

**ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 21 MAY 2013**

Present: Councillor C Cant – Chairman.
Councillors K Artus, H Asker, G Barker, S Barker, R Chambers,
J Cheetham, J Davey, R Eastham, K Eden, I Evans, J Freeman,
E Godwin, E Hicks, S Howell, D Jones, A Ketteridge, J Ketteridge,
R Lemon, J Loughlin, K Mackman, J Menell, D Morson, E Oliver,
E Parr, J Parry, D Perry, V Ranger, J Rich, H Rolfe, J Rose, J
Salmon, L Smith, A Walters, D Watson and L Wells.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), J Corbey (Personal
Assistant to the Chairman), R Harborough (Director of Public
Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal), P Snow
(Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and A Webb
(Director of Corporate Services).

C1 PRESENTATION TO CHARITIES

Councillor Cant, as the outgoing Chairman, presented cheques totalling £2,730 each to Georgeta Busuioc on behalf of Diabetes UK and to Anne Hillion on behalf of Marie Curie Cancer Care.

C2 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Simon Thompson, on behalf of the Save Stansted Village campaign, made a statement including five questions relating to a planning application submitted for the development of land at Bentfield Green and to planning policy generally. Mr Thompson's questions were answered by Councillor S Barker as the portfolio holder for strategic housing and planning policy. The questions and answers given are appended to these minutes.

Mr Thompson asked one supplementary question regarding the Council's policy on community involvement insofar as it related to pre-application discussions with developers. The Director of Public services was invited to answer this question and he said he would do so in writing to the questioner.

C3 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

The outgoing Chairman, Councillor Cant, read a statement to the meeting. She said that it had been an immense privilege to serve the residents of the district as Chairman and she had been struck by the warmth of her reception everywhere she had been.

She detailed some of the events she had been involved with and paid tribute to the amazing people she had met during the year reflecting the pride felt in their communities. She thanked Janine Corbey, her PA during the year and the whole PA team, as well as other members of the Council's staff and all members

for the support they had given her. She finally thanked her husband John for his assistance during the year, especially as a non-drinking driver.

Having been nominated at the previous meeting Councillor Hicks was then duly elected as Chairman of the Council.

RESOLVED that Councillor Hicks be elected as Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year

C4 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Hicks then made his statutory declaration as Chairman of the Council for 2013/14. He said that his first duty was to present a portrait and past chairman's badge to Councillor Cant. It was an absolute privilege to take up the office of Chairman in succession to Councillor Cant. She had done a magnificent job and the Council was indebted to her for the service she had performed. He wished her all the best for the future and said that he would do his best to live up to expectations.

C5 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Having been appointed at the previous meeting, Councillor Artus was duly installed as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

RESOLVED that Councillor Artus be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year

C6 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Artus made his declaration of acceptance of office. He then said that he looked forward to the next year of support as Councillor Hicks' wing man.

C7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Davies, A Dean, M Foley, S Harris, T Knight and D Sadler.

C8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2013 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the correction of the words 'Council Tax had been abolished' to read 'Council Tax benefit had been abolished' in the second sentence of the second paragraph of minute C86(iii).

C9 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute C84(ii) – Members Questions to the Leader and members of the Executive

In answer to a question from Councillor Evans, Councillor Rolfe said that there had been a meeting earlier that day at Carver Barracks about the installation by

BT of superfast broadband and that this was still on course. He would be happy to respond to any questions from members about the impact on specific areas.

C10 REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER – NEWPORT WARD

Members noted the report of the Returning Officer regarding the election of Joanna Jane Parry as a councillor for the Newport ward at the by-election held on 2 May 2013.

On behalf of the Independent group, Councillor Lemon welcomed Councillor Parry as a new member and said that he hoped the trend for the election of independent candidates would continue.

C11 VACATION OF OFFICE IN THE FELSTED WARD

The Chief Executive formally reported the vacation of office in the Felsted ward caused by the failure of Councillor Crome to attend any meetings for a period of six consecutive months. A notice of vacancy had now been published and an election to fill the vacancy would take place after notification had been received from two electors.

C12 REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager reported on the allocation of seats to the Council's committees in accordance with the political balance provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The calculation had now been made on the basis of 43 rather than 44 seats although this made no practical difference to the allocation.

He said that the Council had previously agreed to exclude the Standards Committee from the application of political balance on the basis that the committee should be balanced equally between the three political groups. The calculation had accordingly been made on this basis but could only be confirmed in the absence of any dissent.

Nominations for committee places as submitted by the political groups had been circulated to members. It was intended to leave a vacant place on the Performance and Audit Committee pending the election of a new member for the Felsted ward. One further nomination was required from the Conservative group to serve on the Staff Appeals Committee.

RESOLVED that the political balance of the Council and the allocation of seats set out in the report be agreed

C13 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES 2013/14

The Leader proposed the appointment of committees, and their chairmen and vice-chairmen where indicated, working groups, and the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the area forums as set out below:

COMMITTEES

PLANNING

Chairman: J Cheetham
Vice-Chairman: K Eden

C Cant	K Mackman
J Davey	J Menell
R Eastham	D Perry
E Godwin	V Ranger
E Hicks	J Salmon
J Loughlin	L Wells

PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT

Chairman: S Howell
Vice-Chairman: E Oliver

K Artus	E Parr
K Eden	J Parry
D Jones	D Sadler
A Ketteridge	1 vacancy

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Chairman: M Lemon

C Cant
K Eden
E Godwin
J Loughlin
J Menell

Independent Members (non voting)

Allen Brobyn
Vic Lelliott
Georgina Tindall

LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Chairman: D Perry
Vice-Chairman: J Salmon

H Asker	M Lemon
J Davey	D Morson
J Freeman	V Ranger
E Hicks	A Walters
J Loughlin	

SCRUTINY

Chairman: E Godwin
Vice-Chairman: D Morson

G Barker	S Howell
P Davies	E Oliver
I Evans	J Rich
S Harris	D Watson

STAFF APPEALS

K Artus
G Barker
C Cant
K Eden
E Hicks
D Jones
V Ranger
L Wells

WORKING GROUPS

CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP

J Davey
I Evans
A Ketteridge
D Morson

J Menell
J Rich
D Watson
L Wells

LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE

R Chambers
J Ketteridge
J Loughlin

ELECTORAL WORKING GROUP

R Chambers
J Davey
A Dean
J Freeman
E Hicks
J Ketteridge
M Lemon
J Rose

AREA FORUMS

NORTH FORUM

Chairman: J Menell
Vice Chairman: D Perry

SOUTH FORUM

Chairman : J Salmon
Vice Chairman: J Davey

C14 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE TO SERVE ON THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The Leader proposed Councillor Chambers to serve as the Council's member representative on the Essex Police and Crime Panel.

RESOLVED accordingly

C15 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

i) Leader of the Council

The Leader opened his remarks by welcoming Councillor Parry as a new member. He then presented a summary of the past year and said that this meeting marked the mid-way point of the Council's life. He commented upon a number of the memorable events that had taken place connected to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics, and to the strong association of the district with 33 Engineer Regiment stationed at Carver Barracks. New recycling and waste collection practices had come into effect.

The budget setting process had been one of the most comprehensive ever conducted culminating in a 1% cut in council tax, increased support for the voluntary sector and no reductions in service delivery. He paid tribute to the work of the financial planning team even though there was no room for complacency because of the continuing need to make further efficiency changes. The Council's sound financial position had been acknowledged during the visit of the Minister for Local Government in March.

A new Corporate Plan had been produced as the objectives in the previous plan had largely been achieved. In contrast the Local Plan had stalled since the autumn because of delays in the preparation of the highways assessment. The planning team was working hard to move the process on and a Local Plan Position Statement had now been produced. He urged all interested parties to read the statement and not to rely on other interpretations.

In conclusion, the Leader said that the year ahead would focus on consolidating the Council's financial position, delivering services and meeting the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

(ii) Councillor Rolfe – Executive Member for Communities and Partnerships

Councillor Rolfe presented his report as tabled at the meeting. He said that it covered the three main areas of communities and partnerships, economic development, and customer services and that he had nothing to add.

Councillor Barker asked him to investigate the accuracy of the facility on the website enabling residents to find information about their waste collection day and he agreed to do so.

C16

CHANGE OF DATE OF COUNCIL MEETING

The Leader proposed changing the date of the next scheduled Council meeting from 16 July 2013 to 1 July to allow representations to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the consultation on the Council's proposed new warding arrangements.

RESOLVED that the date of the next meeting be changed to 1 July 2013 accordingly

The meeting ended at 8.15pm

PUBLIC STATEMENT AND QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SIMON THOMPSON

Simon Thompson made the following statement as a resident of Bentfield Green and on behalf of the Save Stansted Village campaign. The answers given to Mr Thompson at the meeting are added in bold at the end of the statement.

3 Minute Presentation To Uttlesford District Council

On Behalf Of Save Stansted Village

Councillors,

My name is Simon Thompson and I represent the residents of Bentfield Green and the Save Stansted Village group.

In Stansted we now face a planning application by Taylor Wimpey on countryside at Bentfield Green. The residents of Stansted have registered their opposition in this petition of over 900 signatures which I will present to you following this statement. The application is large-scale and unacceptable for a number of reasons and will, no doubt, give rise to many letters of objection. We will set out our detailed objections through the planning process but we have five key questions to put to you tonight.

Our first question is:

- Will the Planning Committee consider and determine the application by the process set out in paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), rather than determining it entirely on the Council's lack of a five year housing land supply, as seems to be happening at present?

The lack of a five year housing land supply seems to have become the key determinant of current applications so our second question relates to the same issue:

- When the 5 year housing land supply deficit is met, will the tap be turned off and the current developers' 'free-for-all' across Uttlesford stop?

Planning policy cannot and should not be a 'free-for-all' just because national policy prioritises 5 year housing land supply over other issues. At the moment it appears that whoever gets their application in first gets approval so our third question is:

- Will the Planning Committee have regard to better sites already in (or soon likely to be in) the planning process that could meet, or contribute to meeting, the current housing land supply deficit, or will it merely operate on a 'first come, first served' basis of determining whichever application comes first?

We are alarmed that meetings of the Local Development Group are being cancelled and replaced with private meetings between developers and the entire planning committee. These meetings give the impression of behind-closed-door deals on major developments. We urge this Council to be far more transparent and open in its treatment of such applications and we ask:

- What assurances can be given that the outcome of the Bentfield Green application is not already predetermined, given the private meeting that has already taken place between Taylor Wimpey and the entire Planning Committee?

Finally, we note the pride this Council has rightly taken in Uttlesford's ranking of third in the UK in the recent Halifax 'quality of life' survey. We share that pride. We know that Stansted is a great place to live, which has already taken its fair share of large scale housing at Forest Hall. Developers will come and go but the Uttlesford countryside, once concreted over, will be lost forever. So, finally, we ask:

- What will the Council be doing to maintain its high 'quality of life' ranking and prevent speculative developers ruining the Uttlesford countryside forever?

Simon Thompson

Save Stansted Village

Appendix: Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

For **plan-making** this means that:

- local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

For **decision-taking** this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Answer to question 1:

All planning applications are considered in light of the adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy framework. The recommendation and decision is not just based on the Council's lack of a 5 year housing land supply. This robust approach of assessing planning applications will continue.

Question 2:

All planning applications are determined on their own merits. This means that there will not, and cannot be a comparison between different applications or expected applications.

Question 3:

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that all applications are considered in light of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is not a case of a free for all or a tap being turned off. The council will continue its practice of robustly assessing all planning applications which are submitted.

Question 4:

The pre-application process is an important way of enabling potential developers to obtain informal guidance from planning officers and answer questions from elected members in advance of submitting a planning application.

Such presentations are chaired by planning officers and are common practice at many local authorities. They are also positively encouraged in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Planning applications must not be predetermined by Councillors. In fact some schemes which have been subject to a presentation to the Planning Committee have subsequently been refused.

Question 5:

The Council will continue to work with its local communities to maintain and enhance the area in which we live. The recent grants to local community groups and Citizen Advice Bureaux, the support we provide to Parish Councils to deliver Parish Plans, its determination to adopt an up to date local plan and to plan for the provision of local housing as set out in the position statement is evidence of this Council's hard work to maintain and enhance the area in which we live.