

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 20 JANUARY 2009 at 7.30 pm**

Present: - Councillor S Barker – Chairman  
Councillors C A Cant, R Chamberlain, J F Cheetham, A Dean, C M Dean, C D Down, E J Godwin. J Howell, H J Mason, R D Sherer and A M Wattebot.

Also present:- Councillors A J Ketteridge and D J Morson.

Officers in attendance: - M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Acting Director of Development), P Hunt (Engineer) A Knight (Principal Accountant) R Pridham (Head of Street Services) and A Webb (Director of Central Services).

**E41 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Prior to the meeting a statement was made by Nick Baker in relation to item 7, Local Development Scheme. A summary of his comments is attached to these minutes.

**E42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There had been no apologies for absence received.

Councillor Howell declared a personal interest in item 5 - Lead Officer's Report (in relation to waste recycling) as an employee of May Gurney Integrated Services plc.

Councillors C Dean, A Dean and E Godwin declared personal interests as members of SSE.

Councillor Cheetham declared a personal interest as a member of NWEIPA. Councillor Barker declared a personal interest as a member of Essex County Council and the EERA Housing Panel.

**E43 RIVER BOURNE FLOOD STUDY ASHDON**

It was reported that following the severe flooding in Ashdon village in 2007 the Council had commissioned a study of the river Bourne through Ashdon in order to investigate possible flood risk reduction measures. The study had determined that the village had a standard protection of 2 years compared to the indicative standard protection of 25 years. A number of actions had been agreed with the County Council and Parish Council to help prevent future flooding events but these would still not be sufficient to meet the 25 year figure.

It appeared that the best way forward would be to pursue the greater involvement of the Environment Agency who had greater resources to deal

with this problem. To enable this responsibility to be transferred to the Agency the river would need to be designated as a “main river”. The Parish Council had contacted the MP to obtain his support and was now asking the Council to add its weight to this lobby. Councillor Chamberlain drew attention to the anxiety of the local residents being faced with a possibility of a flood every two years and asked the Council to support this request.

RESOLVED that the Committee give its support to the ongoing programme of action proposed and agree to lobby for the River Bourne through Ashdon to be designated a “main river” enabling the Environment Agency to take the lead in the matter and also to ask Essex County Council to complete its work in this area.

#### E44 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2008 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to an addition to minute E32 to clarify that officers had agreed to arrange a meeting with Councillor Cheetham and Councillor A Dean regarding the response to Defra on its draft guidance to airport operators on the preparation of noise action plans.

#### E45 **MATTERS ARISING**

##### **(i) Minute E36 – Chairman’s Report**

The Committee was updated on the situation with the recycling market and were informed that there was currently a reduced income for cardboard but the material was still being collected. All other areas were unaffected.

##### **(ii) Minute E36 – Municipal Waste Strategy**

Councillor A Dean said that the minutes of the last meeting did not fully reflect member’s deep concerns about mention in the Strategy of mechanical and biological treatment plants and the fact that this Council could be subsidising low recycling rates from elsewhere in the county. He said that Chelmsford Borough Council’s Cabinet meeting had voiced concerns at the scale of the proposed plants, the high level of residual waste and the PFI procurement arrangements. He thought this Council should make similar representations. He understood that the Essex Wide Waste Management Board had been postponed and asked to be advised of the reason for this.

The Chairman said that the Inter Authority Waste Agreement was still being prepared by Essex County Council and would hopefully be considered by a special meeting of the Environment Committee prior to the Council meeting on either 19 or 24 February.

E46

## **LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Acting Director of Development updated Members on matters that were not on the agenda.

In relation to concessionary fares it was reported that 8583 passes had been issued last year compared to 4921 in the previous year and officers were congratulated for managing this workload. The forecast for the costs of administering this scheme had increased and there was concern that the grant from the Government for this purpose would be insufficient. A meeting had been arranged with the DCLG for those councils that had been affected by an increased take up of this scheme and Essex would be represented by Chelmsford Borough Council. Officers would report back on the outcome of this at the next meeting.

*During this discussion Councillor Cheetham declared a personal interest as a holder of a bus pass.*

In relation to the NATS proposals for airspace change, discussion had taken place at a recent meeting of the Airport Advisory Panel. Officers had drafted a letter to NATS pointing out that Uttlesford was affected by a disproportionate number of the proposed noise routes and pressing again for a meeting with NATS. At STAAP it had been suggested that publicity should be given again to the Council's efforts to keep residents informed. Officers would action this.

In relation to the ecotown proposal, officers were waiting for the Government to publish the viability and other technical assessments for North East Elsenham and the other sites across the country. It was likely that an extraordinary meeting would be required for members to formulate any response as the consultation closed on 6 March.

In relation to the Waste Strategy, Members received a briefing note on the Essex Waste Interauthority Agreement. Councillor C Dean asked that this document be put before the next meeting of the Waste Strategy Working Group. The deadline for approval of the agreement by the district councils had been put back to the end of March. However, it was hoped that an extraordinary meeting of the Committee could be arranged to consider the agreement prior to the full Council meeting on 19 February as agreement would need Council approval and might have an effect on the budget.

E47

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman updated Members on a number of matters of interest.

The kitchen bin 25 litre trial had started at Wendens Ambo and in parts of Saffron Walden and Dunmow. Negotiations were continuing with the County Council for an up lift in revenue funding for this trial.

