

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 17 MARCH 2011 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor S Barker – Chairman.
Councillors H J Asker, C A Cant, J E Davey, C D Down, C M Dean, E J Hicks, C C Smith and A M Wattebot.

Also present: Councillor A J Ketteridge.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), W Cockerell (Principal Environmental Health Officer) R Harborough (Director of Public Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal), A Webb (Director of Corporate Services), M Wilson (Climate Change Strategy Officer) and N Wittman (ICT Manager).

E43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K R Artus, R H Chamberlain, J F Cheetham, E J Godwin, S J Howell and A C Yarwood.

Councillor Barker declared a personal interest as a member of Essex County Council, and in item 7 as a subscriber to the Buzcom radio broadband service.

Councillor Cant declared a personal interest in item 9, Uttlesford Core Strategy review of housing numbers, as Chairman of the Save Boxted Wood Committee.

E44 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to an amendment to minute E40, in relation to Councillor Wattebot's interest, her neighbour was the site owner and not the objector as stated in the minute.

E45 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute E38 – 2011/12 Fees and Charges

Officers had been asked to investigate whether free parking for disabled vehicles was standard practice in other districts. This information would be fed into the ongoing parking review. In respect of responsibility for street naming and numbering, although it was legally possible for this to be undertaken at parish level, it was a complex process using a number of council systems and further thought would need to be given to the feasibility of devolving this responsibility.

ii) Minute E40 - Minerals development document: preferred approach

Councillor Cant requested a copy of an email that she had become aware of after the last meeting, which had mentioned possible health risks associated with gravel extraction. The Chairman said that she would make contact with the relevant cabinet member at the County Council and ensure that a copy was forwarded to Councillors Cant and Down.

E46

CHAIRMAN'S ITEMS

The Chairman said that since the last meeting she had attended meetings and events on a number of issues including the Parking Partnership, air quality, flood management, the waste agreement and broadband provision.

The following questions had been put by Councillor C M Dean under procedure rule 8.3.

- i) Given that the first tenet of the Council's waste hierarchy is reduction, what plans does the Council have to further reduce the total waste arisings?
- ii) What proportion of the Council's housing stock has cavity and loft insulation, and what plans are there to make all council owned properties as energy efficient as possible?

Councillor C Dean said that she had put forward this question because although Uttlesford had very good recycling figures, the council did not appear to have a coherent policy for waste reduction and she would like to encourage a suitable policy to be produced.

Answers were provided by the Chairman and are set out in the appendix to these minutes

E47

AIR QUALITY REVIEW 2010

The Principal Environmental Health Officer reported the results of air quality monitoring around the district during 2010. It was noted that in Saffron Walden an additional site of poor air quality had been identified. It was intended that rather than designating an additional air quality management area it would be beneficial to revoke the existing AQM sites in Saffron Walden and replace them with an enlarged single AQMA. It was intended that air quality assessments would be required for planning applications which had the potential to adversely influence air quality within this wider area. If developments were approved contributions would be sought from developers and the Action Plan would provide the policy basis for seeking contributions.

There was some concern about the perception of this wider designation on residents in the area. However, the general view was that this would be

seen as positive step in tackling the problem and could result in initiatives to deal with congestion in the town.

RESOLVED that the Council consults on revoking the existing AQMAs within Saffron Walden and replace them with a single larger AQMA which incorporates all areas of poorer air quality within the town.

E48 **LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT**

During the course of the discussion Councillor C Dean declared a personal interest as a recipient of the HEEP scheme

The Director of Public Services presented his report as Lead Officer, updating the Committee on matters arising on the previous minutes, the new Homes Bonus, Economic Development Skills and Learning, and the Integrated County Strategy.

Mark Wilson, the Climate Change Manager, attended the meeting for this item and outlined a range of activities related to the Council's Natural Resource Management Strategy and support for Uttlesford Futures. Members asked a number of questions about the various initiatives. Councillor C Dean questioned the progress of the initiative to train local people to disseminate relevant information in the community and was advised that this was being progressed through the CAB.

Mark Wilson informed the committee about a possible new project, which in partnership with Eon would place PV panels on some council properties. The roof space would be leased to Eon thus providing the council with some income and tenants would benefit from a reduction in energy bills. This project was still at an early stage but members endorsed this initiative.

Members also asked for consideration to be given to producing a policy for the use of energy efficiency measures on listed building properties.

E49 **NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP**

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal reminded the committee that in 2004 on-street parking had been decriminalised and had become the responsibility of the County Council. This had been devolved to districts and boroughs with the agreement that the service should be self financing. Uttlesford had operated the service in partnership with Colchester and Braintree. However, for each year of operation there had been a deficit and this had been met by ECC. Notice had now been given that from 31 March 2011 the service would be transferred back to ECC.

ECC was now looking to provide the service in a different way by setting up two partnerships covering the north and the south of the District, which would each operate through a joint committee. Uttlesford would be in the

north partnership with Colchester as the lead authority and comprise Braintree, Epping Forest, Harlow and Tendering Districts. There was no obligation to join but there would be benefits such as input into various policies including signs and lines, parking permits, charging and scrutiny arrangements. Possible disadvantages could be a potential financial liability (as the ECC subsidy would cease after 2 years). However there would be the option to withdraw from the scheme after giving 12 months notice.

The new arrangements would come into operation from 1 April for on-street parking. The arrangements for off-street parking would need to be confirmed at Full Council and a full report together with the agreement would be presented to the meeting on 12 April. The Colchester and Braintree Parking Partnership would have its final meeting in June. At the present time it was envisaged that the partnership would at worst break even.

The Committee agreed that, in principle, it would be beneficial for the Council to join the new North Area Partnership.

E50

RADIO BROADBAND

The Committee considered a proposal to award a grant to Buzcom Ltd to enable it to provide a radio broadband service in the District. It was noted that many areas of the district currently had either slow or no broadband coverage with the only real alternative being satellite broadband which was expensive and relatively slow. Advancement in technology meant that radio broadband was now a viable option for hard to reach areas.

The potential for this project had initially been discussed by the Economic Development, Skills and Learning Working Group. The worked up proposal was for the Council to enter into a partnership with Buzcom by way of a grant of £30,000 with the monies payable based on a mix of milestones and invoices. The contract would be between the company and the customers, there would be no contractual arrangements with UDC. Members noted the detailed operation of the scheme and in particular that a 3 further transmitters would be required on two water towers and one on the Police tower at High Garrett to enable the scheme to cover the whole of the district.

As the money would be given as a grant there was no requirement for repayment but the Council would be given free access to the service which would enable it to save money by cancelling existing broadband contracts and a further role out of remote working. It also intended to work in partnership with Buzcom to provide free internet access to all residents within the Council's sheltered units.

Members asked about the likely take up and were informed that a similar scheme that was being rolled out in the Malden district was proving successful. A significant publicity and advertising programme was planned. The Director of Corporate Services acknowledged that this was a fledgling business but the grant was phased in such a way as to monitor the progress

of the project. Councillor Ketteridge said he was confident that this scheme could provide positive advantages to the residents of Uttlesford.

RESOLVED that

- 1 A grant of £30,000 be given to Buzcom to deliver a radio broadband service for residents of the district. £24,000 will be funded from the 2009/10 Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI) money which is held in the Business Development Reserve and £6,000 from the Change Management Reserve, to enable the provision of two transmitters in the north of the district and the use of the High Garrett Police Tower. The grant to be payable in instalments based around an agreed plan of invoices and milestones.
- 2 The Environment Working Group of Uttlesford Futures is asked to monitor the environmental impact, if any, of the introduction of radio broadband.
- 3 Savings from the proposed Uttlesford District Council use of the service would be used to replenish the Change Management Reserve (£6,000) first and then the LABGI fund (£24,000).

E51 LDF WORKING GROUP MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the LDF Working Group on 28 February 2011.

E52 UTTLESFORD CORE STRATEGY – REVIEW OF HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

The Director of Public Services presented a report on the review of housing numbers following the decision at the meeting in September for members to review the scale of housing growth appropriate for Uttlesford subsequent to the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the housing target figures. Following the meeting a range of possible options had been put forward and discussed at the LDF Working Group. The report before members put forward an option that was based on natural growth and the need to provide affordable housing for social rent. The approach was explained in the report and would require additional new sites to be identified for 2,500 homes which would equate to an annual building rate of 295. This would meet identified housing need, reduce the amount of growth that would have resulted from the RSS, produce a figure to satisfy the inspector that the strategy was sound and have regard to the implications of the new affordable housing regime.

Councillor Cant asked whether the expected National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance would have implications for the committee's

decision. In reply she was informed that after the decision was taken today any issues could be assessed in considering the response to the consultation. Councillor Dean questioned whether the proposed lower figure would meet future demand for in-migration and whether it might jeopardise the affordability of housing in the district.

RESOLVED that the Committee approve the housing numbers set out above as a basis for further consultation.

E53 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Committee received a copy of the 4th revision of the Local Development Scheme which was the project plan for the preparation of the documents that would make up the Local Development Framework. This took account of the changes that had been made since the last approved plan in January 2009. The next key stage was the consultation on the revised housing numbers and strategy options from October 2011 to November 2011. The Chairman asked, if possible, for this stage to commence a few weeks earlier.

Councillor Dean suggested that there should be early dialogue with parish councils about whether growth could be accommodated in their areas.

RESOLVED that the Committee approve the revised Local Development Scheme.

E54 WEST ESSEX LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN

The Committee considered a report advising on the development of a Local Investment Plan for West Essex which had been produced in conjunction with Epping Forest and Harlow District Councils. The intention was to provide a framework for future partnership working and the investment required in the area. The latest draft had been circulated to be adopted by the 3 council's although at this time it had been difficult to set out a vision for West Essex when each local authority was thinking of its own development objectives. However the document did characterise Harlow as the sub-regional centre of the area.

The Plan had identified a number of investment priorities in the short, medium and long term. Affordable housing in Uttlesford was a category 1 priority across all three timeframes; maintaining the decent homes standard was a priority 1 programme in the longer term; and Uttlesford Gypsy and Traveller site provision would be a priority 2 project for the medium term. Once the plan was adopted the three authorities would continue to work together to take forward the priorities and secure funding to develop these projects.

RECOMMENDED that the Local Investment Plan be adopted by Full Council.

E55

HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

It was reported that Essex County Council had replaced the section of the Local Transport Plan which its Highways team used to comment on planning applications. These new policies needed to be adopted by this council to enable officers to use them to assess and make decisions on planning applications.

It was requested that a copy of the relevant document be circulated to the committee members. In order to be aware of the policies the Development Control Committee would be holding a workshop on this issue prior to the next meeting.

Councillor Wattebot was concerned about the tendency for cul-de-sac developments in many rural villages. She was advised that issue was addressed in the Design Guide Urban Place supplements that had already been adopted as guidance.

RESOLVED that Essex County Council's "Highways Development Management Policies" February 2011 document be used as Council approved planning guidance

E56

TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

The Committee considered a report on the possibility of setting up a transport users group. It considered the benefits and made suggestions of how it might operate within the framework of the Uttlesford Transport Forum.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Committee agree in principle to support the setting up of a transport users' group, subject to
 - i) An initial meeting being held to gauge the level of public support for the group, consider what it could deal with, when and where it should meet, and who could best represent the group on the UTF.
 - ii) The initial meeting taking place as soon as possible after the May elections.
 - iii) Endorsement of the establishment of a user group either at the initial meeting or by other representations.
- 2 Officer support and other enabling activity be provided to the user group within the agreed budget for FY2011/12

E57

APPOINTMENT OF CONTRACTOR

The Committee was informed that currently there was a buoyant market for recyclable materials and there was an opportunity for the council to sell its co-mingled recyclables at an attractive rate. A company had been identified

that had up to date knowledge of the current market and established contacts with recycling companies, that could negotiate a contract on behalf of the Council. The results of the negotiations would be reported to members.

RESOLVED that White Young Green be appointed to procure a contract on the Council's behalf with a materials recycling facility to buy our recyclable materials.

E58

LAST MEETING

This was the last meeting before the District Council elections and the last meeting of the Environment Committee before the council moved to the new executive structure. The Leader thanked the Chairman for her sterling work over the last 4 years and in reply she thanked members of the committee for their hard work and support.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.

RESPONSE TO QUESTION UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE 8.3

Given that the first tenet of the Council's waste hierarchy is reduction, what plans does the Council have to further reduce the total waste arisings?

The Council plans to reduce waste arisings through the following range of initiatives:

1. The Council is a member of the Essex Waste Prevention Partnership (led by Essex County Council)
2. The Council has promoted Love Food Hate Waste (national food waste reduction campaign) locally:
3. Love Food Hate Waste workshop held in conjunction with Sustainable Uttlesford event on 19th February 2011
4. Love Food Hate Waste promotional materials provided to Walden Local Food stand (market stall promoting local food)
5. Promotion of Home Composting locally:
6. Will be hosting compost give away in Spring and will co-promote home composting and discounted home compost bins available through a partnership with Essex County Council
7. Ongoing support of the Saffron Walden Cloth Nappy Network through provision of leaflets, flyers and posters
8. Ongoing support of the Essex County Council Cloth Nappy scheme through details provided on council website, booklets and advice available on contact with recycling team

What proportion of the Council's housing stock has cavity and loft insulation, and what plans are there to make all council owned properties as energy efficient as possible?

1. Cavity Wall Insulation – Our records show we have 2415 properties with cavity wall insulation (over 80% of the total stock). There are in addition a limited number of properties of cavity wall construction to which surveyors were not able to gain access.
2. All the council stock has loft insulation.

Improvement plans:

3. Solid Walled properties – 452 properties are solid wall construction of either “Facing brick” and “Partial render” or “Fully rendered”. We have commenced a programme of applying insulated render to the most vulnerable properties. In 2011/12 we have identified 26 properties for treatment and tenders are being sought now. This work attracts grant assistance of about £1200 per property. We have allocated £90,000 in the capital programme to carry out this work.
4. High efficient Gas boilers SEDBUK A rated – All gas boilers are upgraded to this standard when the existing boiler fails or during the Planned Programme. Last year we replaced 177 gas boilers, and installed 3 air source heat pumps. Two of the properties fitted with an ASHP had defective oil fired boilers, and the third had no heating at all. We have ring-fenced £25,000 on an ongoing yearly basis to replace oil boilers with air source heat pumps, as part of our carbon emissions reduction plans.

5. We intend to work with residents on energy efficiency through behavioural change, including the provision of energy saving devices in the home. The Housing Newsletter will feature initiatives to address fuel poverty and provide information to assist residents in keeping their properties well insulated. When a property in the Council's housing stock is rewired, or becomes void at a change of tenant, low energy light fittings are installed.