

**EAST AREA PANEL held at THE RODINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADEN
RODING at 7.00 pm on 27 FEBRUARY 2007**

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

Also present: Councillor P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: G Bradley, M Jones, S Nicholas, M T Purkiss and
D Toombs.

EP44

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Jenny Oliveira from Broxsted Parish Council said that she was disappointed that there had been no reference on the Agenda to Stansted Airport. She said that she had previously made representations that this should be a standing item. She said that she also understood that the Stansted Public Inquiry on 30 May would be held at Endeavour House and considered that it should not be held on BAA premises and hoped that the matter would be looked at again.

Councillor Gayler said that the venue would not make a difference to the decision and he considered that it was better that the Council's resources were spent on defending the case. Councillor Cant added that the number of venues which would be available for the length of time involved in this Inquiry were very limited. Councillor Thawley concluded that it had been a choice between spending money on a venue or legal representation. He said that the Planning Inspectorate were satisfied with the venue.

The Chairman said that her comments would be noted and he would reinstate Stansted Airport on the next Agenda.

EP45

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M L Foley, M Miller and F E Silver.

EP46

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Thawley declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item concerning school placements policy as he was a Governor of Felsted Primary School. Councillor Murphy declared an interest as a Member of the Dunmow Town Strategy Group and Councillor Flack declared an interest as an Essex County Councillor.

EP47

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EP48 **BUSINESS ARISING**

The Chairman said that a press release had been issued updating progress with the work at Vicarage Mead, Thaxted.

EP49 **SCHOOL PLACEMENTS POLICY**

Neil Keylock from Essex County Council made a detailed presentation on the school placements policy operated by the County Council. He explained the policy and the current situation with the proposed new school at Flitch Green. He said that it was now intended that the new school would open in September 2008 and he explained the contingency arrangements that would be made with Felsted and Stebbing County Primary Schools and the bussing arrangements from Flitch Green to Stebbing.

Mrs Perry, a resident of Flitch Green asked why the school would not be ready to open in September 2007 as originally planned. Mr Keylock explained that there had been problems with the consultation period running concurrently with the County Council Election period and a new local and Cabinet Member had been elected. New environmental regulations had also had an impact on the contract period. He added that there could have been a possibility that the school would be ready to open in January 2008 but it was considered that this would be disruptive as it was half way through the school year. He said that the County would consult with parents to ascertain how many intended to transfer from Felsted and Stebbing schools and to enable the staffing arrangements at each of the schools to be planned.

Mrs Wallace from Flitch Green said that she was aware of a parent who was within walking distance of the school but understood that the child had not been included on the school list. Mr Keylock said that the closing date did not expire until 28 February and no allocations had been made at the moment. He undertook to provide further details to Mrs Wallace outside of the meeting.

In answer to questions from Councillor Flack, Mr Keylock said that the name of the school would be a matter for the Governing Body, it would be a stand alone and not a federated arrangement and the admission arrangements would give priority to children living in Flitch Green. He also agreed that it was unlikely that the school would be full in the first years and there would be mixed year groups during the early period.

Councillor Murphy asked how the County Council was planning to deal with the impact of the proposed new houses in the district. Mr Keylock said that there was additional capacity at both the Stansted and Dunmow secondary schools and there could be further expansion at the schools related to housing growth. Councillor Cant also expressed concern at the increasing number of students at the Helena Romanes School and considered that there was a need to look at providing a further secondary school in the district. Mr Keylock said that the Mountfitchet School was a comparatively small school and could increase to 750 students and the Helena Romanes School to 1,750. He said that the impact of new housing would be offset by the falling birth rate and

small class sizes in primary schools. In answer to a further question from Councillor Gayler he said that the County Council was involved in the Local Development Framework process and talked to developers to ensure the database was kept up to date. He said that Dunmow was a pressure point in particular year groups.

Councillor Thawley asked how the governors would be appointed at the new Flitch Green School. Mr Keylock said that initially a temporary governing body would be appointed and they would make the appointment of the head teacher and things would then evolve from this. Councillor Gregory said that he hoped that the Residents Association would be consulted.

The Chairman thanked Mr Keylock for his interesting presentation.

EP50

RURAL TRANSPORT

Richard Gravatt, the Transport Strategy Manager from Essex County Council, gave a detailed presentation on an overview of the basis for rural transport in Uttlesford.

He explained the background, the impact of deregulation in rural areas, the County Council's strategic approach and details of operational decision making. He also explained how people could promote awareness of public transport in their area and how new services could be proposed.

Jenny Oliveira from Broxted said that she was pleased with the Village Link No 5 bus which had been successful. She asked if there were plans for real time information to be provided. Mr Gravatt said that priority was being given to improving existing facilities which were mainly in the urban areas and the work would then be rolled out.

Councillor Flack made a plea for more information to be provided in areas where there were limited services. She also asked whether the possibility of school buses picking up passengers when they were running on empty return journeys could be looked at. Mr Gravatt said that the County Council were looking at registering some secondary school buses for passenger services.