An initial meeting of the Parking Partnership Committee had been held with Braintree and Colchester.

She had attended a recent meeting of EERA where the latest RSS review was looking at housing provision to 2031. The availability of infrastructure to support higher levels of growth had been a focus of concern. She observed that in the current East of England Plan Essex had been allocated 27.8% of housing numbers but only 11% of infrastructure monies.

Plans for the proposed Civic Amenity site at Great Dunmow had been submitted to the County Council as the planning authority for waste proposals and would shortly be with the District Council for comments.

E48

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE BUDGET 2009/10**

The Committee received the 2009/10 revenue budget. The budget reflected contractual commitments and included estimates for expenditure required to deliver existing levels of service. Income budgets had been based on realistic estimates of activity and the recently approved fees and charges. No specific growth or savings items had been identified.

There were some areas where final figures were as yet uncertain including the ECC contribution to refuse and recycling costs, the commitments under the parking partnership and the concessionary travel costs.

Essex County Council was likely to contribute £440,000 of revenue funding towards refuse collection to replace the recycling credit payments of £216,000. The funding would be subject to the District and ECC agreeing the terms and conditions of the Inter Authority Agreement. Officers reported that discussions with the County Council were also continuing in respect of capital funding and vehicle leasing arrangements.

In answer to a question from Councillor Howell, officers circulated a detailed breakdown of the Waste Management Budget which set out the cost of collecting waste and recycling.

Councillor A Dean questioned how the recent public consultation had influenced the priorities in this budget as food waste collection had come near the bottom of the list, but the kitchen caddie trial was still continuing. The Chairman reiterated that this was a trial scheme and at present there was no commitment for ongoing funding.

He also asked a number of questions in relation to the planning policy budget and hoped that sufficient staff resources would be available for the heavy workload of this department over the coming year. Officers agreed to provide him with a detailed break down of this budget outside of the meeting.

**RECOMMENDED** that the 2009/10 revenue budget as set out in appendix A to the report be approved and forwarded to the Finance and Administration Committee prior to final approval by the Council on 19 February 2009.

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME – 3<sup>RD</sup> REVISION**

The Interim Director of Development presented the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was the project plan for the production of the Uttlesford Local Development Framework. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> revision of the plan and had been revised to take into account recent Government changes to the LDF process and comments made by the Government Office and others in relation to the Core Strategy preferred options consultation.

The Committee considered the revised LDS and the accompanying programme for the preparation of the LDF documents. It was noted that additional technical work and consultation was required before the Core Strategy could be submitted for examination. There would need to be an additional consultation to test the implications for the Strategy arising from options for Stansted Airport. Some of the technical work required for this consultation was being done as part of the Council's case for the G2 Inquiry, so the Core Strategy timetable had been extended to allow for this work to be made available and in the revised LDS this consultation was scheduled for September/October 2009. This timetable would also allow for the technical work already underway to be included in the consultation.

The pre submission consultation was then expected in April/May 2010 to be submitted to the Secretary of State in November 2010. On the current timetable it was likely that the Core Strategy would be finally adopted by October 2011 with the Development Control DPD and site allocations being adopted in 2013.

Councillor C Dean asked at what stage there would be a decision on whether the site at Elsenham would be confirmed as the Council's preferred option. She also questioned the criteria that this site would be judged against. The Director said that there was a whole raft of information that would need to be brought together for a robust decision, including the results of the technical studies, the sustainability strategy and deliverability. He confirmed that the Council would need to consider the results of the pre submission consultation in spring 2010 before a decision of the preferred option was finally taken. The Director added that the whole LDF process was being made increasingly complicated by Government requirements for additional documents and studies.

Councillor A Dean said he was encouraged by the proposed programme but was uneasy at a number of caveats in the text and was concerned at whether there would be sufficient staff resources to meet this timetable.

It was noted that workshops were to be held on the various technical studies to ensure that members were aware of the issues involved. A timetable for these was currently being devised.

Councillor Cheetham moved the recommendation that the revised LDS be approved for submission to the Secretary of State. A number of members

had been concerned at the conduct of the previous public consultation and hoped that any future exercise would engage properly with the public. Councillor A Dean moved an amendment that a workshop be arranged to agree a process for future consultations. The amendment was agreed and it was

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Committee approve the revised LDS for submission to the Secretary of State.
- 2 A cross party workshop be held to agree a process for future consultations.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm

## STATEMENT BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

### **Mr Baker – Representing Henham PC and the joint steering group of parishes opposed to option 4**

Mr Baker spoke in relation to the preparation of the core strategy and reiterated the groups opposition to the decisions and processes of this committee that had led to the option 4 being the Council's preferred option and the following proposal for an ecotown at the same location.

He understood that the final decision was subject to technical appraisals to determine the suitability of large scale development at Elsenham. He said that the Steering Group had commissioned independent Consultants to comment on the proposal and they had confirmed it was fundamentally flawed for a number of reasons

- The road system was inadequate for a large development.
- The rail system was inadequate
- The development would be too small for employment
- The development would not be large enough to support services such as a school and a supermarkets
- The site would be on green agricultural land/ not brownfield.
- It would lead to the cohesion of Elsenham and Henham.
- It was a water stressed location.

He hoped that the Council's conclusions would concur with the unbiased experts that the proposal were flawed and this was a mis-conceived plan in the wrong location.