

Committee: Environment committee

Agenda Item

Date: 18 January 2011

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Title: Lead Officer's Report

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Summary

1. This report updates Members on matters that are not included elsewhere on the agenda

Local Development Framework Core Strategy - Update on the emerging housing allocation for inclusion in the LDF

2. At its meeting in September 2010, the Committee resolved that a review of the scale of growth appropriate for the district be undertaken and subsequently the location of that growth. The opportunity to review the housing allocation that will feature in the Local Development Framework (LDF) is as a consequence of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which previously set the allocation, being proposed for revocation by the new government when the recently published Localism Bill becomes legislation.
3. The previous allocation had been a minimum provision of 8,000 homes between 2001 and 2021 in the district and to plan for a continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of the adoption of the LDF Core Strategy. This would necessitate an annual building rate of some 430 units/year. The Council did not agree with the housing target. It was too high to enable such growth to be accommodated in a sustainable manner. The Council had therefore lobbied Ministers to that effect but failed in its attempt to secure a lower target.
4. The Council now has the task of identifying a housing growth figure that is appropriate for the district, and how that growth should be distributed. The LDF Working Group is currently considering the amount of growth that would be appropriate having regard to the fact that the outcome will need to satisfy the inspector at the inquiry into the Core Strategy that it is 'sound'. This necessitates it justifying that
 - it is founded on a robust and credible evidence base; and
 - the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives.
5. The Localism Bill is expected to lead to some important changes to the planning system, but nevertheless it is increasingly clear that it is in the council's interest to press ahead with developing its proposals by a fair and proper process so that it can maintain an up to date development plan.

6. Members of the Working Group considered two basic alternative approaches to identifying options for growth that might reasonably be considered to be justifiable. These involved looking to accommodate either:-
 - the amount of private housing that would be necessary to facilitate the delivery of sufficient affordable housing to meet local need (under a range of scenarios as to the amount of social rented housing); or
 - the Government's household projections for the district.
7. The projection-based figure for household growth was emerging as the proposed approach on the basis that it was both justifiable and likely to be acceptable in terms of the scale and associated rate of annual building required.
8. However, in November 2010, the Government issued updated household projections. The previous ones that had been considered by the Working Group had been 2006-based but the new data was 2008-based and featured a marked increase in the projected number of households. The number was approximately mid-way between the RSS allocation and the 2006-based household projection.
9. Officers are currently exploring the extent to which the relatively high new projections are a consequence of the assumptions about migration trends. Officers are examining what level of housing would be required as a consequence of birth, death and household formation rate trends if no provision is made for in migration.
10. Data for the period to 2027 (15 years from the planned date of adoption of the Core Strategy) has now been obtained from ONS, and work is in hand to produce a further report on the implications of basing a strategy using alternative assumptions to a trend based approach to migration.

Section 106 obligations

11. The Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 December recommended that the relevant policy committees review the financial contributions collected through planning obligations. The objective of the recommendation was to enable policy committees to assure themselves that the funds would be used within any specified time limits for the intended purposes. The funds relevant to this committee are contributions related to ongoing maintenance of open space in the main. The full table of contributions is appended. The Committee also requested that the question of whether to implement a community infrastructure levy be considered in taking forward the core strategy.

Response to New Homes Bonus consultation.

12. The Council's response was submitted to DCLG immediately after Christmas and has been acknowledged. DCLG is currently working its way through the large number of response it has received. The response has been circulated to all members by e mail.

Virement of capital spend from waste and recycling to street cleansing

13. The Council had an urgent requirement to purchase a safety trailer to protect the litter picking crew when operating on main routes. The purchase was funded by a virement from provision in the capital programme for vehicles for the waste and recycling service. The Chairman agreed to this virement because the matter could not wait until this meeting. An accident involving local authority staff had demonstrated the risks to which such staff are exposed if additional protection in the form of a safety trailer is not provided.

Grounds Maintenance contract

14. Tenders were due on 11 January. They will then need to be subject of detailed appraisal by officers before the contractor is appointed. The Committee will be advised of the outcome in due course.

Parking Partnership arrangements

15. The County Council is proposing changes to the partnership arrangements for enforcement of on street parking controls. Under new arrangements being developed the county council would commission services from two consortia of district councils covering the county, one (including Uttlesford) hosted by Colchester Parking Partnership and one by Chelmsford. As reported in the 2011/12 budget report on this agenda, these would come into operation 1 April. New partnership agreements will be brought to the Council for endorsement when they are available.

Joint waste and recycling service with Braintree

16. The final report of the consultants is awaited but it is still expected to advise that both councils are able to make savings independently, and the scale of those savings is not subject to establishing a joint service. There remains, however, potential for joint depots. The final report will be presented to a joint member steering group meeting, following which a report will be made to the Waste Project Working Group.

Background Papers

17. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Appendix to Lead Officer's Report

Section 106 contributions

The sum of capital infrastructure contributions received by the Council but not expended is as follows:

Sum	Source	Purpose	Comments
£2,673,253.59	Stansted Airport 2003 Agreement. Funding received in 2004/5.	Provision of affordable housing through registered social landlords within Uttlesford, Harlow, and parts of East Hertfordshire and Braintree districts.	Funding underpinning the Stansted Area Housing Partnership. No money has been drawn down since receipt in 2004/5 because the SAHP has been able to attract other funding from the Housing Corporation and DCLG Growth Area Funding. The original sum (£2.2m) has accrued interest. Although delegation arrangements were put in place recently to make it easier for partner authorities to draw down funds for schemes in their areas, no requests have been received. No timescale is specified in the obligation for the expenditure of the sum.
£430,419.18	Forest Hall Park (Rochford Nurseries), Birchanger and Stansted	Community facilities payments	First of two index-linked instalments by Taylor Wimpey towards indoor sports facilities or other leisure recreational and / or community facilities in the District arising out of or reasonably related to the needs of Forest Hall Park residents. Any money that is unspent and uncommitted ten years after the second instalment is paid is required to be returned to the developer.
£203, 239.08	Priors Green, Takeley and	Community Facilities	Sum is allocated to the specific purposes stated in

	<p>Little Canfield £13,272 received 2008 £88,173.08 received 2008 £115,066 received 2010</p>	<p>Enhancement sum (£146 per unit) and Community Facilities Equipment sum (£1,750 per unit). UDC to place community facilities sum in interest a/c and return unexpended sum on 10th anniversary of receipt from developers.</p>	<p>the Agreement</p>
£150,000	<p>Charles Church Bellrope Meadows, Thaxted development. Funding received in 2007/8.</p>	<p>Off site provision of affordable housing within ten years of date of the agreement</p>	<p>This sum had been intended to support the funding of the homeless hostel, Manor Road, Stansted, but alternative arrangements involving the conversion of existing stock in Molehill Green were funded from the HRA. This sum is now earmarked for the redevelopment of Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding.</p>
£106,446.13	<p>Woodlands Park, Great Dunmow £116,363.75 received 2008/9 and £20,825 received 2009/10 £30,742.62 drawn down 2009/10</p>	<p>Landscape commuted sum Sum drawn down to pay for equipping of playground</p>	<p>Sum is to pay for landscape maintenance</p>
£41,472	<p>Felsted School Ingrams, Felsted Agreement to provide</p>	<p>Off site affordable housing provision to be expended within 5 years of first occupation</p>	<p>This sum is now earmarked for the redevelopment of Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding.</p>

	affordable housing contribution		
£32,865	Bell College Saffron Walden (Crabtrees, Countryside Properties' development)		Sum for remedial works to the playing fields in lieu of obligation to provide pitches to a suitable standard
£19,887	Flitch Green	£9518.16 and £7000 received in 2007/8 for community facilities £2,899.20 drawn down in 2008/9 £4,100.80 drawn down in 2009/10 £10,368.97 received in 2010	Sum is allocated to the specific purposes in the agreement
£18,149	Dunmow Eastern sector		Sum represents outstanding balance after £38,000 contribution made to heart of Dunmow project