

**EAST AREA PANEL held at FOAKES HALL GREAT DUNMOW at 7.00 pm
on 5 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Present:- Councillor D W Gregory – Chairman.
Councillors C A Cant, C D Down, S Flack, M A Gayler, E Gower,
E W Hicks, M Miller, J P Murphy and S Silver.

Officers in attendance:- E Blackie, G Bradley, M Cox, J Elsom, H Joy,
R Millership, J Mitchell, P Snow, A Stewart and D Toombs.

EP14

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

(i) Felling of Trees to the rear of Berbice Lane Great Dunmow

A resident representing households in Berbice Lane, Great Dunmow, addressed the meeting about the Poplar trees to the rear of their properties that had been felled earlier that day. These trees were subject to a tree preservation order and he asked why they had been felled and why no consultation had taken place.

The Executive Manager Development Services explained the situation. A proposal for the landscaping of all the Woodland Park site had been submitted to the Council, and included in that scheme was the felling and replacement of the Poplars. He explained that if trees were subject to a preservation order they could only be felled if they were diseased or dangerous or were likely to cause problems to properties or structures. An arboricultural report had found many of the trees in the Poplar group to be diseased.

An application to fell the had been considered by the Development Control Committee in February but had been deferred because the replacement planting was inadequate. The application had then been approved in April subject to substantial replacement planting. With regard to consultation, the regulations in relation to the trees did not require any notification. However, the ward members and the Town Council had been advised of these proposals. Unfortunately, the developer had not told the District Council that the work was about to commence and there had been no opportunity to inform residents.

A resident said that a number of different trees had been felled and many did not appear to be diseased. The Executive Manager Development Services said that the report showed that although not all the trees in the group were currently affected, they would not do well if left on their own. The new planting would in the long term provide a greater number of trees and a better screen for the properties. Another resident said that he understood that 50% of the hedgerow was to be maintained but all of this had been taken out earlier in the day. He also mentioned that there were implications for public liability insurance as the felling was occurring within seven metres of the houses.

The residents wanted to know how soon the new trees would be planted and what this would consist of. Many had moved to their houses because it was secluded and backed onto preserved trees. The Executive Manager would

advise residents of these details. Councillor Flack asked whether it might be possible to plant more mature trees.

The Tree Warden for High Roding Parish commented that poplar trees were not a long life species and if they had been found to be diseased their days were probably numbered.

Councillor Murphy said that this issue was about failure in communication. Although the correct procedures had been observed, these had been inadequate in this case. He considered that as the felling had occurred only 6 metres from the boundaries of the properties, something should have been done to notify the residents. The Chairman asked that officers review procedures for notifying nearby residents in terms of tree related issues.

Councillor Gayler asked officers to contact Wickfords to ensure that residents knew about the replanting timescales. Councillor Flack asked who had commissioned the agriculturist report. It was confirmed that this was produced by consultants employed by Wickfords, but was verified by the Council's own officers.

Councillor Silver apologised to the residents as he had had no knowledge of this situation. He said that they had been let down by a lack of communication.

Councillor Cant said that the Development Control Committee cared deeply about the retention of trees. She commented that Woodlands Park development was in general lacking in landscaping, but planning permission had been given many years ago when the laws were different. The felling of the trees had only been allowed with the condition of appropriate replacement planting.

The residents asked what the Council could do to prevent a resumption of the felling the next day. They wanted to be sure that the felling that was taking place had been authorised. They also said that the felling was being undertaken in an unsafe manner. The Executive Manager said that if this was the case it would be a matter for the Health and Safety Executive and he would contact them first thing in the morning. He would also speak to Wickfords and ask them to halt the felling, although he stressed that they had no obligation to do so. Members asked that a meeting be arranged with Wickfords, the residents, the Town Council and officers to clarify the situation at the site. The Executive Manager said that he would make his best efforts to arrange a meeting.

A number of the children of Berbice Lane then presented a petition against the felling to the Chairman.