In answer to a question from Councillor Wattebot, Mr Gravatt said that a bus help line number would be provided at stops but this service did not include mobile phone updates.

Councillor Thawley said that the website was very good and he had used the telephone number and some live information particularly on the 133 service was available. He also suggested that publicity should be provided in parish newsletters. In answer to a question from a member of the public Mr Gravatt explained the situation regarding cut price fares for young people during peak periods.

Councillor Gayler asked whether the free bus passes for over 60's had increased the use and viability of services. Mr Gravatt said that use had increased but this did not always help the viability of services and in answer to a further question from Councillor Wattebot he said that the Essex Consortium

had extended the start of the period that these could be used from 9.30 am to 9.00 am, but any further extension would have cost implications which would have to be met by Uttlesford District Council.

Councillor Gregory asked Mr Gravatt for a view on a proposed route from Harlow to Hatfield Heath, The Rodings, Dunmow, Felsted, and Braintree. Mr Gravatt said that it was difficult to comment but his initial feeling was that it would be difficult to make such a service viable.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gravatt for his presentation.

EP51

STREET LIGHTING

Gaynor Bradley, the Council's Leisure and Community Development Manager, gave an update on the pilot scheme to turn off some street lighting in the district from 2 April 2007. Plans showing the areas affected were displayed and she outlined the exception criteria.

Councillor Gayler said that he welcomed the fact that the County Council had gone some way to addressing the points made by Great Dunmow Town Council. However, he felt that there were more effective ways of saving energy and considered that the Council should maintain its opposition to the pilot scheme.

RESOLVED that Essex County Council be advised that the Panel wishes to maintain its opposition to the proposed pilot scheme.

EP52

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Melanie Jones and Sarah Nicholas from the Council's Development Department informed the Panel of progress with the consultation on the LDF Core Strategy. They explained that the consultation period expired on 9 March and they sought the views from the Panel on growth options. It was noted that the options around a dispersed approach were as follows:

- (a) Over a hierarchy of settlements from villages with services and facilities through key rural centres to larger settlements.
- (b) Along the west Anglia Rail Corridor.
- (c) In villages around the district.
- (d) Along the A120 Corridor and Great Dunmow.

Jenny Oliveira from Broxted Parish Council said that her Council supported option (c) and stressed the importance of providing housing which supported village facilities and promoted more social housing.

Peter Watson, the Clerk of Felsted Parish Council said that options (a) and (c) would result in coalescence and his parish council supported option (b).

Councillor Murphy said that the Dunmow Town Strategy Group had commented on the proposals and these comments had the support of Great Dunmow Town Council. He said that several of the policies were not

consistent with regional policies and said that the Council should provide an evidence base that Uttlesford could not meet the extra 3,000 houses without damaging the area.

Councillor Wattebot said that some parish councils did not seem to be aware of the consultation and asked if a reminder could be sent emphasising the importance of the consultation exercise. Officers agreed that this would be done.

Councillor Gayler said that the dispersed options were the only ones that were acceptable and it was important to look at housing need and where it would support the community. He also emphasised the importance of affordable housing for local people. Councillor Cant concluded that it was important for the Council to be proactive in order to avoid development by default.

EP53

PARISH ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mick Purkiss, the Council's Democratic Services Manager, explained that following the adoption by the Operations Committee of criteria guiding the Council's approach to parish electoral arrangements a further letter had been sent last November giving parishes one final opportunity to comment upon their electoral arrangements prior to the ordinary election of parish councillors in May.

He reported that a letter had been received from Little Easton Parish Council seeking an increase to six councillors as "an extra councillor would greatly ease the difficulties we have had, on occasions, of being quorate. This has been due to a number of reasons including sickness and business commitments and having an extra councillor would greatly ease this problem." He said that the response fitted in with the Council's policy and suggested that the relevant change in representation could be agreed.

He also explained the situation regarding Aythorpe Roding, Leaden Roding, Little Bardfield, Margaret Roding and White Roothing parish councils which currently had the statutory minimum of five councillors. However, there appeared to be no desire or reason to increase the numbers in these instances.

He also reported that Thaxted Parish Council had indicated that it would prefer to remain with nine councillors and confirmed that this was within the guidelines at present and no change was suggested.

He said that the Panel must also consider, when reviewing parish electoral arrangements, any expected changes in the number and distribution of electors within the next five years. He outlined the expected electorate changes for the parishes concerned in the five years to 2012 and concluded that these would make no significant difference to the projected electorate in five years time.

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Council agree to the request from Little Easton Parish Council for an increase in the number of

parish councillors from five to six and that the arrangements for all other parishes in the panel's area remain unaltered.

EP54 **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Panel was informed of the Community Development activities and schemes that officers had been involved in since the previous Panel meeting.

EP55 **LAST MEETING**

The Chairman said that this would be the last meeting during the current Council year and said that it had been a pleasure to have been part of the Area Panel team and thanked all those officer and Members and the public who had been involved.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.