

Committee: ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: 17 March 2011

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Title: LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT

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Item for decision

Situation

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

Matters arising

2. A revised specification for remedial works to the multi use games area at Crabtrees, Saffron Walden has been submitted to Countryside Properties. Early implementation of these works would enable the transfer of the facility and it to be made available for use.
3. The Head of Street Services will explain the street cleansing arrangements to a meeting of the waste project steering group that is being organised shortly. This will include the review of street cleansing that has been undertaken.
4. The response submitted by the West Anglia Routes Group to National Express East Anglia on its proposed timetable changes included the points made by the committee.

New Homes Bonus

5. The New Homes Bonus was reported to the Council meeting on 24 February. The Government has said that it "addresses the disincentive within the local government finance system for local areas to welcome growth. Until now, increased housing in communities has meant increased strain on public services and reduced amenities. The New Homes Bonus will remove this disincentive by providing local authorities with the means to mitigate the strain the increased population causes. In addition, in doing so the New Homes Bonus should help engender a more positive attitude to growth, and create an environment in which new housing is more readily accepted.
6. The New Homes Bonus grant still remains a provisional allocation, but it is not expected that this Council's confirmed allocation for 2011/12 will differ from the £714,365 already notified by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The deadline for representations about the provisional amount was 10 March. The Government has advised that the grant is likely to be paid shortly after final allocations are announced in April. Payments are being made through Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 as an unringfenced grant. It has stated "Local authorities and their communities will have the freedom to spend New Homes Bonus revenues according to local

wishes - for example, improving play areas, transport improvements, town centre regeneration, Council Tax discounts etc.”

7. The Government has also stated that New Homes Bonus is intended to be permanent feature of the Local Government Finance System. It has set aside almost £1billion over the Spending Review period and says the scheme is fully funded in Year 1. £250m per annum has been set aside for the following three years of the Spending Review Period. It is clear that funding beyond those levels would come from formula grant. It is apparent however that even in Year 1 the provisional allocations exceed £1billion in total, and £250m a year for the rest of the CSR period will not cover the continuing payments for 2009/10 additions to the council tax base. There will be further payments due in respect of the 2010/11 additions in Year 2 and thereafter. In future years, the government says that additional funding for the scheme will be allocated from the Spending Review resources for Local Government.

Economic Development Skills and Learning

8. Since 2007, the Council's policy has been that economic initiatives should be progressed through Uttlesford Futures, which has a working group with representatives from Business Link, Job Centres Plus, Newport Business Association, Thaxted Adult Learning Centre, Thremhall Business Park, the Small Business Federation and the council attending. This committee remains responsible for the Council's support for economic development and its budget provision for this activity from Government grant received under the former Local Authority Business Grant Initiative in 2009/10 and held as an earmarked reserve. The Chief Executive has delegated authority to allocate this funding in consultation with the chairman of this committee and other relevant committee chairmen. The committee also is responsible for the staff budget which provides the resource to support the working group. To date, the Chief Executive has allocated funding to initiative a) below.
9. The Uttlesford Futures Economic Development, Skills and Learning working group is currently pursuing a number of initiatives:
 - a) Provision of an outreach facility of Braintree based Business Development Services to provide a face to face business advice from the council's Saffron Walden offices.
 - b) Procurement of a feasibility study into establishing a woodfuel supply and distribution business to support the submission of a bid for rural development funding from an EU funded initiative.
 - c) A programme of meetings and events for local businesses to promote lower carbon initiatives, encourage enterprise, support local procurement, attract and facilitate inward investment, encourage skills development and influence economic and spatial planning.
 - d) Support for the West Essex Alliance of West Essex District Councils and businesses within the Essex, Kent and East Sussex LEP.

- e) Promotion of local economy initiatives eg loyalty cards, and support for rural broadband, which is subject of a separate report on this agenda.

