

## Item 2, Minutes of the meeting on 29 November 2011

### **COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 29 NOVEMBER 2011 at 7pm**

Present: Councillor D Jones – Chairman.  
Councillors K Artus, H Asker, S Barker, C Cant, R Chambers, J Cheetham, D Crome, A Dean, R Eastham, K Eden, M Foley, J Freeman, E Godwin, E Hicks, A Ketteridge, J Ketteridge, T Knight, M Lemon, J Loughlin, K Mackman, J Menell, D Morson, E Parr, D Perry, V Ranger, J Redfern, J Rich, H Rolfe, J Rose, J Salmon, L Smith, D Watson, L Wells and P Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal) and P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager).

#### **C36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Barker, J Davey, P Davies and E Oliver.

*Councillors Barker declared her interest as a Member of Essex County Council. Councillor Chambers declared his interest as a Member of Essex County Council, and of the Essex Fire Authority.*

#### **C37 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2011 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following corrections and clarifications:

The question asked by Councillor Parr under minute C28 'Members' Questions' was as follows:

'The Minutes of the last two LDF meetings are now in the public domain. In the Minutes of 29 July, LDF7, it is stated that a list of high scoring sites from SHLAA had been identified by officers. Members then discussed "in detail" this schedule and selected sites for 925 homes. In the Minutes of 2 September, LDF12, the Divisional Head of Planning reported "that meetings with developers were currently taking place in relation to these identified sites". I was surprised to find representatives from the Crown Estates at Elsenham Parish Council this month. Given these factors, why is it that non LDF Members have not been informed about what is happening in their wards?'

In relation to the same matter, Councillor Barker clarified that, as at the time of the meeting, she had not written to Councillor Wilcock but had sent a holding reply stating that she owed him a response and this would be forthcoming in due course. She had now forwarded her written response to officers. It was noted that this matter was now the subject of a Freedom of information request.

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### C38 BUSINESS ARISING

#### (i) C31(ii) – Interim Review of Members' Allowances Scheme

Councillor Wilcock asked whether there had been any outcome of the review of the decision to reimburse the cost of Members' data protection registration fees? The Chief Executive clarified that it was not possible for registrations to be arranged on a block registration basis. The only option for Members was for them to continue to register as individuals.

### C39 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Lemon said that the latest edition of Uttlesford Life had been delivered in Hatfield Heath on 28 November. The publication had made reference to a meeting taking place on 24 November and to an exhibition at the Museum finishing on 27 November. He said it had been a waste of time to include this out of date information in the publication.

The Chief Executive apologised for the problems that had occurred with the distribution of Uttlesford Life on this occasion but said that the late delivery of Uttlesford Life in parts of the district had been outside the Council's control. Another article in the publication required comments to be returned by 18 November but this date had been extended.

Councillor Wells reported on a fact finding visit of members to a waste transfer site at Alconbury. This was in the light of a consultation by Essex County Council on the proposal to build six waste transfer stations to support the delivery of new waste treatment facilities, including one in Great Dunmow. She asked Councillor Barker to confirm whether the Council intended to respond to the consultation and whether she had any comments on the methodology used by the County Council in making its proposals.

Councillor Barker agreed with Councillor Wells about the likely impact of the proposed very large building at Dunmow which measured 11m x 32m x 40m and said that it would be appropriate to respond. The County Council had looked at the possibility of a single waste transfer facility to be shared between Uttlesford and Braintree and she thought there were flaws in the methodology used. She expected the matter to be discussed by the Waste Strategy Project Team.

Councillor Dean asked about the proposal to scrap the proposed scheme for Photovoltaic cells and asked Councillor Redfern to make a statement.

In response, Councillor Redfern confirmed that the Council would not be proceeding with the scheme because the alteration in the feed in tariff from 43.3p per unit to 16.8p meant that it would no longer be viable for E.ON to continue.

She hoped that it would be possible to identify other investment opportunities that would provide value for money. A public statement would be made when discussions with E.ON had been concluded.

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Councillor Dean commented that it was still possible for suppliers to obtain a good return on their investment.

Councillor Watson quoted from the Housing Board minutes of 28 September about changes in the local housing allowance. The relevant passage stated that 'there was a particular problem in that the amount paid in the south of the district was £200 greater than for properties in the north of the district'. The minute went on to say that few if any properties in Saffron Walden would fall within the rate and that the resulting shortfall was likely to create problems for tenants. He asked Councillor Redfern to comment on the reasons for the difference in the allowance paid.

Councillor Redfern said that the south of the district was included with Epping and Harlow while the rate in the north was assessed as part of a wider area that included places such as Ely. Further information about this problem would be given to members as soon as it was available.

C40

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman referred to the list of his engagements since the annual meeting as circulated to members at this meeting. He reflected that many people he spoke to were unaware of the location of Uttlesford and that it was unfortunately not a strong name in terms of identification.

The proposed quiz evening had been cancelled but another attempt would be made to organise one in the New Year. He also referred to the staff awards function on 16 December and hoped that a number of members would be able to attend.

C41

### **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader said that the briefing given to members by the Chief Executive had been very useful and he hoped that similar future briefings could be given on a regular basis.

The annual audit letter had made exceptionally good reading and had been the best for a number of years. In particular it supported the Administration's manifesto commitment to provide a clear financial plan by stating that the Council was now well placed to meet the challenges ahead and had a soundly based financial strategy.

He was pleased to report the success of the revenues and benefits team in that no adjustment was required on the Council's £18.7m claim, and that an accuracy level of 99.99% had been achieved. This excellent result was a credit to the officers concerned.

Finally, he said that Councillor Barker had circulated a spreadsheet containing details of parking orders being made and asked members to check that the information included was both accurate and complete.

**MATTERS REFERRED FROM COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**

**(i) Electoral Working Group – recommendation to adopt a revised scheme of Parliamentary polling districts and places**

Councillor Chambers proposed the recommendation of the Electoral Working Group to adopt a revised scheme of polling arrangements with effect from 1 December. He drew members' attention to the entire proposed scheme set out at appendix A to the report which included the proposed changes highlighted in bold.

Councillor Rich referred to a number of emails and other representations he had made in response to the formal consultation objecting to the proposals in respect of Stansted. He said that the Parish Council had expressed concerns about the proposals. He was concerned that the number of polling venues would increase in both Stansted North and Stansted South as a result of the recommendations and this was a cause of potential confusion. He was particularly concerned that the Peter Kirk Centre, used as the polling venue in Stansted North for many years, was proposed to be switched to become the polling location for electors in part of Stansted South.

Councillor Rich said that the arrangements had worked perfectly well before and should not be altered.

Councillor Dean supported the proposed scheme and seconded the motion. He said that Councillor Rich's views were his own and were not supported by the Parish Council who had not raised objections. There was a clear need to improve the voting arrangements in Stansted South by providing a polling facility closer to the new estate at Foresthall Park and to the Mountfitchet Road area. He considered the new arrangements were an improvement on the existing scheme as they made sense in terms of the location of the proposed polling stations. Some change was inevitable in view of the increase in population.

A question was raised about membership of Stansted Parish Council. Councillor Salmon confirmed that he was a member of the Parish Council, as were Councillors Rich and Loughlin, but that Councillor Dean was not.

Councillor Loughlin confirmed that, from a personal point of view, she had no problem with the proposals. Councillor Rich spoke again about the proposed arrangements in Stansted and asked why electors in Stansted North could not continue to vote at the Peter Kirk Centre.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager said that the purpose of the review was to provide the most convenient possible arrangements for electors. In Stansted the difficulty was caused both by the increase in population at Foresthall Park and because both existing polling places were located in the North ward. The exercise undertaken by the Working Group had been to match the centres of population with the ward and polling district boundaries and the potential available locations and to make recommendations accordingly. No suitable building could be identified in the proposed Stansted South West polling district and the Peter Kirk Centre had been identified as the proposed polling

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place because it was located closest to the bulk of electors living in that area. This had resulted in a switch of venues between the Peter Kirk Centre and the Youth Centre. Electors from two different wards could not be mixed in the same place.

Councillor Cheetham said that she was disappointed with the proposed change in Takeley to create a new polling district at Priors Green to include Smiths Green and part of Bambers Green. At the previous election a split into two polling stations had been arranged at the Silver Jubilee Hall and this had worked perfectly well. She was concerned that confusion would be caused to residents at Priors Green especially given that these properties all had Little Canfield addresses. She also hoped that consideration might be given to changing the polling boundary at Mole Hill Green to include the whole of Bambers Green.

Councillor Hicks spoke as a member of the Electoral Working Group in support of the recommendations. He said that officers and members had given a great deal of thought to the proposals and weighed carefully all of the possible alternatives in agreeing a proposed scheme. He considered that the proposals represented the best possible available solution to meet the statutory criteria.

In thanking members for their contribution to the debate, Councillor Chambers referred to the careful advice the Working Group had received from Mr Snow and said that the polling scheme would be kept under review so that improvements could be made if needed. He commended the proposals to the meeting.

The motion was put to the vote and agreed by a margin of 27 votes to four.

RESOLVED that:

1. the recommended revised scheme of polling arrangements in the district be adopted to take effect from 1 December 2011;
2. the following statement be added to the schedule of polling districts: 'Delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive and Returning Officer to change the polling place designation for any polling districts defined in the schedule, only at any specific election where the designated polling place is unavailable for any reason, to enable him to make the best arrangements possible for electors at that time.'

C43

### **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS**

Councillor Chambers wished the Chairman and his family a happy and prosperous Christmas and the Chairman, in turn, extended Christmas greetings to all members and officers.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.