

**NORTH AREA PANEL held at THE VILLAGE HALL ASHDON at 7.00 pm
on 6 MARCH 2007**

Present:- Councillor R F Freeman – Chairman.
Councillors B M Hughes, M A Hibbs, S C Jones, V J T Lelliott,
J E Menell, M J Savage, S V Schneider and A C Yarwood.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, F Gardner, M Jones, S Nicholas,
R Pridham, C Roberts, P Snow, J Starr and A
Stewart.

NP55

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chairman, Councillor Freeman, welcomed all present and opened the question and answer session.

(i) Meeting - advance publicity

Mr and Mrs Arnold informed the meeting that they had only seen advertising for it in the Saffron Walden paper, not on any notice boards in the village. The area champion, John Starr, stated that notices had been sent to the parish clerk.

(ii) Service No 18

Mr S McCarthy from Hempstead, drew attention to the threatened closure of service number 18 which covered the bus route Haverhill, Hempstead, Saffron Walden. He considered that this would severely disadvantage the elderly and young people, and he said that he spoke also on behalf of Age Concern. Mr McCarthy asked that the Panel work to maintain the service. He was not sure which company ran the service and Councillor Jones asked him to involve LA21 which had made a bus study of all bus services affecting villages and reported to the District Council's Environment Committee.

RESOLVED that the Environmental Services department be asked to establish which company ran the bus and what prospects there were for the service, and to contact Mr McCarthy with this information.

(iii) Recycling

Mr McCarthy spoke also about the recycling of domestic waste which he thought was operating very well. He nevertheless had a concern as to where the waste did eventually go and what proportion of it went to recycling since there were stories about to the effect that it did not go to recycling.

Ron Pridham, the Services Officer, assured Mr McCarthy that 100% of the recyclable waste collection was recycled and he gave specific details of how each category of waste was recycled and by which companies. He concluded by stressing that nothing went to landfill.

Mr R Bedborough asked whether Uttlesford paid or was paid for the collected waste and Mr Pridham gave a detailed explanation of income received and gate fees paid in the process of recycling.

(iv) Swan Meadow Pond

In answer to a question from Mr P Riding, Councillor S Jones explained that no further decision had been taken regarding the removal of the island in Swan Meadow Pond, but that the Council's Architect and Property Advisor, Mr Demery, was reviewing the matter. Members commented on the advantages and disadvantages to the environment and Mr Riding stressed that he was enthusiastic for the island to be kept and for the ducks to remain on it as a visual attraction.

NP56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor H Baker.

Councillor S Jones declared an interest insofar as he was a member of the Local Development Framework Management Group.

NP57 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

NP58 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Experimental traffic calming scheme

It was noted that the proposal for this scheme would be submitted to the Environment Committee.

(ii) Summary of Mouchel Parkman Study

The Leisure and Community Development Manager explained that this summary would be provided to a future meeting.

(iii) Consultation response on district council budget 2007/08

A Member referred to the change of the projected rise in Council Tax for the next financial year from 4.5% at the meeting on 16 January to 2% at the meeting of the Council. She felt that the public should receive an apology insofar as they had been misled by the first figure of 4.5%.

The Chairman and Councillor Jones, the Chairman of the Operations Committee, explained that this situation had not misled the public and it was not necessary to apologise for a lower budget.

Some representatives of the parishes present were however concerned about what fund had been used to supply the difference between 2% and 4.5%. Mr R Higgins of Arkesden said that the drop in two weeks to 2% left him feeling unsettled and uncomfortable and he felt there would have been many questions if such a change had gone in the other direction. Mrs K Barwood also found it difficult to understand how budgets could be amended at the last minute to this extent.

Councillor Jones replied that the change had been planned many months previously. Councillor R Freeman added that line 33 of the budget had been reduced from £190,000 to £90,000 to achieve the Council Tax reduction.

A resident asked if this reduction was linked with the impending local elections. Councillor M A Hibbs explained that local government finance was particularly complex; of the funds used by local government only about one fifth was raised by Council Tax. Line 33 of the budget represented money put aside for use in the future and its removal had no effect on front line services. Councillor Jones added that a comparison of the grant monies from 1999 – 2003 showed the grant amounts reducing. The Chairman of the Committee stressed that the budget was in fact set at one single meeting and at a particular time of the year when all relevant financial information was available.

Councillor S V Schneider asked that a full explanation of line 33 be sent to Mr R Higgins of Arkesden and it was agreed that this would be done.

Councillor Mrs J Menell added that her concern was for the public being misled during the consultation process rather than the ultimate budget process and Councillor Jones replied that the decisions were not made at the panel but at Operations Committee and then the Council. Much depended on what the Government gave the Council, which became apparent only towards the end of the process.

NP59

PART STREET LIGHTING

The Panel was informed by the Strategic Partnerships Manager that the Essex County Council decision on part street lighting, which had been expected in time for the Panel's meeting, had been called in by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee because of inaccuracies in the report regarding consultation undertaken with Uttlesford. Mr Stewart continued that there was no mention of the extensive consultation by Stansted Parish Council and he gave the response received from the 15 parish councils consulted and informed the meeting of a petition with 101 signatures.