Integrated County Strategy

10. The Essex Chief Executives Association has been leading the development of an Integrated County Strategy. Following a meeting of the Leaders of the Essex local authorities, all Essex authorities have been asked to endorse the Strategy. The Strategy aims to identify those economic investments that would be transformational and give the greatest rate, particularly in the current economic growth climate and limited public sector funds. Discussions have been progressed through an economic summit held last February between local authority representatives and Essex's economic partnerships. Further discussion has been held at West Essex level and at the other Essex groupings. It has taken place in parallel and been informed by the work on the Joint Local Investment Plan for the HCA which is subject of a separate report elsewhere on this agenda. The ICS has three strategic themes: low carbon technology, key towns and Thames Gateway South Essex.
11. The broad vision for West Essex is: "To create a sustainable and employment led major economic growth point based on the renaissance, revitalisation and transformation of Harlow as a leading regional centre, served by a world class international airport at Stansted and improved transport links, and where there is a pattern of vibrant market towns and villages set within attractive undeveloped countryside containing high quality environmental assets, heritage and prosperous rural enterprises. Seven transformational changes are listed to deliver this broad vision:
- major renaissance of Harlow;
 - major development and regeneration of Harlow town centre;
 - choice and diversity in housing stock in Harlow;
 - raise employment rates and labour force qualifications in Harlow;
 - expand and diversify Harlow's local employment base; upgrade Harlow's transport and other infrastructure; and
 - provision of affordable housing within Epping Forest and Uttlesford districts.
12. It is suggested that the committee note the process and the milestone reached in this work so that engagement with business community in West Essex can proceed through the West Essex Alliance and with other key audiences such as Essex Members of Parliament.

Climate Change

13. Since September 2010, a service level agreement has been in place with Braintree District Council. Under the agreement, its Climate Change Manager, Mark Wilson, has been supporting a range of activity related to the council's

Natural Resources Management Strategy and support for Uttlesford Futures.
A detailed report is set out below.

Progress on the climate change SLA between Uttlesford and Braintree DC.

14. The SLA sets out the council's requirements as follows:

15. Delivery of National Performance Indicators:

NI 185 (& NI194)

Annual monitoring of existing and new projects, energy data collection for both buildings and transport. Submission of spreadsheet to DEFRA. (required July 2011)

NI 186

Develop a strategy for district wide initiatives, and new public private partnerships. Monitor and measure progress of the various projects. Manage and promote HEEP scheme. Represent UDC at NI 186 officer group meetings. Prepare annual submission for DEFRA (required July 2011).

NI 187

Working in partnership with energy companies target properties with fuel poverty and monitor their success. Carry out and submit annual fuel poverty survey to DEFRA using CAN East. (required March 2011)

NI 188

Seek to achieve Level 3 by March 2011. Ensure continuity of UDC's organisation adaptation measures to climate change. Assess and monitor proposed measures, identify continued improvement. Engagement with LSP Uttlesford Futures to address climate change adaptation across the district. Represent UDC at NI 188 officer group meetings. Submit report to DEFRA (required May 2011)

The local authority National Performance Indicator set has been considerably scaled back. This includes the 5 indicators that link to energy efficiency and carbon reduction. The only indicator mentioned so far that will be re-instated in April 2011 is NI185 *Carbon reduction in the Councils estate and operations*. This ties directly into the Council's ongoing work on carbon reduction within the organisation under the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme.

16. Carbon Management

During 2010 there has been a gap in the implementation of carbon reduction projects between Jake Roos leaving in December 2009 and Appleyards starting their carbon reduction audit in September 2010. The authority has however still seen carbon reduction during 2010. The closure of the Dunmow offices has seen an annual carbon saving for the Council of 70 tonnes. The Green Driver Training programme will also see transport related carbon savings in this financial year.

17. Planning support role

Under the agreement planning applications have been reviewed with recommendations as to appropriate sustainability conditions on development. The conditions are also being reassessed to bring them up to date and make them more user friendly for both planning officers and planning applicants.

18. Advise developers on planning requirements (ongoing): There is regular liaison with developers and agents on sustainability standards, provision of advice to residents on renewable technologies and planning requirements. An advice page has been produced and published on the Uttlesford website.
19. Work with planners on the LDF core strategy environmental policies (up to 2012) has not yet started.
20. Promote Code for Sustainable Homes level 4, produce guidance (30 June 2011): Discussion are currently being held with house builders, briefing them on the new requirement that UDC will bring in.
21. Lobby national Government on the issue of consequential improvement (ongoing). Government did not adopt this approach to the extension of properties. Uttlesford is however continuing with its widely supported planning condition and we are encouraging take-up by other local authorities.

