

**EAST AREA PANEL held at FOAKES HALL GREAT DUNMOW at 7.00 pm
on 23 MAY 2006**

Present:- Councillors C A Cant, S Flack, M A Gayler, D W Gregory,
E W Hicks, J P Murphy, F E Silver, A R Thawley and
A M Wattebot.

Also present:- Councillor M J Savage.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird, G Bradley, R Chamberlain, H Joy,
M J Perry, M T Purkiss, P J Snow and D Toombs.

Also in attendance:- Chris Stoneham (Essex County Council), Councillor
Rodney Dodkins (Little Dunmow Parish Council) and Councillor
Nicola Douglas (Felsted Parish Council) and representatives of
Oakwood Park Residents' Association.

EP1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED that Councillor D W Gregory be elected Chairman for the
meeting.

EP2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE PANEL

The Chairman agreed to take the next two items as urgent business, as it was
necessary to fill those positions for the coming year.

RESOLVED that Councillor D W Gregory be elected Chairman of the
East Area Panel for the ensuing year.

EP3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor A M Wattebot be appointed Vice-Chairman
of the East Area Panel for the ensuing year.

EP4 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C D Down, M L Foley,
E Gower and M J Miller.

EP5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Gregory and Thawley declared personal interests as members of
Felsted Parish Council and Councillor Flack declared a personal interest as a
member of Essex County Council.

EP6

MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March and of the Extraordinary meeting held on 26 April 2006 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman, subject to the second paragraph of Minute EP17 being amended to read 'Councillor Flack asked what the process was for considering parking restrictions'.

EP7

BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute EP13 – Thaxted Day Centre

Councillor Flack explained her comments made at this meeting and said that the Council should avoid being left with small areas of grass which would need to be maintained.

(ii) Minute EP15 – Items for Future Agenda

Councillor Flack said that highway issues and grants had not been included on the agenda for this meeting. The Chairman said that a meeting was being held between officers and the three area panel chairmen to ensure that all relevant issues were included in a forward work programme.

(iii) Minute EP10 – Road Safety

In response to a question from Councillor Hicks the Chairman said that discussions were taking place to ensure that road safety and other highway issues were properly addressed by the area panels.

(iv) Minute EP12 – Waste Strategy

In response to a question Councillor Thawley said that the first wheelie bins would be delivered during the week commencing 5 June and the collections would be undertaken during the following week.

(v) Minute EP17 – Traffic Calming at Woodlands Park Drive

Following a question from Councillor Gayler, Chris Stoneham said that the County Council was in the process of undertaking informal consultation and a letter drop to residents would be carried out next week. He said that there would then be a 21 day period for responses to be made and once the response had been assessed, arrangements would be made for the formal consultation stage.

(vi) Minute EP19 – Civic Amenity Site

Councillor Gregory clarified that the six vehicles referred to in Minute EP19 were for collecting recyclables and not just kitchen waste. Councillor Gayler asked that copies of the leaflet be provided to all town and parish councils. Officers said that this would be addressed.

PARISH REVIEW – LITTLE DUNMOW/OAKWOOD PARK

Councillor Gregory left the meeting for the consideration of this item and Councillor Wattebot took the chair.

Councillor Wattebot explained that there were a number of decisions to be taken on this item and she intended to take each one separately.

The Electoral Services Officer submitted a comprehensive report on all the issues and explained these in detail. He said that in June 2005 Little Dunmow Parish Council had requested the District Council to support the creation of a separate parish based on the area of Oakwood Park. It had been decided to initiate a Parish Review under Section 9 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, but to limit the review to arrangements for the parish of Little Dunmow only. The review was advertised in the local press and letters sent to interested parties. He said that 481 individual responses had been received from Little Dunmow parish and this represented 50% of all electors. 350 individual responses had been received from Oakwood Park and this represented just over 49% of all electors. He said that 71% of those responding said that they agreed that there should be a new parish. He said that separate representations had been received from the Oakwood Park Residents Association and details of their response were submitted.

Taking the decision in principle

The Electoral Services Officer said that the Government Circular stated that it was desirable that a parish should reflect a small, distinctive and recognisable community of interest, with its own sense of identity. The feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants were the primary considerations.

