

STATEMENT OF SIMON HAVERS – Scrutiny Committee: Tuesday, 15 January 2019

I would like to comment briefly on three things: the need for this review, the scope of this review and the timing of this review:

NEED

This review is badly needed if Uttlesford is to have any chance of restoring public confidence after making a decision so manifestly against the interests of its own residents. To list all the reasons why would take too long so just one example. It's an absolute travesty to say that "Extensive work went into engagement with the public". I live 3km from the end of the runway, near the flight path and take an interest in local affairs. The first I heard of this application was in October from SSE, not through any efforts of the council. I spoke to dozens of relatives, friends and neighbours about it subsequently and not one of them was aware of the application and were to a greater or lesser extent outraged that it had not been communicated to them. So much for the extensive work!

SCOPE

It is entirely appropriate for the Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise individual decisions made by other committees if their review uncovers matters they feel are irregular. To try to tie the hands of the review by limiting its scope at the outset will look to me and every other member of the community like an attempted cover up. The scope of any review should explicitly include a review of the merits of the decision made by the Planning Committee and of the advice it received. The only people who would argue against this would be those who fear they have failed to discharge their duties properly and don't want to be held to account for that. A kindergarten PR class would teach you that the cover-up is always worse than the original failing. It's one thing to do something wrong; it's a completely other issue to try to hide the truth from the public. The former you can usually earn forgiveness for; the latter not.

TIMING

I read four different reasons in Officer Pugh's report arguing for a delay to the start of the review: because the secretary of state is still looking at it, because there is litigation going on that UDC is not a party to, because it would not fit in well with the calendar of committee meetings and finally because everyone's a bit too busy right now. I worked in the public sector up until 1992 and even back then this sort of rubbish would not have been tolerated. By all means make sure the review is

properly resourced and has plenty of time to do its work, but that's an argument for starting the work at the earliest opportunity, not kicking the can down the road.

In summary, please start a review without delay and give it a broad scope.

Thank you

Simon Havers