22. Delivery of DEC's (Display Energy Certificates)

Set up and manage DEC's for: Saffron Walden Council offices, leisure centres at Dunmow, Stansted, Saffron Walden (threshold to be reduced—additional public buildings may need DEC's in following year). (October 2010): This year's DEC's and advisory reports have been completed, on public display and available for inspection. Both the Council Offices and the Museum are more energy efficient than typical equivalent buildings. The energy rating in the Council Offices is the same as last year, but energy consumption has increased in the Museum. This may be due in part to revisions to the DEC calculation process on energy consumption. These DEC's will shortly be put on the Council's website.

23. We have also had to respond to the new European regulation for air conditioning units, requiring a performance report to be published by the Council. This work will be carried out shortly.

24. Utilities

Set up and manage contract with external energy bureau to monitor/manage UDC's gas, electric and water: This has been set up with a company appointed by the council, Smith Bellerby. The contract is managed by the Head of Housing Services. The Council is now in a position where it is managing its utility bills and able to access the best available market forecasts in planning its future budgets for energy provision.

25. Offer advice to Procurement Officer on utility procurement: This can be delivered within the Smith Bellerby contract, and is not an issue until mid 2012 when the contract is up for renewal.

26. LA21 Group and Uttlesford Futures

Support the activities of the groups and attend meetings (ongoing). Provide lead officer role for the Environment Uttlesford Partnership group: The Climate Change Manager has provided 6 months of support to the LSP Environment Group, the Sustainable Uttlesford group and the Sustainable Homes Network. Support has been in the form of lead officer attendance at meetings, advising on actions, identifying resources to deliver actions, helping deliver actions, developing new actions based on Government position, providing written feedback to the Uttlesford Futures board, attending events and providing specialist advice.

27. Delivery of Natural Resource Management Strategy

Monitor and report progress of delivery of action plan projects (ongoing): This is established.

Expand carbon management and implementation plan to specifically include water use (invite Anglian Water to carry out water audits for all UDC sites) (30 September 2010): The water audits have been completed, and an analysis is being conducted of which recommended measures to implement. Domestic water efficiency information has been added to the UDC website. Further information on rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling will be included. The Council has secured a large delivery of water saving devices from E-on which are offered to residents in the district. Veolia will also be approached for similar devices.

28. Support ICT Manager to implement Green ICT strategy (31 Mar 2011): The ICT Green Strategy is approved and its progress is tied to the Council's new ICT Strategy 2010-15. The key improvement has been the installation of virtual servers, reducing the electricity consumption of the server room. An update on progress through 2010 from ICT team is to be added.
29. Support Fleet Manager to review and produce report on vehicle fleet migration to alternative fuels (31 Mar 2011): This action has not yet started.
30. Encourage Leisure Connection Ltd to participate in the carbon reduction programme (31 August 2010): The leisure centres were not included in the Council's Carbon Management Programme. Although the standard Carbon Trust carbon management programme is not in place, the individual leisure centres are installing energy saving measures, i.e. low energy lighting and VSD's, with the support of the Climate Change Manager. The centres have also agreed to have water efficiency audits carried out for the sites to identify water saving measures.

31. Assistance has been offered to Leisure Connection in producing green travel plans for the three Uttlesford leisure sites. Once completed the new UDC Green Travel Plan will be used as a template for them. While Leisure Connection staff are not employed by the council, they are providing an external service on behalf of UDC and a travel plan will ensure that transport carbon issues are addressed in delivery of that service.
32. Encourage staff awareness and engagement in management of energy; generate regular updates on performance (ongoing): This has not progressed because future performance updates will be linked into both the energy billing information provided by Smith Bellerby and the identified energy saving improvement work from Appleyards.
33. Advise on the Heritage Quest Centre development in exceeding sustainability requirements (31 Dec 2010): This scheme was deferred from the 2010/11 capital programme.
34. Monitor strategy for UDC buildings with respect to climate change: The impacts from climate change are being picked up under NI188. The production of a climate change impact risk assessment for Council estate and operations is being addressed and is in draft form at present
35. Seek to implement staff green travel plan (ongoing): Staff travel plan survey is drafted; this will go out to staff in April. Meetings have been held with the ECC Highways Green Travel Plan Team for advice on plan content. The new travel plan is in early draft form, and is waiting for input from staff survey.
36. Produce plan to address fuel poverty and CO2 reduction in Council housing stock (consider Resource Energy East and Greenfields partnership project) (ongoing): A dedicated plan has not been put forward because external partner resources have been extensively reduced over the last 6 months. New initiatives have however become available recently but there is uncertainty over whether a new fuel poverty national indicator is to be introduced in 2011. In place of a plan, a series of measures have been delivered, or are in progress, to address the objectives:
 - A new section on energy efficiency has been completed in tenant handbook.
 - Work has started on a behavioural change guide for tenants with Greenfields RSL which will be extended to Uttlesford tenants.
 - A Solar PV panel on housing stock project is at discussion stage with installers. This is designed to benefit residents from reduced electricity bills. E-on has offered to extend this project to include smart energy meters to support tenants in understanding and controlling their energy use.
 - We have carried out tender process to secure low cost external cladding for the solid wall properties within Council's stock that require urgent improvement for the tenants.

- Energy saving devices, secured at nil cost to the Council from E-on, are being distributed to tenants to help reduce their energy costs, carbon emissions and fuel poverty.

37. Advise tenants on energy efficiency (extend BDC and Greenfields tenants advice pack to UDC) (ongoing): see above

38. Support HEEP scheme (attend meetings, seek funding, etc) (31 Mar 2011): This work is ongoing, the role includes validating loan and grant claims, resolving issues for applicants and promoting the scheme across the district, including the Council magazine, website, at events, phonecalls and mail outs.

39. HEEP update

Since June 2009 in Uttlesford District we have seen 477 loft and cavity wall insulation installations, 27 heating installations and 9 renewable energy installations, a total of £209,000 of external funding spent in support of local residents, saving over £9500 tonnes of carbon.

40. Seek to develop the green doctor home visit scheme (consider REE energy efficiency advice door knocking scheme/or EST) (31 Mar 2011): This initiative has struggled due to loss of funding and loss of external partners. The intention now is to work with the CAB and parish councils, in accordance with the 'big society' volunteer approach.

41. Work with Hastoe Housing Assoc on Passivhaus scheme (31 Mar 2011): The scheme will be promoted to developers on completion, through the Council website, agent forums and the Sustainable Homes Network.

42. Provide support role on internal waste recycling (ongoing): A push in the spring is planned with staff on carbon saving through recycling.

43. Run community engagement programme on environmental impact and reducing fuel poverty (ongoing): This is being delivered in partnership with the Sustainable Homes Network. In November 2010 events were run in Uttlesford libraries to engage with the public, in partnership with EST before they ceased operating.

44. Support Uttlesford Futures in relation to sustainable development (ongoing): Technical officer support has been provided to the Uttlesford Futures Environmental Group, Sustainable Uttlesford and the Sustainable Homes Network. Part of the role has been assisting the group in producing a new action plan for raising the profile of carbon reduction and climate change. Other work includes attending events providing advice to the public on domestic energy efficiency and renewable energy installations.

45. Provide local business support on climate change adaptation and carbon reduction: A guide is in production by the Printroom. It will be made available shortly on 'Adapting Your Business for Climate Change'. Key supporting documents will be added to the UDC website shortly. The Council signed up to

the Resource Efficiency East business support programme in September. As well as advice workshops hosted by the Council, they offer energy efficiency, water efficiency, transport and waste recycling audits and action plans. This is backed up by 6 months of support to participating businesses.

46. Through Uttlesford Futures, roll out programme of energy audits for businesses in partnership with REE. (31st Mar 2011): Local SME's were targeted through promotion of the scheme by the EDSL group, combined with a business breakfast in November 2010 and promotion with local firms. The Council has secured extension of externally funded support from REE through into 2011/12. A mail out to all the SME's in Uttlesford is planned as the next step to encourage further take up by local firms. This is being managed by the Council.
47. Publicise Natural Resources Management Strategy and Council's achievements internally and externally. (ongoing): Natural Resource Management Strategy and Action Plan to go onto Council website, and update on actions is to be provided.

48. Suggested additional areas of work:

49. Seek to develop UDC procurement supplier support network in greening their business (through partnership with Business Link and REE): This needs to be developed in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and has not yet progressed.
50. In consultation with Mechanical and Electrical Surveyor, explore opportunity of a project with Renewables East and BRE to carry out a green residential refurbishment demonstration of an existing housing stock building: Discussions have started with Housing Services and potential external partners. A similar scheme has been delivered by Greenfields RSL, but at substantial expense. A more cost effective property improvement is being proposed where the property will have insulation installed combined with heat recovery and triple glazing. Other measures will include low water use devices and low energy lighting.

