

**NORTH AREA PANEL held at the COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00 pm on 5 JUNE 2007**

Present:- Councillor J E Menell – Chairman.
Councillors R H Chamberlain, K L Eden, S J Howell,
A J Ketteridge, H J Mason, D G Perry, J A Redfern, H S Rolfe,
D J Sadler, P A Wilcock and A C Yarwood.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, A Clarke, D Millership, S Nicholas,
C Roberts, J Starr, A Stewart and T Turner.

NP1 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chairman, Councillor Menell, welcomed all present.

Members introduced themselves and Councillor Menell opened the question and answer session. She encouraged residents to take and complete a questionnaire on development of the Area Panel.

(i) Pavement at Hempstead

Sean McCarthy said he had been in touch with officers about provision of a pavement at Hempstead and asked for the written support of the Panel. Councillor Wilcock suggested that the Panel write formally to the Cabinet Member of the Essex County Council for Highways and the newly appointed Director for Highways and this was agreed.

NP2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Anjum, T Knight and S Schneider.

Members of the Panel declared personal and non-prejudicial interests as follows:-

Councillor J E Menell	Member of Littlebury Parish Council
Councillor A C Yarwood	Chairman of Newport Parish Council
Councillor A J Ketteridge	Member of Saffron Walden Town Council
Councillor H S Rolfe	Member of Great Chesterford Parish Council
Councillor D G Perry	Member of Saffron Walden Town Council
Councillor J A Redfern	Member of Great Chesterford Parish Council
Councillor K L Eden	Member of Saffron Walden Town Council

NP3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

NP4

BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Local Development Strategy - Consultation

Concern was noted from representatives of the Sampfords about a reference in the Annex to the Minutes to affordable housing and to market housing in the parish which they considered inaccurate.

Councillor Yarwood commented that these were two separate issues.

(ii) Names of residents attending the Panel meetings

Councillor R Chamberlain requested the names of public attendees be circulated with the Minutes.

NP5

YELLOW BUSES PRESENTATION

The Panel received a presentation by James Bennet, the Yellow Bus Project Manager for West Yorks Passenger Transport Executive.

The project had been produced by a dedicated project team with government funding.

The final phase of implementation would take place by October.

Competition for operation of the buses was high with nine companies operating the 150 services in a wide variety of environments.

Mrs E Sanders asked how the buses were deployed during the day and Mr Bennet explained that it was part of the contract that they could undertake private hire work at a standard rate for schools, which brought in about £100,000 per annum. This market had grown since schools could now hire a bus for a matter of two hours rather than having the expense of buying a service for the whole day.

In answer to further questions it was said that:-

- Further funding had been offered.
- If a parent did not meet the bus, the driver would contact the PTE who would ring the parent.
- Buses would have a 13-15 year life.
- Journey costs were approximately 50p per journey to the pupil, and were subsidised by the PTE.
- There was a clear procedure when parents failed to notify that a pupil would not be travelling.

The Department of Transport may be unwilling to fund yellow buses nationwide, but was prepared to consider individual requests for vehicles to be used in similar schemes.

The Chairman said that issues raised should be forwarded to the Essex County Council with a request to provide a pilot scheme in the area.

Councillor R Gooding of Essex County Council, said that the scheme seemed worthy of consideration.

RESOLVED that this matter be referred to Essex County Council for a pilot scheme within the Uttlesford area.

NP6

LOCALLY DETERMINED BUDGETS

Davina Millership, Interim Area Manager for the West Essex Area Highways Authority, gave a presentation explaining how the locally determined budget was arrived at on a three yearly basis and subsequently added to on a rolling list.

The Chairman expressed regret that papers had not been circulated before the meeting and Councillor A C Yarwood referred to problems of long delays and absence of replies to enquiries at Harlow, due to staffing issues.

Mr M Young asked what the position was now regarding vehicle activated signs and Ms Millership said she would provide this information after the meeting.

In answer to other questions, she said she knew of no plans to enhance the area budgets from savings on lighting. Progress on the Market Square, Saffron Walden could not be further advanced until advice was received from Government on whether funds from previous years could be carried forward.

Councillor H Rolfe expressed sympathy with Ms Millership in view of the resource constraints and suggested that it was important for Uttlesford to improve the dialogue with the Highways Area Office and particularly to talk about raising the local budget. He proposed that the Panel should make proactive moves towards approving items for decision.

Councillor Wilcock proposed an amendment, however in the light of the absence of facts and figures about budgets. He suggested that the decision should be deferred until further clarification had been obtained.

RESOLVED that the programme as already agreed be accepted, that much more dialogue take place in future regarding the items for the Locally Determined Programme and that key areas be prioritised in a simple format as a basis for the dialogue.

NP7

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

The Panel received a presentation by the Senior Planning Officer on representations received following consultation on the core strategy policy choices and options for growth document. She referred in particular to the second part of the document which contained growth options about housing distribution.

Comments received had been made available on the intranet in detail. A report would be provided to the Environment Committee on 4 September 2007 to agree the Preferred Options for consultation in September/October. In addition, an energy efficiency supplementary planning document had already been published for consultations.

RESOLVED that the receipt of representations be noted.

NP8

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN

Alaine Clarke, the Head of Partnerships and Performance gave a presentation regarding the structure for the new corporate plan. She explained that a workshop had taken place with directors, heads of division and political leaders and that the views of Members and the public would be appreciated on the draft priorities, via the material provided. Parishes would also be consulted separately.

RESOLVED that the consultation exercises be noted.

NP9

COMMUNITY PROJECTS GRANTS

The Panel received a presentation by the Strategic Partnerships Manager, Alex Stewart giving advice on related community development activities and schemes in connection with the community project grants powers.

The Strategic Partnerships Manager explained that under the scheme, the sum of £4,000 was no longer ring fenced and that each area would receive £10,000 from which to make awards. The report provided a table showing relevant considerations in the case of each application for Members' consideration.

Mr Stewart explained in answer to questions that the skate park was not registered as a sports club and therefore did not fulfil criteria for a grant of that nature.

Councillor Eden noted that grants appeared to be driven towards rural areas and Mr Stewart said that this was a statistical anomaly.

RESOLVED that the recommendations set out in the report be endorsed.

NP10 **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Panel received the report of the Area Champion, John Starr, covering actions taken by officers to promote greater community capacity and wellbeing.

Councillor H Rolfe asked for a presentation on community development activities at a future meeting.

NP11 **QUESTIONNAIRE**

The Chairman of the Panel reminded those present that return of the questionnaires would be appreciated. In particular, she would be looking for an opinion on the venue (which appeared to be better at the Council Offices than within the parishes) and for suggestions about the question and answer session.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.