(ii) Traffic Calming on Woodlands Park Drive

Lisa Burgess asked about the progress for the scheme of traffic calming on Woodlands Park Drive. Councillor Gayler replied that following consultation on the scheme, there had been some objections, these would have to be considered and a further report prepared. The residents said that there had been no communication about the progress of the scheme. David Green, spoke to the meeting as one of the residents who had objected to the

measures. He said he was in favour of reducing speed on the road, but said that speed ramps and cushions were inappropriate. The Chairman said that the County Council would be asked for a position statement on this scheme.

EP15 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M L Foley, A R Thawley and A M Wattebott.

Councillors declared the following personal interests.

Councillor S Flack as a member of the Essex County Council.

Councillor C D Down as the Chairman of Tilty Parish Meeting.

Councillor C A Cant as a member of Stebbing Parish Council.

Councillors M A Gayler, F E Silver and J P Murphy as members of Great Dunmow Parish Council.

EP16 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2006 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EP17 **BUSINESS ARISING**

(i) **Minute EP9 – Draft Work Programme**

In answer to a question from Councillor Silver, it was confirmed that the draft work programme had been agreed and he would be forwarded a copy.

EP18 **TOURISM**

The District Council's Tourism Officer, Elisabeth Blackie gave a presentation on current tourist activities. She mentioned the importance of Stansted Airport to the District and explained how the tourism officers tried to work with it and get the benefits. There were many hotels and guest houses connected with the airport and they looked to tourism to assist them. Each year, a visitor guide for the District was produced and was circulated widely. It was currently used as a bedroom browser in the airport hotels and many responses had been received from this.

Where there was a gap in the information provided, specialist leaflets were produced. Tourism routes had been put in place to encourage tourists into the District's hinterland. Uttlesford Tourism worked in partnership with the East of England Tourist Board to promote the district abroad and with One Railway to produce the Let's Go booklet. Local writers had produced books

on walks and there had been work on promoting churches and gardens in the District.

Jenny Oliveria from Broxted Parish Council asked how premises appeared in the visitor guide. She was advised that the tourist officers contacted all known businesses yearly and new accommodations would contact the tourist office for help. However, some businesses felt that they got sufficient custom by advertising over the internet. Also, no properties were included that had not been inspected by the Tourist Board.

Elisabeth Blackie said that the duelling of the A11 and the A120 had affected the numbers of visitors to the District, particularly in terms of passing trade. She said this was the reasoning behind the tourist routes and trying to encourage people into the hinterland. Councillor Flack asked what was being done about the closure of shops, post offices and pubs in villages and whether there could be a reduction in business rates for these premises. She was advised that the District Council did have a scheme in place, but it was local use of these facilities that was required to keep them open. .

The Chairman had invited representatives from tourist facilities and attractions to the meeting and had asked for ideas for future initiatives. The Maltings Preservation Trust had apologised for the meeting, but had submitted a series of comments which were passed to the Tourism Officer. A representative from the Gardens of Easton Lodge referred to the problem of small tourist attractions managing to meet their costs and said that more resources were required. She felt that more effort should be made to encourage residents of Uttlesford to be a tourist in their own area.

The representative from Thaxted Tourism Partnership asked about the District Council's commitment in the longer term. The Chairman said that by discussing this issue at this meeting and asking for comments, the Council was showing a real interest in this matter. Also the Council had resolved to make maximum benefit of the Olympics in 2012.

The meeting then discussed ways of promoting tourism and methods of distributing leaflets. Elisabeth Blackie said that to be effective, the venues for distributing the leaflets needed to be properly targeted. In terms of promoting tourism, it was probably more important for the Uttlesford website to be expanded and updated regularly.

The Chairman had received a leaflet about a walking festival in the South Pennine area and asked the Tourism Officer to look at promoting something similar in the Uttlesford area.

Members thanked the Tourism Officer and all her colleagues for their efforts in promoting tourism in the district.