51. What next in 2011-12

52. Green Deal – we're waiting for clarification on the Government's detailed proposals for local authorities' role in delivering the green deal. This will steer how we tackle carbon reduction and fuel poverty across the district. Schemes like CERT funding and Warmfront are being phased out to be replaced by the Green Deal. Government figures advise that in 2008 18% of the population is in fuel poverty, primarily due to increasing fuel prices.
53. As an authority we are already addressing the government's agenda on carbon reduction and fuel poverty through schemes such as HEEP and the distribution of energy saving devices and advice to households.

54. We are already supporting businesses on energy efficiency. The authority has secured another year of fully funded support through 2011-12 for business efficiency from Resource Efficiency East, comprising seminars and individual on site energy efficiency audits.

55. Domestic Energy Efficiency & Local Support

The Council is in an enviable position in having strong local support from the Uttlesford Futures groups, the Sustainable Homes Network, CAB and others. As resources are cut further, the value of these groups will increase. Part of essential environmental work for the council is to encourage and maintain this volunteer support and demonstrate we are already practicing the proposed Big Society approach. These groups and the Parish Councils are the way forward to engaging directly with the local community, residents and businesses in delivering the Green Deal and tackling fuel poverty and carbon reduction.

56. To achieve this, volunteers in the parishes will be given basic energy training and encouraged to speak directly with hard to reach residents and put them in touch with the Council. We will then work with them to provide advice and implement suitable energy saving measures for their property.

57. Public/Private Partnership Working

HEEP will come to a close at the end of March 2011. At this point combined with the cessation of the Energy Saving Trust and reduction of Warmfront funding there will be no support for Uttlesford district residents on energy saving and fuel poverty. It is proposed to replace this scheme by extending the geographical boundary of the neighbouring 'Braintree loft and cavity wall insulation scheme' to include Uttlesford residents and make it into a joint scheme. This is currently a Braintree District Council managed referral scheme run in partnership with local installers to secure low insulation prices for residents and reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. Any additional interested local installers in Uttlesford district would be invited to tender and, if selected, to take part.

58. There is a possibility of setting up a loan scheme using UDC's housing grant from the government to part fund residents installing renewable energy technologies or solid wall insulation. Current grants/loans are for housing improvements up to £3000. This can be delivered in partnership with local approved renewable energy installers.

59. Climate Change Adaptation

60. The Coalition government has asked for climate risk assessments from those organisations in the front line of the effort to prepare the country for climate change – for example water, transport and energy infrastructure companies. They want local authorities to provide a community lead on climate change adaptation. The council needs to be in a position where its estate, services and operations are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

61. Unlike the other Essex authorities, Uttlesford has not yet demonstrated progress on climate change adaptation under the National Indicator NI188. This NI was introduced to enable local authorities to build resilience against the impacts of climate change. Although the indicator has been dropped (in theory all the local authorities have completed the national indicator) there is still a need for Uttlesford to produce a comprehensive risk assessment for each service and the estate. This work has started and will be used to update the Council's corporate risk register and service area business plans.

62. The results of this work will be used to encourage and support organisations and businesses across the district with the authority acting as an exemplar and providing a template for adapting to the impacts of climate change.

63. Internal carbon reduction

64. Future work will include supporting the Mechanical and Electrical Surveyor in delivering the estate carbon reduction projects identified by the Appleyards energy reduction audit. The carbon savings will be measured and added to the overall 25% reduction target. Key to this area of work will be the reporting to staff within the staff awareness programme on progress, highlighting the Council's new projects to encourage the take up of energy saving measures by staff.

65. New measures are being introduced for staff including carbon reduction through i.e. green driver training and refreshing the car share scheme.

66. A planned area of work is a good practice section on the Council's intranet for staff and Members showing how they can save energy and carbon at work. This is important as good engagement with staff can account for up to a 10% reduction in CO2 emissions in the work environment.

67. Uttlesford DC housing stock & tenants

68. Future work to improve the energy efficiency of the properties includes external cladding for solid wall housing and increased loft insulation, boiler replacements and Air Source Heat Pumps, installation of solar PV panels through the FiT scheme.

69. Planned support for residents includes regular energy efficiency information section in tenants' handbook, distribution of energy saving devices, installation of smart power meters to understand and clarify energy use, and support in delivering behavioural change.