He said that the key questions were:

- Was Oakwood Park a separate and distinctive community?
- Was there a discernable feeling of local community there?
- Were the wishes of local inhabitants clearly defined?

He stated that if the answer to each of these questions was yes, the Area Panel would be justified in deciding that a new parish should be created. The Parish Review Working Party had already made a recommendation to this effect.

Liz Bennett, the Secretary of the Residents' Association, explained the reasons for the discrepancies in the number of responses and said that many people had asked questions which they had been able to answer at the door step. Alan Bennett, Chairman of the Association, said that there was a distinct feeling that Oakwood Park was a separate community from Little Dunmow and residents wanted to grasp the opportunity to move forward and improve the development.

Rodney Dodkins, Chairman of Little Dunmow Parish Council, said that he agreed with what had been said and added that Little Dunmow was now outnumbered by the residents of the new development. He felt that they

should be given the opportunity to run their own affairs and Little Dunmow should continue to be administered as a small village.

Councillor Thawley said that there was a clear sense of community in Oakwood Park with a different culture to the ancient village of Little Dunmow. He said that it should have its own representatives to pursue local issues about the area and the provision of important facilities, such as the new school. Councillor Cant said that as Chairman of the Development Control Committee she had been involved with the development over a number of years and said that the commitment of the local community deserved a parish council. In answer to a question from Councillor Silver it was clarified that there would be no direct cost implications for the district council and any new parish council would submit a precept in the normal way. Councillor Murphy thanked the Electoral Services Officer for his comprehensive report. It was then unanimously

RESOLVED that the Area Panel propose to the Secretary of State the creation of a separate parish for Oakwood Park.

Naming the Parish

The Electoral Services Officer said that the names of Flitch Green, Oakwood Park and Tile End had been put forward and the Residents' Association had organised a local survey to ascertain preferences. This had resulted in votes being cast as follows:

- Flitch Green – 96
- Oakwood Park – 46
- Tile End – 10
- No preference – 4

The Electoral Services Officer said that it seemed likely that the postal address would change if a new parish was created and he outlined the procedure which would be adopted by Royal Mail.

Alan Bennett said that Oakwood Park had been a marketing name and he supported the name of Flitch Green which he said would help create a community feeling. Rodney Dodkins said that he also supported the name of Flitch Green for historical reasons. Councillor Flack said that she supported the name of Flitch Green, but suggested that the County Council should be contacted to ensure that any proposals for a new school incorporated this name.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED that the name of Flitch Green be adopted for the new parish.

Deciding the new parish boundary

The Electoral Services Officer said that there were two realistic options to consider in determining the new parish boundary. These were:

- The development limits of Oakwood Park as commonly understood and more fully described in the report submitted to the meeting or
- The area above, together with the area of the proposed nature reserve south-east of Stebbing Brook and north-east of the River Chelmer.

The Electoral Services Officer said that very few consultees had referred to the proposed boundary of the suggested parish. He said that the second option would involve an encroachment of the new parish into Felsted parish.

Liz Bennett said that the nature reserve was being well maintained, but there was no access from Oakwood Park, despite this being shown on the original plans. Councillor Cant said that she would take this matter up with the planning officers.

Nicola Douglas of Felsted Parish Council said that she felt strongly that Felsted Fen should remain part of the Felsted parish.

RESOLVED that the new parish boundary should comprise the development limits of Oakwood Park, as commonly understood and as set out in paragraph 34 of the report.

Deciding on electoral arrangements

The Electoral Services Officer said that electoral arrangements must be agreed both in the interim period before the new parish council begins to operate, and in the longer term for all affected parishes. He said that as the new parish might not begin to operate for a year or two after the May 2007 elections, arrangements needed to be made for the interim period and the following options were available:-

- Increase the number of parish councillors in Little Dunmow to 11 (or another suitable figure) with no division into wards; or
- Agree to the temporary introduction of a warding scheme.

Councillor Murphy favoured warding as it would pave the way to establishing two separate parish councils. However, Rodney Dodkins said that this solution was cumbersome and it would be better to increase the number of parish councillors to 11. This view was supported by most district councillors and Councillor Silver said it was important to keep any solution simple so that everyone understood what was going on. In response to a question from Councillor Murphy, the Electoral Services Officer confirmed that the situation at Flitch Green was not comparable with that at Swards End.

Mr Bennett said that the Residents Association supported the increase to 11 parish councillors as this would give them the opportunity to work alongside and learn from the existing Little Dunmow parish councillors.

The Electoral Services Officer reported that the Parish Review Working Party had recommended nine parish councillors for Flitch Green and seven for Little Dunmow in the longer term arrangements.

RESOLVED that

- 1 during the interim period before the new parish is created, the number of parish councillors in Little Dunmow be adjusted, by order, to 11, with effect from the ordinary election of parish councillors in May 2007 (and from such earlier date as is required for all other purposes in connection with that election), provided that the new parish council does not begin to operate from that date; and
- 2 in the longer term, the electoral arrangements for the new and revised parishes, with no division into wards, be nine parish councillors for Flitch Green and seven parish councillors for Little Dunmow.

Establishing the new parish

The Electoral Services Officer said that precise steps to set up the new parish council did not have to be agreed at this stage. He set out the options that were available and said that the district council would probably have to agree the first year's budget and parish precept.

RESOLVED that consideration of this matter be deferred for the time being and the Residents Association continue to be consulted on this issue.

EP9

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Leisure and Community Development Manager said that there would be a presentation on tourism and an item on grants allocation procedure at the September meeting and the November meeting would look at a policy regarding school parking and access to schools. She asked Members to put forward other items which could be included in the work programme and the following items were put forward:-

Councillor Murphy – presentation from Dunmow Town Council on the skateboard park.

Councillor Gayler – road safety and highway issues.

Councillor Flack – presentation by Primary Care Trust.

- Woodlands Park – progress.

- Eastern sector – progress.

Councillor Thawley – implications of the Regional Spatial Strategy Examination in public.

- Next phase of the Local Development Framework.

Councillor Gregory – Rural Transport in the Greater Dunmow Area.

- Presentation by Three Valleys Water on water conservation.

Councillor Wattebot – provision of space for businesses which need to expand in the context of the local plan.

Councillor Silver – presentation by Accuro.

EP10

GREAT DUNMOW PRIMARY SCHOOL – HOUSING LAND EASTERN BOUNDARY

The Executive Manager Housing Services reported that since the Dunmow Primary School had opened in September 2005, there had been problems with some parents parking as near as possible to the school to drop off and collect their children. The Panel had received reports in the past about how this impacted on the residents of the nearby council estate which covered Newton Green, Newton Grove and Stortford Road.

He said that in recent weeks, officers had been monitoring the parking situation on the estate and since the road works to complete the lay by had finished, the problems had decreased to a very marked degree. He said that a significant number of children were using the gate access and the condition of the strip of land was currently regarded as fair. Councillor Gayler said that he had spoken to many residents and had only found one who wanted the path closed. Having regard to all the circumstances, he said that he would not be in favour of its closure.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the path be not closed;
- 2 a sign be placed in Newton Grove stating that it is a private road; and
- 3 officers investigate whether parking restrictions would improve the situation in Green Lane and Jubilee Court.

Councillor Flack asked that it be noted that she did not vote on this matter.

EP11

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Sections 100A and 100B and Schedule 12A, Paragraph 5 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting whilst the Committee considered the following item.

EP12

GREAT DUNMOW PRIMARY SCHOOL – HOUSING LAND EASTERN BOUNDARY

The Chairman agreed to take this item as urgent business as it was necessary for Members to be aware of all the facts concerning this matter.

Councillor Gayler declared a personal interest as an employee of Essex County Council.

Councillor Murphy said that it was difficult for Members to discuss this matter with a Member of another authority present. Councillor Flack said that she did not feel that she had a prejudicial interest, but would leave the meeting if other Members felt uncomfortable. At this stage, Councillor Flack and Chris Stoneham left the meeting.

Members then considered a report giving legal advice with regard to the status of the land in question.

RESOLVED that officers open informal discussions with Essex County Council regarding this strip of land and report back to the Area Panel to enable a recommendation to be made to the Community Committee and officers continue to monitor the situation for the remainder of the school term.

EP12

THAXTED YOUTH CLUB

The Leisure and Community Development Manager said that she had received a letter from the Thaxted Youth Club seeking a contribution towards the cost of a new building. She said that she would be taking a report on this matter to the meeting of the Community Committee on 8 June 2006.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm.