

Lead Officer's Report
Environment, item 3

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: 4 September 2007

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Title: Lead Officer's Report. Functions of the Committee

Author: John Mitchell, Director of Development. Item for noting

Summary

This report updates Members on matters arising from the minutes that are not on this Agenda. Information items on economic development, car parking action plan update and planning policy for renewable energy are set out.

Recommendations

That the report is noted.

Background Papers

Minutes of meeting of 19th June 2007

Reports referred to in this report

Impact

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None specifically but considerable implications within some of the reports on this agenda
Finance	None
Human Rights	No direct implications
Legal implications	No direct implications
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

4. Matters from the previous meeting not on this agenda

- 1 Minute E6 – the Planning White Paper. A response was sent to DCLG incorporating the views of this Committee and the DC Committee

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- 2 Minute E7 – Planning for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the East of England. A response incorporating the views of this Committee and the input of EPOA (Essex Planning Officers Association) was forwarded to EERA.
- 3 E12 – Memorandum of Understanding. At the time of writing there is no further news since the last council meeting. A verbal update may be given at the meeting.

4. Economic Development – item for information

Purpose

- To inform the Environment Committee of the work of the Economic Development Team
- To seek input from members of the committee into Uttlesford District Council's Economic Development Strategy

Economic Development Team

- Helen Rodgers – Economic Development Manager
- Steve Rhenius – Research and Intelligence Officer
- Elisabeth Blackie – Tourism Officer
- Louise Milns – Tourism Assistant
- Bruce Tice – Market Towns Project Officer (covering for Sarah Seward)

Key issues in economic development in Uttlesford

Uttlesford is an affluent area with a highly educated population. Unemployment is currently less than 1%.

Currently Uttlesford faces a number of issues which impact on the economy including:

- High levels of out-commuting from the district leading to pressures on the infrastructure
- Some businesses expressing problems expanding within the district
- Equality and diversity issues, e.g. disabled people in rural areas having difficulties accessing jobs
- Many businesses have difficulty recruiting people with certain skills, caused by a number of factors including the high cost of living within the district
- Local people want access to services/businesses in their area but businesses may find it too expensive/ too much hassle to locate here

In addition to the existing problems over the next few years Uttlesford faces a number of issues which will impact on the local economy including:

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- 8000 new houses in the district – where will people work and will out-commuting lead to dormitory towns?
- Could Uttlesford become over-reliant on airport jobs?

UDC’s economic development strategy

Over the next six months the Economic Development Team will be developing an economic development strategy for the council and will work closely with partner organisations with interests in economic development.

The strategy will address:

- What can Uttlesford District Council do to enable economic development within the district – e.g. monitor its own policies and impacts on business
- What can Uttlesford District Council do in partnership with others to encourage economic development in the district. Key partners include:
 - Local business sector
 - Voluntary sector
 - Regional bodies – Greater Cambridge Economic Partnership and the Greater Essex Prosperity Forum, etc
 - Uttlesford’s Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
 - How to attract funding for projects in the district to encourage economic development and work with partners to use this funding
 - Dealing with equality and diversity issues within the Uttlesford workforce

The economic development team will also be:

- Developing a tourism action plan to make the most of the opportunities for attracting visitors to the area over the next five years
- Providing research and analysis on economic issues within the district
- Supporting town partnership groups to improve the market towns
- Engaging with the business community on council issues

Input from council members

Keeping the team informed about economic issues within the district
Over the next six months inputting into the development of a vision for the economy of the district and agreeing on the actions proposed to achieve this vision



3 Car Parking Action Plan – update for information

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Following lengthy and detailed work by the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) Working Group, a report was taken to the meeting of the Environment Committee on 7th November 2006 recommending a number of actions and policies which were all agreed by the Committee.

A position statement on each item (as detailed in appendix C3 of the original report) and forward action plan is presented in the appended table below:



4 Policy on renewable energy

Concern has been expressed over the Council’s planning policy to be applied in dealing with a potential planning application for a wind farm at Linton, a small part of which would lie in the north of the district. No comment can be made at this stage as no application has been received.

The relevant policy in the Structure Plan is EG4. This states:

“Proposals for renewable energy schemes will be permitted provided there is no materially adverse impact upon:-

- 1. Existing land-uses by reason of pollution, odour, noise, or loss of visual amenity;**
- 2. The local highway network including the convenience and safety of road users;**
- 3. Telecommunications networks, radar installations and flight paths for aircraft;**
- 4. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Coastal Protection Belt, statutorily protected nature conservation sites, landscape character, historic settlements, or buildings/areas of architectural, historic or archaeological importance.**

In relation to off-shore schemes, the visual impact of associated on-shore electricity transmission equipment should be minimized, preferably by the undergrounding of cables, and servicing for the development should be from existing local port facilities.”

The principal policy in the local plan is ENV15. This states:

“Forms of renewable energy include wind power, solar power and biomass (plant materials either grown specifically for energy production or generated as a by product of another industry such as forestry wastes). In Uttlesford it is expected that acceptable schemes in the District would be relatively small scale e.g. solar panels, single wind turbines serving single or small groups of dwellings and/or businesses. Schemes should be sited close to settlements or groups of buildings in rural areas and close to the origin of the energy resource. Development will only be permitted in locations where the local road network is capable of handling any additional traffic generated by the proposal.

Policy ENV15 – Renewable Energy

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Small scale renewable energy development schemes to meet local needs will be permitted if they do not adversely affect the character of sensitive landscapes, nature conservation interests or residential and recreational amenity.”

The East of England Plan will become increasingly relevant as part of the Development Plan. In its present status it sets renewable energy targets and advises that issues of location and scale will require careful consideration, with the Regional Assembly issuing further guidance at some stage in the future

The Government’s Energy White Paper, 2003, will be a material planning consideration. The Energy White Paper ‘Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy’ (2003) sets a domestic goal to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60% below current levels by 2050. Other national goals are to maintain the reliability of energy supplies, promote competitive markets in energy and ensure adequate and affordable heating in every home. A doubling of the 2010 renewables’ share of electricity is aspired to by 2020. The Government has introduced a number of initiatives including a new ‘renewables obligation’, to succeed the non-fossil fuel obligation and the climate change levy.

The usual development control policies for development in the countryside will also apply.

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November '06 Appendix C3 Reference	Policy Detail	Current Position Statement (August 2007) and Planned Actions.
2	Car Parks / Off-Street Parking.	
2.6	Continuation of Pay & Display.	
2.6.1	No changes are made to the payment methods in any of the Council's car parks.	Pay & Display retained. No plans for pay-on-foot, pay-on-exit or other alternatives.
2.6.2	A 3-year rolling replacement programme of new Pay and Display machines with solar power be implemented.	2-year programme adopted. Solar power options explored but dismissed for most locations due to: Additional cost of machines. Solar power only an add-on, machines still require mains or battery primary power source. All machines other than those in Swan Meadow, Saffron Walden, to be replaced in 2007 (replacement programme starts September). Swan Meadow to follow in 2008/9.
2.6.3	Operations Committee be asked to make provision in the Capital Programme 2007/8 and 2008/9 for £30,000 p.a. to cover the cost of the Pay & Display machine replacement programme.	Done. Capital finance is in place for the replacement programme (additional funding was sourced by selling some of the machines being replaced).
2.6.4	Officers further investigate the provision of mobile phone parking and other payment methods and report back to this committee on the practical and financial implications.	Smart-card system being introduced as part of the machine replacement programme (card readers are integral in some of the new machines). Based on similar systems, e.g. in Ipswich, involving a partnership between machine provider Cale-BriParc, smart card experts ERS, software providers Chipside and the local Council.

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		<p>System to be called 'U-Park', introduced and tested in autumn 2007 for press launch in December 2007.</p> <p>The introduction of new payment machinery and the U-Park system to be managed via a dedicated project plan.</p>
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2.9	Station Car Parks.	
2.9.1	Officers to liaise with relevant contacts as appropriate and necessary.	Ongoing.
2.10	Agreements with Waitrose, Boots, the Co-op and Stansted Parish Council for Car Park services.	
2.10.1	Officers to ensure that UDC meets its obligations as set out in the Agreements with relevant parties.	Ongoing – no issues.
2.10.2	Officers to ensure relevant parties are consulted as set out in Parking Policy 4 – Consultation.	Ongoing – will be included in all future consultations, particularly regarding fees and charges.
3	On-Street Parking and Residents Parking Schemes.	
3.2	Fly Parking in the District: officers work in conjunction with ECC and the relevant Parish Council to consider what schemes could be introduced to address the fly-parking problem. If appropriate, consultation to be carried out and, if required, the preferred scheme to be introduced for an 18 month trial period.	New restrictions currently being introduced by ECC in Takeley, in consultation with UDC. Further issues continue to be monitored in partnership with ECC.
3.6	Fees and Charges for On-Street Parking: every other year On-Street Parking Charges to be reviewed and consideration given to appropriate changes.	Charges currently coming under review. Target for implementation of any changes is April 2008, following extensive consultation and Committee approval of proposed new charges.
6	Staff.	

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6.3	Staffing Levels: to ensure staffing levels are maintained at an optimum level, Officers to recruit in a timely and efficient manner.	Management partnership arrangements currently being developed with Braintree District Council, with further potential partnership working arrangements to be explored. There are no current enforcement staffing issues.
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8	Other Issues.	
8.1	Land Purchase for Future Off-Street Car Park Provision: Parking and Development Services officers to consider opportunities for land purchase /Section 106 agreements for the provision of Off-Street Car Parks as opportunities arise.	No current opportunities are available. Continue to monitor.
8.4	M11 Expansion: Officers of Development Services to consider whether there is adequate parking provision when plans for major developments are being looked at.	Ongoing: with Development Services.
8.5	Introduction of Park and Ride: Where an opportunity is identified to introduce a Park & Ride Scheme(s) officers present details to the relevant Area Panel and the Environment Committee for consideration.	No plans currently being progressed Continue to monitor.
8.6	Environmental Implications: any new provision of parking facilities to undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment.	Any new projects/facilities will be fully assessed as they arise.