

**ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 PM on 4 NOVEMBER 2003**

Present: A R Thawley – Chairman.  
Councillors C A Cant, K J Clarke, D Corke, C M Dean, C D Down, R F Freeman, E J Godwin, E Tealby-Watson and A M Wattebot.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman: Councillors A Dean and S Flack.

Officers in attendance: M Cox, S McLagan, J Mitchell, P O'Dell, B D Perkins, J Rice and R Secker

ET27

**PRESENTATION BY ESSEX COUNTY COUNCILLOR RODNEY BASS – CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION**

County Councillor Bass spoke to the meeting about the proposed local service agreement for the Highways and Transportation Service in Essex. He circulated two documents, the outline framework and also the background analysis and supporting information.

He explained that the Highways and Transportation service in Essex was currently delivered through a combination of County Council direct provision, agency arrangements with the Borough/District Councils and partnership contracts. Arrangements varied across the County and sometimes this could lead to unnecessary bureaucracy and lack of consistency and accountability between the County Council and Borough/District Councils dependant on the type of provision. Members of the public were also often unsure who to contact and who was responsible for the service they required.

The new local service agreement acknowledged the need for the County Council and Borough/District Councils to work in partnership to deliver a seamless service which would replace the old arrangements. The agreement set out those services that would be covered, those to be provided by the County Council and those by the District Council. It was suggested that the District Council would look after the local road network whilst the County would take responsibility for roads of a more strategic nature. Financing of road maintenance would come from a single pool of money based on road length. The new arrangements would have implications for the organisation of the Highways Authority and for the staff employed by the County, District and contractors. The details of the arrangements had yet to be finalised, but Members were asked to agree to the principle of the agreement.

County Councillor Bass asked for initial comments by the end of November. The new arrangements were to be introduced from April 2004. A copy of the documents would be circulated to all Members of the Council and comments invited by 21 November 2003.

Councillor Bass then left the meeting.

ET28

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J F Cheetham.

Councillors C A Cant, D Corke, C M Dean, C D Down, A Dean, E J Godwin, E Tealby-Watson, A R Thawley and A M Wattebot declared their interests as Members of SSE.

ET29

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ET30

## **BUSINESS ARISING**

### **(i) Minute ET20 Proposed Waiting Restrictions – The Tanyard/Weaverhead Lane/Copthall Lane junction and Bolford Street Thaxted**

Since the last meeting, further discussions had been held with the residents and the Parish Council and all except one of the objections had been withdrawn. The Committee considered that the restrictions were now acceptable and it was

RESOLVED that the waiting restrictions proposed for The Tanyard/Weaverhead Lane/Copthall Lane Junction and Bolford Street be introduced.

### **(ii) Proposed waiting restrictions – Bentfield Road Stansted Mountfitchet**

A further meeting had been held with the Parish Council and the local resident and a compromise had been achieved to reduce the restrictions on the northwestern side of Bentfield Road from 15 metres to 10 metres. The objector had raised further issues, which were being considered by County Council Officers.

RESOLVED that the revised waiting restrictions for Bentfield Road and Bentfield End Causeway be introduced subject to the resolution of signage.

ET31

## **STANSTED AIRPORT ADVISORY PANEL**

The Committee received the Minutes of the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel held on 20 October 2003. The meeting had considered the consultation document from Stansted Airport Ltd, which set out details of the proposed noise insulation programme.

RESOLVED that the response to the consultation on further Stansted noise insulation set out in Minute SA22 be approved.

**POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05**

The Committee received the initial Draft General Fund revised estimates of direct costs and income for 2003/04 and estimates for next year 2004/05, prepared on the basis of existing approved levels of service. It also included information regarding the budget review items that had been identified at the previous meeting of the Committee. The Leader of the Council advised Members that this Committee had a large number of budget review items. In the light of the tight financial situation of the Council, he advised the Committee to consider whether extra spending was really necessary, whether items could be funded from existing budgets and every opportunity taken to maximise income. The Committee then discussed the review items in detail and gave guidance on a number of issues. These would be included in the overall General Fund Budget Strategy Report which would be submitted to the Resources Committee on 20 November 2003.

RESOLVED that the Committee

- 1 Approve the revised 2003/04 budget and draft 2004/05 budget for submission to the Resources Committee for comments.
- 2 Give guidance on the following budget review items.

**Planning Grants – Review Effectiveness**

Reduce the promotion of Local Centres Grant (£20,000) by £16,000; leaving £4,000 for projects to help promote the whole District, particularly tourism related projects.

Officers to report to the next meeting providing a justification for the grants awarded to Uttlesford Enterprise and the Essex Economic Partnership.

**Car Parking – Review of Charges**

The Committee agreed the principle of charging options D and E (as set out in the report), but asked officers to take into account the following:-

- 1 the possibility of a six day charging regime at the Saffron Walden offices car park;
- 2 increasing the differential between short term and long term parking;
- 3 a half-hour tariff or reduced tariff for car parks that are close to facilities in Stansted and Great Dunmow;
- 4 charging at the Thaxted car park;

- 5 charging at the Great Dunmow offices car park on a season ticket basis.

### **Residential Parking – Continual Reduction of Deficit**

To reduce the deficit of £13,000 - 6,500 by increasing charges and 6,500 by administrative savings.

### **Assisted Travel Consideration of Extra Support**

Add £15,000 re statutory cost of bus passes - Increase the cost of transport tokens to half the value, i.e. 30 tokens for £15.00.

### **Refuse Collection – Increase Income for Green Sacks**

Increase the cost of the sacks from 80p to £1. Reduce the cost of the sack for the elderly and disabled to 50p.

Officers to investigate selling more bags in local outlets, parish council offices and village shops.

### **Energy Efficiency Post - £30,000 less Offset by Reduced Cost of Energy in Council Offices**

The principle of this post was agreed. Officers were asked to prepare a further report to include a cost/benefit analysis and consider further options for funding from within the Council or from other sources.

### **Planning Monitoring Service - £3,000**

The Committee agreed the need for this service but asked that the sum be found from within existing budgets.

- 3 Instruct officers to prepare, in the light of guidance issued by the Resources Committee on 20 November 2003, service plans and draft budget proposals for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee on 13 January 2004.

ET33

## **STANSTED M11 CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS STUDY**

The Committee received a detailed report which set out the recommended response from the Council to the draft final report of the Stansted M11 Corridor Development Options Study. The Committee thanked the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager for a clear and comprehensive report on such a detailed subject. Members added their concern that the study was a totally flawed and inaccurate document and asked that the Council's strong views be made known concerning the process, quality and suggestions in the consultation study.

RESOLVED that the recommendations set out below, which were to be sent to the Consultant, East of England Regional Assembly, Essex

County Council, town and parish councils and other bodies be agreed by the Committee.

- The consultation period on the study report was too short and the amount of information available was too limited. The District Council has involved the local community in preparing this response.
- It is absolutely imperative that in preparing RPG14 and the sub regional strategy for the period to 2021, EERA only plans on the basis of the existing runway capacity at Stansted, as it has previously agreed with Minister of State in the ODPM, Lord Rooker.
- No significance should be attached to the consultant's ideas for the new runway scenarios and the longer term to 2036. The report is confusing and largely hypothetical in its comments on development post 2021 and acceptance of new runways;
- The scale of housing growth in Uttlesford is unrelated to the local economic driver in the London Stansted Cambridge corridor, namely the airport.
- The scale of housing growth in Uttlesford ought to be on a scale that is compatible with achieving a reduction in the net flow of out commuting from the Stansted/M11 corridor sub region core area.
- It is strongly refuted that there is environmental capacity for the scale of development the consultant recommends in Uttlesford by 2021. Such development would be in the wrong location in terms of the rural White Paper and its commitments to protect what makes rural England special. If implemented, the strategy would result in significant urbanisation of valued countryside.
- Insufficient weight has been attached to the importance of retaining the separate identity of existing settlements.
- The recommended spatial strategy would seriously undermine the objective of maintaining Stansted as an airport in the countryside and would result in visual coalescence of Bishop's Stortford and the airport.
- All of the schemes would involve actually creating a new or reinforced landscape structure to contain the new development. In other words, the capacity needs to be created. It does not exist.
- The assumed density of development at 40 dwellings per hectare is high for the rural locations in the consultant's strategy.
- Concentrating development in Uttlesford in locations with good access to West Anglia rail stations will tend to increase rail commuting to London. Whilst this will also occur with development at Harlow, regeneration is the priority. Adding additional rail commuting from Uttlesford stations must be avoided. It would exacerbate passenger loadings in excess of capacity down the line to London.
- The high frequency bus rapid transit proposals look impractical to the extent that i) they seek to address both the needs of air passengers from remote park and ride sites and trips generated by new homes and jobs; and ii) they require dedicated road space on the old A120 and elsewhere. The whole strategy of locating development in a corridor through a rural area is therefore underpinned by an unrealistic transport proposal.
- There is not the supporting infrastructure in a rural area for development on this scale. It would need new primary and secondary

school capacity and primary health care facilities. The socio economic demography of Uttlesford would be changed by large scale housing with implications for health needs. Electrical supply networks would need strengthening.

- The scale of growth in the six core districts in one of driest parts of the UK where there is no additional water supply available is a major issue. Importing water would have significant energy use implications. Sites in Uttlesford are at the heads of river catchment areas, requiring outflow from sewage treatment works into rivers to be high quality. This would be expensive.
- The proposals would damage the quality of life in Uttlesford: they fail to achieve all the objectives of the Sustainability Framework for the East of England at the same time;
- Decisions as to where housing and employment land should be proposed are for the Local Development Document. The Sub Regional Strategy should not be more specific than indicating the level of development in the district, locational criteria and a broad area of search for sub regionally significant development.

ET34

#### **KITCHEN WASTE RECYCLING TRIAL**

The Council had been successful in 2002/03 with a bid to Essex EnTrust to undertake a trial to separate and recycle kitchen waste for composting. The scheme had been introduced using the materials recycling facility at Haverhill with final treatment at Cambridge using in-vessel composting technology. The authorisation for the Cambridge plant had been withdrawn following the DEFRA foot and mouth inquiry. In the interim, a waste food processor had treated the trial collection material, but this was at considerably greater cost. The revised disposal cost for 2003/04 was approximately £60,000, reducing to £20,000 for 2004/05. Costs above £20,000 a year for disposal were not sustainable, and a decision might need to be made to end the trial scheme at the end of March 2004.

The Committee hoped that it would not be necessary to discontinue this innovative scheme.

RESOLVED that the continuation of the kitchen waste composting scheme be reviewed at the next meeting in January 2004.

ET35

#### **GM FREE UTTLESFORD**

A request had been made from the Saffron Walden and District Friends of the Earth (FoE) asking Uttlesford Council to give full consideration to the proposal to declare Uttlesford GM Free and to adopt a number of specific policies. The Committee considered that generally this was a matter that needed to be resolved at a more strategic level and not by an individual local authority. It was agreed that the Chairman would pass on the Friends of the Earth petition to the Government.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Council recognises the continuing public and scientific debate and disquiet about the desirability of and safety of GM food;
- 2 the determination of Council policy on GM crops should be deferred until the Government announcement of national policy, and until more comprehensive information was available.

ET36

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT SCHEME**

The Committee was advised that a questionnaire had been sent to all residents in Saffron Walden, immediate parishes and to businesses in the town centre. It asked a series of questions about why and how they visited the town centre and their views on aspects of traffic management. This had followed the introduction of new parking regulations in June 1999 and concerns about the effect of these on those visiting and working within the town centre. The questionnaire had highlighted two problem areas, parking for blue badge holders and loading/unloading times.

RESOLVED that

- 1 a meeting of District, Town and Parish Members, Essex County Council Highways and the access Group be convened to consider the issues of parking for the disabled and loading/unloading within the town centre to identify the best way forward;
- 2 the meeting be coordinated by the Decriminalisation Task Group;
- 3 a further report be made to the next meeting of the Committee.

ET37

**ROAD SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

At the request of the respective chairmen, the minutes of the latest meetings of the Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow Advisory Committees were circulated to Committee Members.

ET38

**EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100 A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

ET39

## **A NEW FUTURE FOR GOLDS NURSERIES**

The Committee received a report that updated the current position at the Golds Nurseries Business Park, Elsenham. It also proposed a fresh approach to making lettings more attractive and to raise the reputation of the Business Park.

RESOLVED that

- 1      £14,000 be included in the revised draft estimates 2003/04 for the rebranding of the Golds Nurseries site and the provision of CCT, to be submitted to the Resources Committee on 20 November 2003;
- 2      greater flexibility be granted to the management agent to negotiate the principle terms of the lease as described in paragraph 15 and 16 in the report.

ET40

## **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Committee was advised of the tenders received for the grounds maintenance contract to commence on January 2004.

RESOLVED that the Acting Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to award the contract, subject to further consideration of a number of matters.

The meeting ended at 10.45 pm.