

Uttlesford Locality Board: Minutes

Uttlesford District Council, 26 June 2017

Attendees: Cllr Susan Barker (UDC/ECC), Ben Ferguson (UDC), Dawn French (UDC), Fiona Gardiner (UDC), Cllr Ray Gooding - Chair (ECC), Roger Harborough (UDC), Cllr Simon Howell (UDC), Wendy Jackson (ECC), Cllr John Moran (ECC), Cllr Julie Redfern (UDC), Cllr Vic Ranger (UDC), Marcus Roberts (ECC), Cllr Howard Rolfe (UDC), Karen Sanders (ECC) and Cllr Simon Walsh (ECC).

Apologies: Cllr Kevin Bentley (ECC) and Peter Fairly (ECC)

- 1. Welcome and introductions**

Cllr Gooding welcomed all present and introductions were made.
- 2. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following correction:

Cllr Vic Ranger had attended the meeting held on 23 January 2017.
- 3. Transport and Buses**

The Chair brought Item 8 forward in the proceedings in response to a request from Cllr Barker, Karen Sanders and Wendy Jackson.

Cllr Barker asked a question relating to unsubsidised bus routes and timetables in Great Dunmow. After 7pm, residents were isolated as there were no transport links to Bishop's Stortford, the nearest social hub. It was explained that as the providers of such services were commercial, the only recourse available to officers was to notify the companies of such requests.

Cllr Rolfe said the County Council provided three options of public 'bus' services within the district; Dial and Ride Transport (DaRT), Uttlesford Community Travel and local bus services. He asked if these bodies were co-ordinated and how they engaged with parishes. Karen Sanders said the transport department at ECC liaised with parishes directly but there was no 'quick fix' to timetabling problems, as there was a 56 day notice period before a change to a timetable could take effect. She agreed to send out the contact list for parish and transport representatives, so members had a point of contact for community transport related enquiries.

Karen Sanders said ECC was looking at transport holistically and were developing schemes to mitigate the impact of withdrawal of services. The district of Uttlesford was a difficult area for commercial bus services to operate in, due to its sparse and rural nature. Communication was key to ensuring services worked effectively. Wendy Jackson stated that parish councils needed to disseminate information to the relevant parish transport representative, to ensure local authorities worked with communities to get around service issues.

Action: To circulate to members a 'point of contact' contact list for parish/transport representatives.

4. Uttlesford Local Plan Update

Cllr Rolfe provided an update on the status of the Uttlesford Local Plan. Officers had recently issued the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan, which set-out proposals for the building of around 6,000 houses across the district including 3 new settlements on garden community principles.

The new Local Plan would provide the statutory planning framework for the District up to 2033, and as well as housing, sets out where and how new jobs, services and infrastructure would be delivered. He gave a timetable for the future of the Local Plan.

Cllr Gooding raised the question of Section 106 funding with regards to educational needs. He asked for a continued dialogue between ECC and UDC to ensure statutory requirements were met in areas such as education and transport.

Action: For a continued dialogue between ECC and UDC regarding education and transport within the Local Plan.

5. School Places

The Chair agreed to move School Places forward in proceedings.

Cllr Gooding told members that Uttlesford had a good record of pupils attending their first choice school, but people were concerned with the prospect of new developments taking place, without the necessary school places to accommodate the influx of pupils. With regards to secondary schools, Saffron Walden County High (SWCHS) was an extremely popular first choice but there was still capacity in the Joyce Frankland Academy, Newport and Forest Hall, Stansted. Cllr Barker suggested a member briefing take place regarding school places and the Local Plan. Dawn French agreed and said a briefing could be held just before Christmas, prior to the issue of the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan in January 2018.

Cllr Gooding spoke of the changing dynamic within Essex; whilst demand was increasing in certain areas, the viability of some rural schools was being questioned. Cllr Rolfe asked Cllr Gooding to produce a presentation/detailed charts in 6 months-time, as he had done previously, forecasting the capacity of school places within the district.

Action: To schedule a UDC member briefing regarding the impact of the Local Plan on school places.

Action: Cllr Gooding to arrange for officers at ECC to produce detailed charts forecasting the capacity of school places in the district. To be presented to the Locality Board in 6 months-time.

6. Walden School

For the benefit of the discussion, the Chair moved this item forward in proceedings.

Members discussed the potential closure of the Walden School (WS). Cllr Gooding reminded members that as an independent school, WS was outside of the County Council's remit. However, if the school was to close, there were sufficient state school places for the children to attend. He added that only 60% of pupils attending the school lived in Uttlesford.

The general perception around the town was that there was a shortage of school places in Saffron Walden and therefore some had called for the conversion of the WS into a state school. Cllr Gooding reminded members that there was still capacity in local secondary schools, and the pressure stemmed from the popularity of SWCHS as pupils' first choice. Whilst the market price for the Walden school was reasonable, the costs for conversion made the purchase impracticable and unattractive.

Cllr Redfern said there was a real problem in Great Chesterford of getting children into SWCHS and therefore many felt there was a need for another school in the area. Cllr Gooding suggested that the reason children in Great Chesterford were not getting into SWCHS was due to the 'sibling priority' policy, which meant children from villages outside of the catchment area were taking up places. He agreed that SWCHS was oversubscribed. Cllr Redfern questioned the admission policy when children in villages north of Saffron Walden had to travel even further to attend school when theoretically they were in the SWCHS catchment area and, in her view, deserved priority.

Cllr Ranger suggested that an offer to retain the school had been submitted by individuals and parents already connected with WS, and this would hopefully be confirmed in the coming weeks. Cllr Moran said there was a need for urgency, as staff would already be looking for other work before the school year closes.

Members discussed the capacity of Sixth Form colleges in the area and agreed to look at it in more detail at the next meeting.

Action: Sixth Form / college places to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

7. Economic Development Update

Marcus Roberts provided members with a verbal update on the various economic development schemes undertaken by ECC. Specifically, members were updated on the progress of SELEP, Growing Place Fund, Essex Growth Model and Invest Essex. The report was noted.

8. Essex Vision and new ECC organisation strategy

Marcus Roberts presented a report on the Essex Vision which aimed to inform strategic thinking within local authorities and other partner agencies up to 2035. Broadly, the document presented a narrative of the Essex identity and how partners – including communities and residents – said that they wanted Essex to be perceived, as well as setting out themes for action.

Cllr Rolfe commended the strategy; it was aspirational and would help shape policy in the future. Cllr Ranger likened the 'Vision' to a Corporate Plan and said UDC could contribute through its own Corporate Plan.

Cllr Moran said he had encountered cynicism regarding the Vision; many saw it as 'marketing the brand' of Essex, whilst others highlighted the varying nature of the county, rather than the 'single entity' presented. For example, Saffron Walden, Colchester and Basildon were all very different places within Essex and the Vision needed to take this into account if it wanted to appeal to all parts of the county.

Dawn French said the Vision was an opportunity for Uttlesford as it would help bring Essex together and share the same story. Cllr Moran reinforced this point by suggesting that as a result of the Harlow Enterprise Zone, Stansted Airport (and therefore Uttlesford) would benefit greatly. The chances of success were greatly improved if both Essex and Uttlesford worked together in pursuit of mutually beneficial aims.

9 Social Isolation Pilot Update

Fiona Gardiner informed members of the Social Isolation scheme which had just been rolled out by the Communities team at UDC and the Young Foundation. Three areas were selected, chosen due to their differing characteristics: Usterdale Road, Saffron Walden, Little Bardfield and Takeley-Little Canfield. The primary aim of the project was to learn about social networks in different areas and research was planned to continue for 5 months. Following the consultation with residents and businesses, plans would be drawn up to create sustainable social networks based on the findings of the research. The hope was to produce a more structured approach to coordinating isolation prevention schemes but also to encourage 'community-led' support networks, by identifying local 'social ambassadors' and engaging with them.

Cllr Rolfe commended the work and said that social isolation was a recognised problem in Uttlesford. He hoped that as a result of such work, a clear and simple system would be established so that members of the public suffering from loneliness knew whom to contact if they required support.

10. Public Health and links with ECC

Cllr Rolfe said he found it difficult dealing with ECC on Public Health issues and wanted a 'clearer picture' in terms of statistics and data. Marcus Roberts said there were initiatives to assist in this process and there were plans to establish a District-County Health and Wellbeing Forum to bring together chairs of local health and well-being boards and the Essex Board to discuss issues bi-annually.

Dawn French told members that the Public Health profiles would be ready in time for the next Locality Board meeting.

Action: For the Public Health profiles to be presented at the next Locality Board meeting.

11. Agenda for next meeting

The next meeting to be held in September 2017 at the UDC offices – date TBC.

The following subjects were suggested for the agenda:

- Sixth Form places in Uttlesford
- Emergency Planning
- Public Health

The meeting finished at 6pm.