

# Minutes

## Halstead Local Committee

20<sup>th</sup> January 2010



Present:

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Present</b>
Mrs J C Beavis	Yes	H J Messenger	Yes (from 7.35pm)
R J Bolton	Yes	J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Yes
J C Collar	Yes	Mrs J A Pell	Yes
Mrs B A Gage	Yes	Mrs W D Scattergood	Yes
M G Gage	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
N R H O Harley	Apologies	C Siddall	Yes
D L Hume	Apologies	Mrs G A Spray	Apologies
N G McCrea	Yes	F Swallow	Yes

#### 40 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

- Councillor Mrs J A Pell declared
  - (i) A personal interest in Agenda Item 6(a) Local Committee Budget and Priorities, as she is Vice President to Halstead Cricket Club, and her grandson is associated with the Club, that is seeking funding for a book
  - (ii) A personal interest as a Member of the River Colne Countryside Project that has an Information Report at Agenda Item 8
  - (iii) A personal interest as a Director of Braintree Museum that is referred to in Agenda Item 7(a) Budget Consultation 2010/11
  - (iv) A personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7(b) Consultation on the Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project, as her husband works for a power company that purchases from the National Grid. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillor Mrs Pell left the meeting whilst this item was discussed and the vote taken thereon.
- Councillor Mrs W D Scattergood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7(b) Consultation on the Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project as the proposed power line would be adjacent to her property, the Twinstead Tee is visible from her house, and the project could affect the price of her property. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillor Mrs Scattergood left the meeting whilst this item was discussed and the vote taken thereon.
- Councillor J C Collar declared a personal interest as a Member of the River Colne Countryside Project that has an Information Report at Agenda Item 8.
- Councillor Mrs J C Beavis declared a personal interest in

- (i) Agenda Item 5(a) Parish Support Grant as Chairman of Sible Hedingham Parish Council and for any reference to Sible Hedingham Car Park, and
  - (ii) Agenda Item 6(a) Local Committee Budget and Priorities as there is reference to Sible Hedingham and she is Chairman of the Parish Council.
- Councillor F Swallow declared a personal interest as a Sible Hedingham Parish Councillor in all the agenda items that has reference to Sible Hedingham Parish Council.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct all Members remained in the meeting for the items, unless stated otherwise, and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

#### 41 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the minutes of the meeting of Halstead Local Committee held on 11th November 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment at Minute 36 Local Committee Budget and Priorities to record 'That the Criteria for assessing the Business Cases was approved'. There were no matters arising.

#### 42 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There were three speakers in Question Time, and a summary of their questions/statements is appended to these minutes.

The Chairman advised that Item 7(b) the Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project would be taken next on the agenda.

#### 43 **BRAMFORD TO TWINSTEAD OVERHEAD LINE PROJECT**

Melvyn Crow, the Landscape Services Manager, presented the report on behalf of Paul Munson, the report author, who was unwell.

The Council had been consulted on the First Stage of options to provide a new 400kv power line between Bramford and Twinstead, and comprised of four corridor options affecting the Stour Valley in the Braintree District. The Corridor 2 option would replace the existing 132kv line with the 400kv line, and necessitate a new substation to be built, and three site options for this had been put forward. The consultation period closes on 28th February 2010. It was noted that the Twinstead Tee quoted in the reports is not geographically set in Twinstead.

Details of Corridor Options 1 – 4 were advised and the recommendations in the report to (i) object to additional overhead power lines across the Stour Valley and for them to be underground; and (ii) if the National Grid were to pursue the overhead options the Council's preference would be Corridor 2 with Site C as the new sub station site.

Councillor Shelton, as Ward Member, advised that at the last meeting of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley project it had been decided that an application for defining the Stour Valley as an Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) would be made. Councillor Shelton was pleased to see objection to overhead lines and for cabling to be placed underground in the Stour Valley but did not support proposal (ii)

due to the tremendous feeling by the public in North Essex and South Suffolk to the National Grid scheme. There are other alternatives, including those of Stour Valley Underground (SVU), and these should be considered. Councillor Shelton moved proposal (i) only, and this was seconded by Councillor M Gage who was also of the opinion of alternative options, including cabling under the sea and around the coast schemes. Other Councillors supported the motion to place cables underground, and it was proposed that Halstead Local Committee (HLC) should formally write to (i) National Grid to show the unity between HLC and Parish Councils and the response to the consultation; and (ii) to Parish Councils within the Halstead Area, plus neighbouring District Councils at Babergh, St Edmundsbury and Suffolk and Essex County Councils, advising them of the response.

Melvyn Crow did advise that the National Grid had indicated (Item 6 in the report) that burying cables underground is considered in exceptional cases and contains many disadvantages. Once the corridor route had been selected the cost would be 12-17 times higher than the overhead option, and it would clear a swathe - the width of a motorway – across the countryside with no development in that swathe. However, the National Grid had not supplied any technical detail for this instance.

#### **DECISION:**

1. That the National Grid be advised that the Halstead Local Committee, as part of the Council's response, objects to proposals for the construction of additional 400kv overhead lines across the Stour Valley in Braintree District and that they should be placed underground.
2. That a copy of the above response be supplied to Parish Council's in the Halstead Area, together with the neighbouring authorities of Babergh District Council, St Edmundsbury District Council, Essex County Council and Suffolk County Council.

#### 44 **PARISH SUPPORT GRANT**

At the commencement of this item it was clarified that proposals for the cessation of the Parish Support Grant in the Service and Budget Proposals paper (Page 16 of agenda) had been withdrawn by Full Council on 14th December 2009, and the value to 'Net Impact on Profile' amended to zero.

Members considered an extract from the Cabinet minutes of 7th December 2009 and a Discussion Paper by the Leader of the Council that had been received at Appendix F of the Finance papers received at Cabinet and Council in December 2009.

During the discussion Members referred to the creation of the Parish Support Grant in 1974 when local Councils were restructured, and that it was an 'equalisation' grant paid to parishes to mitigate the unparished areas. It was noted that the questions regarding cemeteries in the Leader's paper should be ignored as both Halstead and Witham have responsibility for closed churchyards, including recent expenditure on works to pathways.

Councillor M Gage stated that the previous recommendation (from November's meeting) regarding the use of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should still go ahead, and consider the parished and unparished areas across the District.

Other issues raised in relation to the Leader of the Council's paper included:

- Special Expenses (No 5) Different amounts of Council Tax to be calculated – has to allow for parts of the area that have different services, i.e. in rural areas roads are not swept daily, no play areas are provided from the General Fund, the District Council does not support playing field facilities, parishes pay for their own community halls, and most Parish Councils contribute to the costs of churches and burial grounds.
- Additional Tax for Unparished Areas (No 8) – the expenditure data on Braintree and Bocking
- It was noted that the Leader had written to all Parish Councils and Town Councils, and had taken their comments 'on board' – as indicated at Full Council
- It was noted that some Parishes do have large reserves of their own. However, this may relate to only large villages and many smaller villages may not hold reserve balances
- To promote the 'Localism' agenda and devolve decisions to the local people funding will be required or to utilise funds with other partners, i.e. Town and District Council schemes.

That it be **RECOMMEND TO CABINET:-**

That an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group be established to investigate the equalisation in the longer term of local tax within the District.

#### 45 **LOCAL COMMITTEE BUDGET AND PRIORITIES**

##### (i) **Assessment of Business Cases**

The Member Services Manager, Alastair Peace, presented the report and advised that the Sub Group had met on 13th January 2010 to consider 12 business cases. It was noted that the Community Transport Business Case (HAP01) should be deferred as Essex County Council (ECC) are currently active on this topic, and it was considered prudent to await their proposals. A revised Financial Summary was circulated at the meeting, that results with £24,720 deficit under Capital – it is therefore proposed to transfer funds from Revenue to Capital to allow for this.

Councillor McCrea, the Lead Member for the Community Transport Business Case, provided further information, and stated a number of parishes are failing on transport, i.e. Lamarsh, Borley, Bures, the Hennys, Twinstead, Ovington, Tilbury Juxta Clare and Stambourne. Some work had been instigated by Tracey Corcoran, BDC's Community Transport Manager, and bus routes could be set up for 12 passengers for Pentlow/the Belchamps to Haverhill, Ridgewell to Sudbury, and Toppesfield to Haverhill. However, it is proposed to defer the Community Transport Business Case to a future meeting to await the outcome of ECC's schemes. In the meantime, Tracey Corcoran, is putting forward proposals and considering if any contribution from Halstead Local Committee would be useful and how it would be spent.

In response to a query why there were no highway maintenance issues on the Business Case list, it was clarified that this was outside the criteria for Business Cases that relate to within a community facility.

## **DECISION:**

1. That the funding for Business Cases for 2009/10 as recommended by the Sub Group be approved. It was noted that HAP01 Community Transport Business Case is deferred to a future meeting.
2. That funding be sought from the balance in the residual fund from the previous Rural Communities Development Fund to further support certain projects.
3. That the revised Financial Summary as at 20th January 2010 be noted, and funds of £24,720 are transferred from Revenue to Capital.

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### **(ii) Draft Programme of Work**

The Member Services Manager, Alastair Peace presented the report and advised that further research is being undertaken on the Draft Programme.

The Committee were reminded of the public's requests and noted that 'different ways of working' will be used to produce solutions, currently uncosted, through merging the public providers of local Councils, the Fire Service, the National Health Service, and the Police, and channelling schemes to the appropriate body.

**DECISION:** That the Draft Programme of Work be approved.

## **46 BUDGET CONSULTATION 2010/11**

The Head of Finance, Trevor Wilson presented the report on Council budget proposals for 2010/11. Members were referred to the planned Revenue Adjustments and noted that changes to (i) the Museum Service (Page 15) is not now being put forward, and (ii) the reduction to staffing structure of Landscape Services has been taken out, and the support for countryside programmes and to schools will continue. With regard to Proposed Capital Projects it was reported that £800,000 had been set aside for the Halstead Community Facility Project.

Councillor O'Reilly-Cicconi raised concern to the percentage over three years on the 'worst case scenario' being too low, and was reassured that as a final figure was known for 2010/11, and reductions proposed for 2011/12 to 2013/14, it would be appropriate to revisit this issue post General Election.

Members were pleased that £800,000 had been allocated for a new community facility in Halstead, and for the project to move forward with Halstead Town Council. The deletion of the Parish Liaison Officer post was questioned and information requested on the reorganisation of the parish support arrangements (Page 15). Councillor Mrs Beavis, Cabinet Member for Customers and Communication advised that all Parish Councils will be advised of the changes and proposals are underway to refresh the Parish Cluster meetings and facilitate Parish and Town Councils.

**DECISION:** That the report be noted, and the comments stated above are included in future consideration of the budget proposals.

#### 47 **REVIEW OF OFF-STREET CAR PARKING**

The Committee received the feedback report from the consultation process within the Review of Parking Operations and Charges.

**DECISION:** That the feedback report be noted.

#### 48 **RIVER COLNE COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT**

Melvyne Crow, the Landscape Services Manager gave a verbal report on works on the River Colne, formerly the Countryside Project – a partnership with Colchester Borough Council that had ended in June 2009. A contribution of £3,000 from Halstead Local Committee in May 2009 had enabled the services of the Project Officer to be retained, and an update on achievements since that period was made. There are 300 volunteers across the District, and 1,500 works to habitat management projects, including the Colne Valley and this equates to £7,000 being spent in the valley. Various groups have been set up, and the Project Officer has assisted with schemes of designation, e.g. at Gosfield Pits where a Management Plan had been accepted, and to assist the Friends of Hedingham Riverside Walk with path clearance and tree planting. In Halstead town, work had been undertaken with the Halstead In Bloom, and to support the Green Flag award at the Halstead public gardens. Other work has been completed with conservation groups and local schools from Ridgewell to The Colnes. With such a wide range of projects improvements to the quality of the landscape, bio diversity of the area, and a better lifestyle has been recognised.

Councillor M G Gage, on behalf of Halstead in Bloom, thanked the Landscape Services team for their work in the District. It was clarified that 30,000 trees had been achieved or supported in planting across the District during the last year. Other Councillors extended their thanks to Mr Crow and his team in relation to Environment Agency flood alleviation initiatives along the Colne Valley, and the list of critical water courses and streams that feed into the River Colne. The work of the Landscape Services team on planning applications and enforcement issues also proved very useful. The work of volunteers was also acknowledged, and the pleasure experienced by Mencap and other organisations whilst providing assistance.

Councillor O'Reilly-Cicconi welcomed the activities along the Colne Valley, although one officer post on the River Colne Project had been lost, and the duties of Richard Parmee had been modified.

Councillor Bolton, on behalf of all of the Halstead Local Committee thanked Mr Crow and his team for their work and dedication.

#### 49 **FUTURE ITEMS**

The Committee was advised of a future report for Halstead Local Committee.

**DECISION:** That the current agenda item for the meeting of Halstead Local Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010 be noted as:

- Asset Management 2010/11.

The meeting closed at 9.18pm.

R J Bolton (Chairman)

## APPENDIX

### HALSTEAD LOCAL COMMITTEE

20TH JANUARY 2010

### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

#### Summary of Questions Asked / Statements Made During Public Question Time

1. Statement by David Holland, representing Stour Valley Underground (SVU)  
Item 7(b) Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project

Mr Holland read from a prepared statement and advised that he represented the pressure group SVU that had been formed under the auspices of the pylon issue affecting Essex Parishes of Twinstead, Hennys, Middleton, Lamarsh and Alphamstone and their respective Councils. The SVU represents the people on both sides of the Stour Valley in opposing National Grid's (NG) proposals to further blight the landscape with pylons.

The SVU in this effort are collaborating with other local organisations, including 'Bury not Blight', the Dedham Vale Society, the Colne-Stour Countryside Association, to develop a common and comprehensive collective response that will include:

- the complete rejection of all of NG's 'corridors' on environmental, economic and other grounds (as you do not need to establish a 'corridor' if it is underground)
- the rejection of the validity of the consultation process which has not put all reasonable alternatives for getting power from the east coast to London before the public at NG's consultation events
- to present a 21st century solution to distributing energy from the new renewable energy generators that is right for the whole country, the environment and is a road map to a pylon free UK.

Through research the SVU has developed strategies to place cabling underground, assessing them and consulting with other groups and in most cases finding that they do not suit all of us. But this will lead the SVU to step back from the local issue of pylons and look at the problem of distributing bulk electricity across the UK and from a pan European perspective, and has led to a strategy solving the problem and finding a solution to suit us all. The SVU's draft undersea cable strategy paper and other pylon issue related information is held on their website.

The consultation timescale has produced technical issues and the SVU are in the process of compiling a comprehensive response, and formally requested the Council to delay finalising its' submission until nearer the 28th February 2010 deadline to allow groups and residents to present their responses.

2. Statement by Richard Barnes, Conifer, Twinstead  
Item 7(b) Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project

Mr Barnes (of the SVU) referred to the electricity distribution network across East Anglia including two gas powered power stations at South Holland/Kings Lynn and two nuclear reactors at Sizewell, and the wind farms off the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts, and National Grid timescales of 2014/2016 for the new schemes.

The SVU are suggesting that as most of the new power generation is off-coast or off-shore, complying with UK targets and to reduce CO2 emissions by 2020, the cabling will come ashore under the sea and this should continue as an under sea coastal route instead of coming inland and creating pylons in the Stour Valley. The costs were referred to, and that 3% of electricity bills are spent on high voltage scheme for the National Grid.

3. Statement by Steve Bolter, Wickham House, Gestingthorpe  
Item 7(b) Bramford to Twinstead Overhead Line Project  
Item 5(a) Parish Support Grant

Mr Bolter advised that he is a Member of Gestingthorpe Parish Council who are to discuss the National Grid proposals on 21st January 2010. In his personal opinion neither route corridor should go ahead and the Twinstead Tee is not part of the solution, and any cross of the River Stour should be at the least sensitive point. Underwater high voltage cables should be routed to London, or from Sizewell to Bradwell.

Mr Bolter referred to the four corridor options and that the National Grid should consider the whole route. It was considered that no commitment be expressed to Option 2 without determination of the new transformer station site. The Council's preferred location at Site C for a new sub-station was considered unsuitable as the height of the new pylons would not be screened by Butlers Wood, east of Wickham St Paul. The pylons would be visible from miles around and the local geology and transmission affecting nearby housing was referred to. There would also be increased traffic impact to the A131 main road. Members were requested not to support the Twinstead site.

Mr Bolter made brief reference to the Parish Support Grant and the increase of 2004/05, the introduction of the Rural Community Development Fund – that had now closed – and that the Parish Support Grant should be increased by over inflation.