Malcolm White informed the meeting that the Town Council would be meeting with Councillor Bass and the Highways Department in the next week. Ms Shibata, a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council, stressed that when weighing the opinions of parish councils, it was important to take a view on their population figures to get a proper balance.

Councillor Hibbs asked for the views of Ashdon residents on part street lighting and Mrs Skillings explained that the village owned most street lights

so their main concern was lights owned by Essex County Council. They had concerns about part street lighting near the housing for the elderly. It was noted in this context that although a switch to green electricity was thought good, it had not as yet been implemented. Councillor Yarwood suggested that the Essex County Council would join a detailed discussion on this if asked.

Councillor Jones informed the meeting that the actual savings to be made from part street lighting were about £30,000.

It was noted that there was a link between lighting and the available speed limits, and that street lighting at night had an effect of reducing crime which appeared to last on into the daytime.

NP60

PARISH ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Panel received a presentation by Peter Snow, Electoral Services Officer, on electoral arrangements for parishes in the light of the Council's adoption of criteria for parish electoral arrangements. The parishes had been given a last invitation to revise their electoral arrangements before the parish elections in May.

Three parishes, outside the geographical boundaries of the North Area Panel, had requested changes to their electoral schemes; their requests had already been dealt with by the appropriate Area Panel and were noted. A number of other changes had been confirmed previously.

The presentation covered the established arrangements at all responding parishes, as well as those in some non-responding parishes.

Members considered the electoral arrangements affecting all parishes and discussed also the effect of the Parish Council Code of Conduct upon recruitment of new parish councillors. They considered the existing scheme satisfactory and expressed a wish for advice after the election on the practical requirements of the Code.

RESOLVED that the existing scheme of electoral arrangements for the parishes be confirmed without alteration.

NP61

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL LITTER POLICY

The Panel received a presentation from the Services Officer, Ron Pridham, about aspects of the Council's work which contributed to the Uttlesford policy of discouraging litter.

He explained that new powers had devolved on the Council following the Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005 and the Council could now use; fixed penalty notices, street control orders where litter was proved to emanate from a particular property, street litter cleaning notices to force owners to tidy up, litter abatement notices and dog control orders.

He answered questions from Members and residents about particular aspects of litter law enforcement.

NP62

UPDATE ON ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

Councillor Ray Gooding the Essex County Councillor for the Stansted Division, made a presentation about the County Council's School Transport Policy, covering conditions for subsidised transport, assessment of routes (in this context Councillor Gooding said he thought accompanied walking was not acceptable), funding and sustainability of provision of transport, safety requirements, and the County Council's success in being appointed a Pathfinder Council.

Councillor Gooding answered questions from the floor and the Chairman of the Committee said that hopefully there would be a speaker on 5 June to explain how yellow 'buses were run.

NP63

DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACE ORDER

The Panel received a presentation by the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, Fiona Gardiner, on using a Designated Public Place Order to reduce alcohol related disorder or nuisance. These orders could give the Police powers to control the consumption of alcohol.

It was hoped that the Market Square rather than the Common would be the subject of the order since the preponderance of alcohol related incidents had occurred there.

Questions were asked about various forms of anti-social behaviour and these were answered by the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator. One speaker felt that lack of enforcement was a bigger problem than lack of orders.

NP64

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY – ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR GROWTH – CONSULTATION

The Panel received a Presentation by Sarah Nicholas the Senior Planning Officer who explained that the Panel's views were needed on the Core Strategy with particular reference to the need to identify sites for a large number of new homes pursuant to the Government's initiative.

Speakers drew attention to the need for:-

- more secondary schools;
- more affordable housing particularly near jobs eg at Stansted Airport;
- developments within villages to accommodate the children of local families,
- provision of infrastructure and single settlement possibilities.

The comments made by those present are annexed to these minutes below.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

John Starr, the Area Champion, presented a report on recent community development activities and schemes, which was noted. He informed the meeting about a future Charity Golf Day and reminded them that the next Area Panel meeting would be on 5 June 2007.

The meeting ended at 9.42pm

ANNEX

**MINUTE NP 64 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY
– ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR GROWTH – CONSULTATION –
COMMENTS RECEIVED AT THE NORTH AREA PANEL MEETING 6
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- Will consultation be affected by recent announcements about capacity of existing built up areas?
- A key restriction seems to be the capacity of secondary schools to accommodate new development. There should be a combination of options involving some development at Stansted.
- The split of housing between low cost and market is important
- Housing needs to be near jobs.
- The % of affordable housing needs to be higher and more smaller family homes are required.
- Has the capacity of villages been assessed?
- Lack of infrastructure in villages would seem to point to a single settlement.
- Sampfords were trying to secure affordable housing and would consider some market housing in order to secure this.
- Does the Council or Parish Councils own any land which could be used?
- This presents a fantastic opportunity for a new sustainable settlement which could be on the border with Braintree District and in collaboration with Braintree District Council to meet both Districts' housing requirements.
- Why are we expected to take housing on this scale? The needs are for affordable housing, mainly single person.
- Need to carefully consider timescales for sustained job growth and not plan for industries which have a short life e.g Basildon.
- Affordable housing is not the ideal solution to meeting housing need. Staircasing by the first owner means that 2nd owners are having to buy at 60% of market value which means they are not necessarily affordable.
- A single settlement could work. 40% affordable housing is about right.