

MEETING OF UTTLESFORD FOCUS GROUP - SOUTHERN AREA held at COUNCIL OFFICES GREAT DUNMOW at 7.30 pm on 10 FEBRUARY 1999

Present:- Michael Foster, Craig Hirons, Julia Hirons, Frances Isacke, Catherine Mitchell, Nick Ray, Norman Roads, Barbara Stopher.

Officers in attendance: Brian Perkins, Mick Purkiss and Richard Secker.

I. RECYCLING

Richard Secker, the Council's Head of Environmental Services, attended the meeting for this item and answered a number of questions concerning the Council's recycling activities.

I. THE WAY AHEAD

At the last meeting the Focus Group had decided that, in the first instance, they would concentrate on the following key issues:

- * housing
- * transport
- * environment (including recycling)
- * involving the local community

Unfortunately, three members present at this meeting had not been able to attend the last meeting and were asked whether there were any other key issues which they would want to be included. Following discussion, it was agreed that health should be included as one of the priorities.

The group noted that the next meeting would be held at the Great Dunmow offices at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 24 February 1999. Arrangements had also been made for the group to meet with a small group of Councillors before submitting its formal report to a Committee. This meeting would be held at the Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden on 17 March 1999.

It was hoped that a draft of the report would be available for the meeting of 17 March and Julia Hirons volunteered to prepare the first draft.

I. HOUSING

The following areas were highlighted in relation to housing in Uttlesford.

- * It was recognised that the new A120 would increase the pressures for new housing development.
- * New development must be carefully planned. There was a need for a proper strategy and any large housing sites needed to be earmarked. It was important that new development should be policy led rather than left to market forces or pressures from developers. A system needed to be in place to ensure that developers provided infrastructure at an early stage of any new development. Controls therefore needed to be in place with developers to ensure the provision of infrastructure and the correct phasing of development.
- * More affordable housing for local people needed to be provided and a greater mix of housing was required on new developments. (One idea put forward was a local tax or levy on developers to help pay for acquiring affordable housing sites.)
- * There was a need to build what the area needed rather than what the developers wanted.
- * It was noted that sites for 5,000 houses were available over the next 5/10 years and the group stressed the importance of retaining Uttlesford as a rural community.

I. TRANSPORT

The following areas were highlighted in relation to transport in Uttlesford:-

- * The main problem was the lack of public transport and its suitability to enable people to travel to and from work. Public transport must meet the needs of the public.
- * There needed to be greater emphasis and more encouragement for people to use public transport.
- * The cost of public transport was often prohibitive and there might be a need to subsidise certain routes, particularly for people on limited income.
- * Timetables needed to be made more widely available.
- * There was concern at the state of some pavements and indiscriminate parking which often caused obstructions and it was generally agreed that there was a need for greater policing of restrictions.
- * There was concern at the number of road accidents in Uttlesford and there was a need for more speed controls. The Group considered that there should be a lower speed limit on rural unrestricted roads and speeds should be reduced in built up areas, particularly around schools from 30mph to 20mph.
- * Concern was expressed at the problem of large lorries and the damage which they caused to rural areas. The Focus Group considered that the local authorities needed to reassess the routes used by such vehicles.

I. HEALTH

The Group expressed its concern at the lack of a casualty department within the District, particularly with the expansion of the airport and considered that pressure should be put on the Health Authority to improve services within Uttlesford and to encourage the provision of better accident and emergency cover within the District.

I. FUTURE WORK

At the next meeting consideration would need to be given to the environment and involving the local community. The Focus Group felt that the latter should be re-titled "Communication" and the emphasis needed to be on providing information rather than involving the community.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm