Members and staff, and would help to rebuild a financially stable Council. Unison representatives had added their support to these arrangements. Subject to the outcome of the part II agenda item, he expected that work would commence shortly on the recruitment of a new chief executive.

Speaking next, Councillor A Dean proposed an amendment to the Leader's proposal in the following terms:

'Council resolves:

- 1) To make an immediate start on appointing a permanent, new chief executive by establishing an appointment panel.
- 2) To arrange through Building Capacity East the early engagement of an interim chief executive with experience of council recovery, financial control and the ability to provide firm leadership in these and other key areas.
- 3) To ensure temporary arrangements are put in place for an interim Head of Paid Service on the lines suggested in the Leader's proposal.
- 4) To resume the recruitment of a new Director of Central Services.
- 5) To seek external support and genuinely consider advice from bodies such as the Improvement and Development Agency and the regional improvement partnership.
- 6) That all political groups in the Council will work together to resolve the current weaknesses through collective agreed action by all, and will give clear leadership to the staff in the continuation of excellent work for the people of Uttlesford district.'

He said that the intention of the amendment was to build capacity in the organisation which was presently weak. This weakness had led to major mistakes being made and detracted from the ability to deliver a wide range of services. The Council had never been good at mitigating risk and the approach to risk management was flawed.

The organisation needed a firm, clear minded and forward looking chief executive. There had been no consensus in the political direction and this meant that officers were constantly looking over their shoulders contributing to a culture of blame. The Roots report should have been discussed tonight.

The Council should stop micro-managing and deal with the big issues. To do this it needed a top management structure who knew what they were doing.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Wilcock said that the spirit of co-operation had broken down and this was unhelpful to the Council. He had been talking to the Leader since the financial problem had arisen and it was his view that an immediate start must be made to deliver change through strong leadership. This was the key recommendation in the Roots report and, although this had been accepted in part, the entire report was not being acted upon.

There should be adequate debate and the Roots recommendations should not be rushed but there was a need for more political unity about the way forward.

Councillor Godwin said that she could not support the amendment. It was a repeat of what had got the Council into its present mess. The new Chief Executive must be free to lead in the way he felt necessary. Huge changes had already occurred and once the staff reductions had taken proper effect it would be expensive and unsettling to improve.

Councillor Jones invited the Liberal Democrat group to withdraw the amendment. He said it was unnecessary to press the amendment and urged all Members to vote the same way.

Councillor Artus supported this view and said the amendment was a waste of everyone's time.

Councillor Sell offered clarification by saying there were big issues to address, such as the LDF, and it was hard for some Members to understand how Mr Webb could properly cover three different posts. He had confidence in the officers but there was a limit to what they could do. The quality of the Council's response to the challenges ahead could only be diluted by these uncertainties.

Councillor Rolfe said that in the spirit of co-operation the Council's predicament cried out for stability and understanding and now was not the time for new initiatives. The interim arrangements being suggested were supported by the Government bodies and he was satisfied there was enough expertise in place to meet the challenges ahead.

Councillor Cheetham said that the Administration had worked hard to find the best interim arrangements and what was needed now was a period of stability. The trade union had indicated support and they were satisfied the capacity was in place. She would vote against the amendment and looked forward to a time when the Council would again offer excellent services.

Councillor Chambers thought it would be possible to adopt a corporate approach with the vastly experienced officers in place and hoped the proposal would be supported.

Councillor Hicks said as there was no prospect of the amendment being withdrawn it should be put to the vote.

The Leader expressed disappointment at what he saw as the unhelpful attitude of the Liberal Democrat group. The amendment was an over-reaction to what was being proposed.

Councillor A Dean said that the majority group position was unwise and he was aware that a number of officers at GO-East had severe reservations about the proposals being made. His amendment set out a more sensible way of dealing with the interim position which would address these concerns.

The Leader asked Councillor Dean to confirm who at the Government regional office had made these statements. If he was not prepared to say who they were he should not be saying this publicly.

Councillor A Dean refused to reveal the source of his information.

The matter was then put to the vote. The amendment was declared lost by 27 votes to 9.

The Leader then clarified his proposal as set out in the first two paragraphs of this Minute, before it was put to the vote as the substantive motion. He said that he had full confidence in the proposed interim management team and that Mr Webb enjoyed his full support.

The substantive motion was carried by 27 votes to 7.

RESOLVED that, subject to the outcome of the part II item to be considered later in this meeting, the following interim arrangements be put in place pending the appointment of a new Chief Executive:

- John Mitchell be appointed Acting Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.
- Michael Perry be appointed Acting Electoral registration Officer and Acting Returning Officer.
- Adrian Webb be appointed Acting Director of Central Services.

And that the appointments take effect as from Saturday, 1 March 2008.

C89 **STAFF APPEALS COMMITTEE – APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT MEMBER**

RESOLVED that Councillor Jones be appointed to serve on the Staff Appeals Committee for the remainder of the current year in replacement for Councillor Chambers, who was unable to act in this role as Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee.

C90 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

(i) Local Development Framework Process

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Wilcock and seconded by Councillor Smith:

'The Council asks that the leadership of this Council note:

- 1) That a poorly researched and conducted Local Development Framework Core Strategy process has attracted extensive criticism from local residents, and local newspapers, and critical comments from Essex County Council and the Government Office for the East of England.
- 2) That any strategy that emerges from this process could be declared unsound at an Examination in Public.

This Council welcomes:

- 3) The invitation by Sir Alan Haselhurst to convene a meeting of community representatives to try and explore a bottom up approach to site the housing within the District.

And that the Council therefore resolves:

- 4) To carry out further research and consultation on the Local Development Framework options (particularly with reference to consultation documents, public exhibitions and supporting evidence) and to take account of the output of the meeting convened by Sir Alan Haselhurst in order to gain consensus among the parish councils in the communities of Uttlesford, and the agreement of all political parties.'

In speaking to the amendment, Councillor Wilcock said that a number of critical comments had been made about the LDF process in terms of the preferred option and the delays that had occurred leading to slippage in the original target date to report the outcome of the consultation phase. To resolve the mess that had resulted there was a need for further research; the outcome of the meeting arranged by Sir Alan Haselhurst would help to inform that research.

Councillor Smith said that the process had not been of the best and he wished to second the motion.

Councillor Barker proposed the following amendment, in terms that had been tabled at the beginning of the meeting:

'Delete paras (1), (2) and (4)

Leave para 3 and add

The additional information from this event will be useful to the Council in its future consideration of proposals.

However, members will be aware that officers are currently analysing the responses to the Local Development framework consultation and carrying out further technical work on proposals.

It is therefore premature to consider new consultation before this work is completed.

I therefore propose that this debate is deferred until officers are in a position to present a full report to Councillors.'

Councillor Barker said that the whole debate had been sparked off by an e-mail from the Director of Development, stating that officers had been overwhelmed by responses from the public. She considered it inappropriate to start the process again before those responses had even been logged and until the scale of the consultation was known. She welcomed the intervention of Sir Alan Haselhurst as it would help all of the Council's small parishes to face up to the scale of the demands for new housing allocations in the district.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Cheetham.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried by 27 votes to 0.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and carried by 27 votes to 1.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that this Council welcomes the invitation by Sir Alan Haselhurst to convene a meeting of Community Representatives to try to explore a bottom up approach to site the housing within the District. The additional information from this event will be useful to the Council in its future consideration of proposals.

However, members will be aware that officers are currently analysing the responses to the Local Development framework consultation and carrying out further technical work on proposals. It is premature to consider new consultation before this work is completed. It is therefore proposed that this debate is deferred until officers are in a position to present a full report to Councillors.

(ii) Consideration of report by Bill Roots

With Councillor Sell's consent, Councillor Wilcock withdrew the motion on consideration of the Roots report, as set out in full on the agenda for this meeting.

C91

HUMAN RESOURCES SECTION PARTNERSHIP

The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item on the grounds of urgency.

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded for this and the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 1 to 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

At this juncture, the Chairman adjourned the meeting for a short time to enable Members to read and absorb the contents of both this and the following part II report item.

The meeting resumed at 10.00pm after an interval of ten minutes.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer presented a report setting out a proposal to form a partnership with Essex County Council to deal with the Human Resources function. A range of options had been considered by the Interim Head of HR. The recommended option of a partnership with the County Council was considered to offer the level of support required by the organisation.

The partnership would be funded in the first year by the County Council and thereafter from existing budgets. It would need to be established by 1 April, hence the urgency involved.

Under the proposed arrangements, technical support would be available from the County Council's professionally qualified team. Once allocated to a case, the same team member would stay with the case throughout. Administrative staffing support would remain part of the Council's establishment. The remaining member of staff would transfer under TUPE arrangements.

A number of training needs within the organisation had already been identified. As part of the agreement, the County Council would undertake a review of training and development needs, including an evaluation of the appraisal scheme and performance management capability.

The local branch of Unison had been consulted and the comments made included in the report. Some concerns had been expressed but no objections had been raised in principle to the proposed partnership.

The Leader supported the proposed arrangement and said it would be the first real partnership and would supplement agreements such as the one with the

Town Council for the provision of tourism. It was unfortunately the case that the cost of specialist internal HR advice was prohibitive and this arrangement would secure proper professional support. Councillors Wilcock and Godwin also supported the proposal. *In doing so, Councillor Godwin declared a personal interest as she had worked with the County Council's HR team in the past.*

RESOLVED that

- 1 the HR partnership arrangement with Essex County Council be approved including the TUPE transfer of one member of staff;
- 2 approval be given to a specific training and development programme for managers; and
- 3 an update report be made to the Finance and Administration Committee on 27 March.

At this point of the meeting, the Chief Executive left the room for consideration of the next item of business. Before he did so, the Leader thanked Alasdair Bovaird for his work over the last two months and especially for the help and support he had offered the Leader during that time.

Mr Bovaird said that the past twelve months had not been easy but he was pleased that the Council was beginning to move in a more stable direction. The majority of his time at Uttlesford had been enjoyable and he now looked forwards to a different type of challenge. He thanked Members for their support over the last few months and said that he and his family intended to stay in Saffron Walden where they were now well settled.

C92

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Leader moved the recommendation in the report concerning the terms of the Chief Executive's departure.

RESOLVED that the terms of the termination of the Chief Executive's employment on the grounds of efficiency of the service as set out in the report be formally agreed.

The meeting ended at 10.10pm.

**COUNCIL MEETING – 19 FEBRUARY 2008
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

(i) Ray Woodcock

Mr Woodcock said that he wished to make a statement about the financial position of the Council. His interest was as a Council taxpayer and he wished to protect and respect the interest of all Council taxpayers in the district to ensure the Council did a proper job. He referred to a report in the Herts and Essex Observer of 14 February concerning the £1.8m gap identified in the budget. The article summarised the report of Bill Roots into the Council's finances. He said that Members should be ashamed if they had not read the report. It stated that reserves had been spent at an unsustainable rate and there had been an absence of financial controls. An effective process for budget setting and monitoring had not existed for a number of years.

He considered that a number of Members had not grasped the seriousness of the situation in which the Council found itself and urged Members to stop playing games and get to grips with the magnitude and extent of the problem. It was apparent that some members of the finance committee did not possess the necessary skills to do their job and had not performed adequately.

(ii) Ken McDonald

My name is Ken McDonald. I am a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet, a Chartered Accountant and a company financial director for 20 years before retiring in 2002.

I was appalled to read the report by Bill Roots into the Council's "precarious financial position", in particular that there had been a complete absence of financial control for years and that the Council has no mechanism for monitoring its own financial performance.

Last week, I read that the Council's Finance Committee has recommended that the most immediate of Bill Roots' recommendations should be ignored. Roots demanded immediate attention to producing a balanced budget for 2008/09 and advised that a higher level of Council Tax is called for, beyond the likely Government cap. He also advised that urgent discussions take place with central government to explain the position.

The Full Council, and I repeat, the Full Council is responsible for this financial mess and it should be your number one priority, at the top of your agenda tonight. I hope by the end of this meeting you will have set an appropriate budget and will have established how Bill Roots' recommendations are to be taken forward to ensure that financial control is re-established as soon as possible. Both are urgent and the Full Council should neither delegate nor defer its responsibilities.

Roots commented that there have been inappropriately optimistic budget assumptions in the past, that the anticipated savings in 2008/09 are by no means certain, that there has been a diminution of the importance of the

financial function and that financial officers have been promoted beyond their level of competence. I have to ask – has no notice been taken of these comments? In ignoring Roots' most immediate advice, has the Finance Committee also promoted itself beyond its level of competence?

I urge you to heed Mr Roots' advice and to impose an appropriate level of Council Tax. In considering what is appropriate, please also remember that whilst the financial crisis is your immediate priority, later this year you will have two other priorities – the Examination in Public of your housing proposals and a Public Inquiry into a second runway. Uttlesford residents will expect you to handle both properly, so your budget needs to ensure that you will have adequate resources for both. I refer again to Bill Roots' comment about inappropriately optimistic budget assumptions.

Roots noted that reserves have been spent at an unsustainable rate – in other words the provision of services has been achieved only by supplementing Council Tax income with the proceeds from selling off the family silver. Consequently, it is not surprising that Uttlesford's tax has been the lowest in Essex – clearly far too low. Roots remarked that a higher level of tax may be unpopular but, quite frankly, the Council's esteem with the electorate is so low that you have nothing to lose. Everyone I talk to is thoroughly sickened by the constant petty political party bickering. It is regrettable that I feel the need to say this, but I will remind Councillors that you were elected to preserve and improve the quality of life of Uttlesford, not to put on a Punch and Judy show.

The Council has a collective responsibility to resolve this issue, so can you please get away from entrenched positions and divisions along party lines. Let's see you working as a team. I sincerely hope that this evening you will show that you can work together and will set in place both a sensible budget and a plan for restoring financial stability and public confidence.

Since comprising this statement, I have had an opportunity to cast an eye over the papers for this meeting.

I am concerned at the lack of prudence in the budgets. Bill Roots criticised the sale of the family silver to sustain past expenditure. Now the silver has all gone, there are proposals to "borrow" from future budgets.

£400,000 from the PFI reserve, £240,000 capitalisation of redundancy costs and no contribution to the District Election Reserve.

The budget in itself assumes £500,000 of savings to come in addition to those already identified, no provision for BAA's G1 claim and no special provision for the Examination in Public later this year.

It seems to me that, rather than bite the bullet now, the proposals will simply compound the problem and store up more trouble for the future.

Finally, I note that all the papers have been prepared by Mr Webb. In the light of Bill Roots' comments about officers being promoted too far, I have to question the wisdom of entrusting Mr Webb with both the budget preparation and the review of its robustness.