

**SOUTH WEST AREA PANEL held at BERDEN VILLAGE HALL at 7.00 pm
on 16 OCTOBER 2007**

Present:- Councillor D Jones – Chairman.
Councillors J E Hudson, R M Lemon, J I Loughlin, D J Morson,
J Salmon and G Sell.

Parish Council and public representatives:- M Peachey, R Cheetham,
Clive and Sheila Lane, Dameon Tasker, David Williams, Andrew
Nelson, Keith Vincent, County Councillor Ray Gooding.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, S Hayden and P Snow.

SWAP26

PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Richard Cheetham made a statement as a member of Takeley Parish Council regarding the allocation of future major housing sites in the District. He noted the debate on the Local Development Framework and the large number of objections forthcoming from residents in the Elsenham and Henham area concerning the proposal to allocate 3,000 homes on a site to the north east of Elsenham. He said that very similar views were held in Takeley regarding the prospects of development there and that, when the consultation began, the Parish Council would voice these strongly held views as to why any large scale development should not spill over into Takeley.

Councillor Lemon asked for clarification over the present position regarding the proposal to allocate 3,000 homes in Elsenham. Councillor Morson confirmed that 11 councillors had signed a requisition calling for the decision of the Environment Committee to be rescinded and for a further discussion of the core strategy to take place at the next meeting of that Committee on 30 October. A member of the public quoted the Leader of the Council at the Extraordinary South West Panel meeting as saying that a change of Government would ease the pressure on Uttlesford of the housing targets imposed centrally. He asked what was the Council's commitment towards making provision for this level of development and was it permissible for the Council to employ delaying tactics?

The Chairman responded that the core strategy must be in place by a given date and the implementation of policy would flow from that decision. Penalties could be imposed for not keeping to the required timetable in the form of a loss of grant.

Councillor Loughlin said that the grant in question was the planning delivery grant and the Council might have to decide whether it was more important to meet the centrally imposed target or face a loss of grant income.

A question was raised about what would happen at the Environment Committee in relation to the options to be discussed. Councillor Morson replied that it was his understanding that all options would be open for debate following which there would be a six week consultation period open to all residents in the District. Another review would take place, then the final recommendation would follow in Spring 2008 for submission to Go East.

Councillor Sell said that he understood there could only be one preferred option although the Leader had told the Scrutiny Committee that housing provision at Elsenham and Henham would not be the sole preferred option.

In response to a further question, Councillor Sell said that the Minutes of all of the relevant meetings were now publicly available on the Council's website. Reference was also made to approaches from private development companies about the potential for developing various sites and he understood that these details would be made public where relevant.

In conclusion, the Chairman stated that all nine of the original options were still available for discussion.

SWAP27 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2007 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SWAP28 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute SWAP 16 – Local Development Framework

Councillor Loughlin asked whether the workshop mentioned in the text to this Minute would take place. The Chairman responded that a workshop could take place if a clear need was demonstrated, but it had not been felt necessary to date as all of the issues raised at the July meeting had been discussed in depth at the Extraordinary meeting.

Councillor Sell questioned this interpretation as he felt that the Environment Committee had decided that a workshop should not take place. The Chairman agreed that it was possible that the Area Panel might request a workshop to be held only for that request to be overruled by the relevant policy committee.

In view of the concerns expressed, Councillor Lemon proposed that a workshop should be held on a date to be agreed. Having been put to the vote, this was agreed and it was

RESOLVED that the officers be asked to arrange a workshop on the Local Development Framework.

It was agreed not to consider the accuracy of the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Panel held on 2 October 2007 as these had only recently been circulated. The Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting would be considered at the next Area Panel meeting.

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Electoral Services Officer presented a comprehensive report detailing the results of the consultation undertaken as part of the review of polling districts and polling places and presenting proposals for some changes to the existing scheme. The review had to be completed by the end of 2007 and it was intended that any recommendations from this Area Panel would be forwarded to the Finance and Administration Committee for approval in time to be reflected in the next published register of electors.

The report outlined the outcome of the consultation process, action taken as a result of the access survey undertaken in 2006 by the Essex Disabled Peoples' Association, and the comments of the Returning Officer who was now required by law to comment on all existing and any proposed polling places.

One of the recommendations in the report referred to the designation of polling places for both existing polling districts in Stansted. This was principally designed to give the Returning Officer greater flexibility in view of the reported intention of Essex County Council eventually to dispose of the whole of the site incorporating both the Peter Kirk Centre and St Mary's Primary School for residential development.

The report also included the recommendation of the Returning Officer that the matter of future provision at Rochford Nurseries should be flagged up for future assessment at such time as the site was sufficiently developed to justify an interim review, and that any review of parish arrangements was taken into account at that time.

Councillor Sell said that he was unhappy with some of the proposed arrangements in Stansted and referred also to the position of electors at Stoney Common and Start Hill who had been transferred to another parish, but still remained in their original district ward. He questioned the suggestion in the report that the Peter Kirk site would be fully redeveloped and was concerned to ensure that both the Peter Kirk Centre and the Youth Centre would continue to be used as polling stations.

Councillor Salmon said that he agreed with these comments and felt that arrangements should be made now to deal with the split parish boundary between Stansted and Birchanger at Rochford Nurseries.

Councillor Godwin, who was unable to be present at this meeting, had sent a message supporting the Council's previous decision to delay conducting a parish review until approximately 200 units were populated on the Rochford Nursery site.

County Councillor Ray Gooding said that he had no knowledge of plans to redevelop the whole of the Peter Kirk site and he asked the Electoral Services Officer to explain the process for allocating polling facilities for electors at Rochford Nurseries.

In responding to these questions, the Electoral Services Officer said that there was no present intention to change any of the polling venues in Stansted and

that adoption of the recommendation in the report would give the Returning Officer greater flexibility to make alternative arrangements if this became necessary. He felt the Council's previous decision to delay a parish review to examine the boundary between Birchanger and Stansted at Rochford Nurseries was a sound one as the purpose of such a review was to establish community identities which could only be done by consulting with residents on the site. As far as the process was concerned, electors would be allocated polling facilities within the parish in which they were registered as electors and this would follow parish boundaries as they presently existed. The polling review and the parish review were not linked but if the parish boundary were to be altered in the future, polling arrangements would be altered, where necessary, to follow that change.

He confirmed also that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill would, when enacted, devolve power regarding the creation and review of parish councils to principal authorities. It was therefore likely that any future review could be brought into effect by Uttlesford.

It was noted that similar circumstances applied to the Priors Green development site which straddled the parish boundary between Takeley and Little Canfield and there was a similar intention to conduct a review of parish arrangements once the site was fully occupied.

In reference to the position of electors at Stoney Common and Start Hill, where a consequential changes order had not been made following the alteration of parish boundaries, Members wished to write to Sir Alan Haselhurst MP asking him to exert pressure upon the Department for Communities and Local Government to enable the various electoral boundaries to be harmonised. The Chairman said also that he would pursue this matter through other channels.

Councillors Hudson and Morson referred to difficulties with the delivery of poll cards to electors in Stansted at the recent local government elections and the Electoral Services Officer confirmed that he was taking this matter up with the Royal Mail.

Consideration was also given to proposals for amendments to the scheme at Wicken Bonhunt, where the County Council intended to dispose of the residential facility at Wicken House, and the proposed change to the polling district boundary definition between Mole Hill Green and Takeley village polling district.

RECOMMENDED to the Finance and Administration Committee that:

- 1 The Peter Kirk Centre no longer be designated as the polling place for Stansted North polling district and that the whole polling district be designated as the polling place.
- 2 The Youth Centre no longer be designated as the polling place for Stansted South polling district and that the following description be substituted: the whole polling district, together with a radius of a quarter of a mile beyond the polling district

boundary, subject to any building used being included within the built up part of Stansted village.

- 3 Wicken House no longer be designated as the polling place in Wicken Bonhunt and that the whole of the polling district be designated instead.
- 4 the following amended description be adopted as the polling district boundary for Mole Hill Green, "that portion of the Parish of Takeley lying to the east and north of a line commencing on the north western boundary of the Parish at a point due north of the passenger terminal at Stansted Airport, and running in a southerly direction to a point on the road from Coopers End to Takeley village just to the north of Bridgefoot Cottages, then in a north easterly direction to the parish boundary at the point where it is crossed by the byway known as Cobbs Lane". As before, Takeley polling district would consist of that portion of the parish not included in the Mole Hill Green polling district.
- 5 The arrangements for the electors in polling districts ACA/2, ACA/3, ADC/2 and ARA/2 listed in the report be agreed, and that representations be made to Sir Alan Haselhurst MP about the unsatisfactory position relating to these electors.
- 6 The entire scheme covering the South West Panel Area be adopted, incorporating those revisions listed above, with effect from the date of the publication of the revised register on 30 November 2007, and that the Electoral Services Officer be authorised to prepare a suitable statement of reasons for decisions made as part of this review.

SWAP30 **UPDATE ON STANSTED AIRPORT**

The Leisure and Community Development Manager reported the apologies of the Director of Development that planning officers had been unable to attend this meeting because of the pressure of other work and because there was nothing substantive to add to previous reports. It was noted that the Stansted Airport Inquiry was presently in its closing stages.

Councillor Loughlin said that she was disappointed that no officer was in attendance at this meeting and that there was no written report. Stansted Airport was the most important single issue facing the Council and it was unsatisfactory that the Area Panel had been denied the opportunity to question officers. Councillor Lemon agreed with these comments and said that he had attended the meeting specifically for the Stansted Airport item as there were no other matters affecting his ward. He said that if the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy was unable to attend, he should have arranged for a substitute speaker.

Councillor Sell said that Members were entitled to expect that an officer should attend meetings where required, or that there should be a written

report submitted. He asked that arrangements were put in place to ensure that this would happen in the future.

Members generally endorsed these comments and it was agreed that it should be noted accordingly in the record of this meeting.

SWAP31 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Leisure and Community Development Manager presented a report advising Members of related community development activities and schemes in progress since the previous Panel meeting. She referred in particular to the Uttlesford Futures Sustainable Community Strategy and said that consultation events would be held on Saturdays during November in various parts of the District.

Councillor Lemon said that this was an excellent programme of events and reflected credit on the officers concerned.

SWAP32 OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

A resident of Berden asked why public money had been spent on the illuminated speed limit signs which either did not work or had been calibrated to the wrong speed setting. He said that it was irritating that there was no consistent approach to how these signs operated in different locations. For example, a sign installed in Clavering appeared not to work at all, but a similar sign in Manuden operated at too low a speed. He understood that a similar sign would be provided in Berden in the near future.

County Councillor Ray Gooding said that he would arrange to follow up any cases reported of signs not operating properly. He said that it had been demonstrated that illuminated signs were more successful than speed cameras and this had been illustrated by the contrasting examples of the two London Boroughs of Croydon and Bromley.

Richard Cheetham thought it would be more productive for matters of this nature to be reported to the County Council via the relevant parish council.

The Chairman said that there had been problems of communication with the Highways Office and, following the appointment of a new manager for the West Essex area, he was confident that many of these issues would be addressed.

Councillor Lemon said that he had met with the new manager, Mr Forkin, and he had arranged to follow up a number of unresolved issues in a helpful manner.

The Chairman pointed out that the Area Highways Manager had attended the previous night's meeting of the East Area Panel and he would be happy to offer a similar invitation for him to attend a future meeting of the South West Panel.

Councillor Loughlin said that there was a problem in her ward with green boxes and bins left in the middle of pavements and causing impediments to pedestrians. She urged anyone who was aware of similar problems to make a formal complaint. Councillor Morson said that he was aware of the same problem occurring in Elsenham.

At that point, the Chairman closed the meeting and thanked members of the public for attending.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.