EP19

DUNMOW SKATEPARK

Councillor Trudi Hughes spoke on behalf of the skate project. She said that the existing skateboard park in Great Dunmow was out of date and the project team was looking for a grant of up to £30,000 from Uttlesford District Council

to help provide replacement equipment. The project team had been out to tender for the works and these were approximately £60,000. Great Dunmow Town Council had committed £15,000 and the Essex County Council Community Initiative had put forward £12,800. A number of other organisations and grant funds were being approached, but a commitment from the district council would give credibility to the scheme and increase the likelihood of these being obtained. Any grants received from other parties would reduce the district council's contribution. The Great Dunmow Skatepark Association had been party to discussion and had agreed the design. The finished park would be of high quality which would hopefully attract a greater membership and prevent vandalism.

Subject to the funding the scheme could be started in September 2006 and completed by March/April 2007, within this financial year.

Councillor Silver said he strongly supported this scheme. The Group had worked very hard on the proposal and it was a much needed facility as there was little for young people to do in Great Dunmow. Councillor Gayler added that it was Council policy to provide and support skate parks in the district.

RESOLVED that the Community Committee be advised that the Panel supports the funding of up to £30,000 to provide a new skate park facility in Great Dunmow.

EP20

GREAT DUNMOW PRIMARY SCHOOL – HOUSING LAND – EASTERN BOUNDARY

The Panel was advised of the updated position regarding the strip of housing land running along the eastern boundary of the new Great Dunmow Primary School. At the last meeting it had been agreed that no action should be taken to close access to the strip of land and the situation should be randomly monitored until the end of the school year. This monitoring had now taken place and no significant problems had been identified that needed immediate attention by the Council nor had new complaints been received from the nearby residents. It appeared that the provision of the layby plus the action taken by the Council had reduced the initial problems. Officers had entered into discussion with the County Council regarding future ownership of the strip of land. Further information would be reported back to the Panel.

Councillor Gayler referred to problems of school parking in Green Lane. He was advised that when this road had been visited there had been no obstructions, and as this was public highway the district council had no powers to move on vehicles. Councillor Gayler suggested that the Highways Authority should be asked whether parking restrictions were required on parts of this road as parking on the corner reduced visibility and could be dangerous.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The panel note the current situation and agree that no further action is taken about closing access to the land and the

discussions with the County Council continues regarding future ownership.

- 2 Essex County Council Highways be asked to investigate the need for parking restrictions on Green Lane, Great Dunmow.

EP21

COMMUNITY PROJECT GRANT

At the meeting of the Community and Leisure Committee on 7 September 2004, Members had requested that the Grant Review Task Group meet with town and parish council clerks of the four main settlements to explore ways of improving fairness of the grant schemes and to discuss general grant funding. The task group had recommended that the existing Community Project Grant scheme budget of £24,000 be increased by £16,000 (ring fenced) for the four main settlements and that all parish councils in the district be eligible to apply for funding irrespective of their population size. The Community Committee had agreed that any decisions relating to Community Project Grant allocation should be made by the area panels. The East Area Panel had been allocated £4,000 for Great Dunmow, £4,000 for Thaxted and £6,666 split among the remaining settlements.

The Community Project Grant Scheme was open to any properly constituted voluntary organisation or similar body in the Uttlesford district. The minimum grant available was £100 and the maximum £3,500 and matched funding was required. The report set out details of eligible projects.

Applications had been received from the Great Dunmow Maltings, the Great Dunmow Museum Society, Thaxted Parish Council and Stebbing Parish Council. The amounts requested and the recommended amounts were as follows:

Organisation	Amount Requested	25% of total requested	50% of total requested	75% of total requested	Recommended amounts
Geat Dunmow Maltings	£750	£187.50	£375	£562.50	£750
	£4,000	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000	£2,000
Gt Dunmow Museum Society	£1,600	£400	£800	£1,200	£1,200
TOTAL	£6,350	£1,587.50	£3,175	£4,762.50	£3,950
Thaxted Parish Council	£4,000	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000	£4,000
TOTAL	£4,000	£1,000	£2,000	£3,000	£4,000
Stebbing Parish Council	£3,315	£828.75	£1,657.50	£2,486.25	£3,315
TOTAL	£3,315	£828.75	£1,657.50	£2,486.25	£3,315
OVERALL TOTAL	£13,665	£3,416.25	£6,832.50	£10,248.75	£11,265

There was a shortfall for the East Area of £3,000. The Panel considered that the most sensible option would be to carry this forward to the next financial year.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Panel agree the level of grant funding as recommended above and
- 2 The outstanding balance be carried forward to the next financial year, ring fenced for the "other settlements".

EP22

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

The Panel was advised that the Council had commenced a statutory review of polling districts and places on 1 September 2005. The Council was required to decide suitable arrangements for its district after appropriate consultation. The report contained details of representations received and recommendations for the adoption of a scheme of polling arrangements. The scheme would be approved by the Operations Committee, after which it would be published and would operate for all elections held from the effective date onwards.

Members considered the proposals for the East Area. Councillor Gayler mentioned the disabled audit which had been undertaken for all the premises to be used as polling stations. He asked that any particular concerns be reported back to the Panel in due course.

RESOLVED that the Area Panel recommends the adoption of the scheme of polling districts and polling places set out in the report insofar as it applies to those wards and parishes included within the territory administered by the Panel and the scheme be incorporated into a revised scheme covering the entire district.

EP23

UPDATE ON STANSTED AIRPORT

The Executive Manager, Development Services, updated the Panel on the Planning applications at Stansted Airport.

The current application was for the maximum use of the runway. The Development Control Committee had been working to a timetable of special meetings since the application had been submitted and had considered the application and all supporting information in detail. There had also been a whole week of public engagement meetings which had been very successful.

It had been hoped a final decision on the application would be made at the end of September. However, a number of the statutory consultees, including the Highways Agency, the rail operators and Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils had not yet responded to the consultation. The District could not legally make a decision on the application without these responses. Stansted

Airport was continuing to grow and it was likely that it would reach the current cap on passenger movement within a year. Therefore, BAA would like the application to be determined as soon as possible and it was likely that it would lodge an appeal on the grounds of non determination. If this was the case, then a public inquiry would be held, probably in the Spring. It was unlikely that the district council would be in a position to determine the application until the end of the year. If a appeal had already been lodged, the Development Control Committee would be required to make a decision retrospectively. The meeting programmed for 13 September would now question SSE on its presentation and the meeting on the 27 September would give a comprehensive position statement.

With regards to the second runway, the preferred option for airport expansion was expected in early October.

EP24

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION STREET LIGHTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Panel was advised that last year Essex County Council had revised its street lighting policy to reflect growing environmental concerns. A number of measures had been included, but these would not deliver the requisite reduction in energy consumption in the short term. The County Council was therefore reviewing its practice of keeping street lights on throughout the hours of darkness, regardless of where they were located. As part of its review the County Council was now looking at this arrangement and considering switching off the lights during the middle of the night. There would be a number of exemptions to this arrangement, any accident sites, CCTV locations and other locations determined in consultation with local councils and organisations.

The project would require a £1.8 million investment over two years with a £1m per year saving. It was intended to introduce the new practice by piloting Maldon and Uttlesford in the first instance, measuring local reaction and in evaluating the success of the initiative to the rest of the county over the next two years. The local authority's had been asked to submit their comments.

Members of the panel questioned the sense of this suggestion and commented that any money saved could be countered by increased danger of accident or injury. Councillor Murphy said that most street lights had been placed in their location for a reason and said there was little purpose to a street light if it was not turned on. Councillor Cant said that in villages people were being encouraged to walk to events and they would be deterred from doing this if there was insufficient light. Also a number of street lights in the parishes had been paid for by the parish precept and she questioned how these would be affected. Some members commented that in some residential areas it might be appropriate for specific lights to be switched off, but it was important that there was full consultation with the local councils and residents so that each light could be individually assessed.

RESOLVED that the Environment Committee be advised that the East Area Panel could see huge safety concerns with this proposal and stressed the importance of full consultation and that no lights should

be switched off without the full support of the parish or town council concerned.

EP25

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Community Development Officer outlined details of community development activities and schemes which had occurred since the previous panel meeting and activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

Members thanked the officer for the report and all his efforts in managing the many activities that had been organised over the summer.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm.