



District Councillor Monthly Report

Lawford, Manningtree & Mistley

February / March 2020

Planning

There exists a planning approval to build 67 homes on land to the rear of New Road, Mistley. Another application to revise the approved layout of this site has been submitted (19/01956/OUT)

I have formally called-in the application which must now be heard by the Planning Committee.

I have not received an opinion on the application from any of the three local councils. I am interested in your position before this appears on a Planning Committee agenda.

On the 28th January I attended the Planning Inquiry regarding the Hopkins Homes application to build a further 100 homes on the River Reach site. I gave evidence, together with Councillor Cambridge, Councillor Wynn (Bradfield PC) and Mr Rayner. We await the Planning Inspector's decision.

Consultation – Protecting Bird Life around our coastline from house building

New planning guidance for developers is being drawn up to ensure wildlife is protected from additional human and dog visits generated by new housing developments – and the public's views are wanted on the proposed strategy.

All 12 local authorities in Essex, including Tendring District Council (TDC), are working together to introduce the guidance to ensure areas of our coastline recognised as internationally important for bird life are protected from the indirect impacts of house building.

European Law gives special protection to the Stour and Colne Estuaries, Hamford Water and other areas of the Essex coast, and councils are duty-

bound to ensure both the direct and indirect impacts of new development are assessed, taken into account and, where necessary, mitigated.

The Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will provide Essex councils with a consistent process to apply when dealing with planning applications, and help developers understand the measures they will be expected to put in place.

Under the Essex Coast RAMS, mitigation measures from Essex County Council, local councils and Natural England are set out to lessen the potential impact of developments, which are then funded by contributions made by those behind developments within Zones of Influences.

Measures will include rangers to help coastal visitors understand the importance of different species, work to encourage responsible dog walking, and visits to less sensitive parts of the coast, as well as creating new habitats.

Some Essex councils, including Tendring, are already requiring developers to make financial contributions toward the project but the SPD will formalise the process and set out in more detail how the money will be spent. A public consultation must be held on the SPD before it can be adopted.

Nick Turner, Chairman of TDC's Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee, encouraged people to take part in the consultation.

“Thousands of birds come to the Tendring coastline to breed and feed, and new housing will lead to more people visiting the coast for leisure, such as dog walking,” Cllr Turner said.

“With an increase in visitor numbers comes the potential to cause more disturbance, and research shows this will affect the birds' survival unless mitigation measures are put in place.

“These measures come at a cost, and RAMS means that those who build homes pay to reduce the impact that housing will have on our coastal environment.”

The consultation on the Essex Coast RAMS SPD starts on 10 January 2020 and runs for six weeks, until 5pm on 21 February 2020.

Comments can be made via the consultation portal:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/place-services/the-essex-coast-rams-spd>

Alternatively, email your representations to:

ecology.placeservices@essex.gov.uk or write to: Place Services, Essex

County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1QH. Any queries about the consultation can be sent to Place Services via the email address above **or by phoning 03330 322130.**

Approaches to tackling Homelessness

Four key areas for addressing the issue of homelessness have been set out under a draft Homelessness Strategy from Tendring District Council (TDC).

The public's views are being sought on the document which sets out the council's approach to reducing homelessness and ending rough sleeping.

Although the numbers of rough sleepers are relatively low in Tendring, the council wants to do more to help prevent anyone from having to sleep rough, and to act quickly to get them out of that situation if it arises.

The four strands to the council's proposed approach are earlier intervention and education; increasing the supply of suitable accommodation; better partnership and holistic working; and exploring new ways to tackle rough sleeping.

Specific steps include earlier identification of those at risk of homelessness, the provision of 'crash beds' so no-one who sleeps rough has to spend a second night on the streets and increase the number of move-on properties.

Paul Honeywood, TDC Cabinet Member for Housing, said although the causes of homelessness could be many and varied – and often outside of the council's direct control – TDC was determined to help everyone in the district to live in quality accommodation.

“The council has a proud record of preventing and tackling homelessness, but we recognise that we can do more,” Cllr Honeywood said.

“Whilst the numbers of people sleeping rough are low compared to other areas, we recognise we need to intervene more quickly to respond and, more importantly, we need to do more to prevent it in the first place.”

The consultation will run from 13 January until 23 February, after which time TDC's Cabinet will consider the draft and consultation responses before considering whether to approve the strategy.

The draft Homelessness Strategy can be read online, and the webpage also contains details of how to respond:

<https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategies-policies>

Alternatively a copy can be provided at the council's offices in Pier Avenue, Clacton.

North Essex Garden Communities - cash boost from Government

Housing Minister, Rt Hon Esther Mcvey, has announced a total of £6 million of funding to help progress plans for garden towns and villages across the UK. In total, plans across the UK will help deliver up to 200,000 new homes.

The North Essex Garden Communities project has received a £550,000 share of the funding to progress plans for the three proposed Garden Communities across Colchester, Tendring and Braintree.

Cllr John Spence, Chair of NEGC and Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Adults, said: “We welcome the confirmation of extra funding which we were expecting from the Government, which is a vote of confidence in our ability to deliver garden communities in North Essex through our partnership work.”

Cllr Neil Stock OBE, Leader of Tendring District Council, said: “This welcome but unsurprising announcement comes just as a Planning Inspector resumes examining our joint strategic Local Plan, which sets out our shared ambition for garden communities across North Essex.

“This clearly demonstrates the level of significant and ongoing support from Government – who have already given the North Essex garden communities project more than £3million – for this innovative and forward-thinking approach to ensuring we have enough homes, jobs and infrastructure to support future growth in our area in a planned and sustainable way.”

Cllr David King, Colchester Borough Council’s Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources said: “I’m delighted the Government has once again confirmed its support for garden communities.

“It knows residents deserve better than the piecemeal and speculative development of recent years. This announcement is great news and further testament to our joint vision and ability to attract the investment needed to create sustainable new communities.

“The Government and our council partners know that garden communities are a much better way to deliver the new homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure needed for future generations across North Essex.”

Cllr Gabrielle Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning at Braintree District Council, said: “This money from central government to progress garden communities to create good homes for hardworking families is very good news. We will continue to work with our partners to make the right long-term decisions for our local area.”

NEGC Ltd is the body tasked with taking the North Essex Garden Communities project forward. It is wholly owned by, and works on behalf of, Essex County Council, Braintree District Council, Tendring District Council and Colchester Borough Council. The delivery of the Garden Communities is subject to their being approved by an independent Planning Inspector.

Currently, there are 21 Garden Community projects across the UK.

Director convicted for Fraud

The director of a theatre ticketing firm has been convicted of fraudulent trading, concerning over £100,000 owed to the Princes Theatre.

Tendring District Council (TDC) prosecuted David Eve, of Great Totham, who was sole director of Standing Ovation Entertainments Ltd.

Eve was convicted at Chelmsford Crown Court of a single charge of between January 1, 2015 and June 1, 2017, knowingly carrying on a business with intent to defraud creditors of that company, following a two-week trial.

Standing Ovation Entertainments Ltd provided the box office for the TDC-run Princes Theatre from October 2012 until January 2017.

The court heard Eve had not ring-fenced income from ticket sales to hand over to TDC, and instead used the cash to pay off other debts. He had continued to operate the business and failed to inform TDC of the company's financial problems, despite making a steadily worsening loss.

Eve will be sentenced at Chelmsford Crown Court on Friday, 6 March.

Budget Spending Plans agreed

£500,000 is being offered by Tendring District Council (TDC) to support community organisations operating in the area. The Tendring Community Fund was announced by TDC Leader Neil Stock OBE during his Budget speech to full council on Tuesday, 11th February.

The half-million-pound funding pot will be paid for from the council's New Homes Bonus for 2020/21.

Although details of the scheme are to be finalised, Cllr Stock said he envisaged it being similar to a previous initiative, the Big Society Fund, but modernised.

“This fund seeks to support community groups and organisations that in turn support the residents and local communities across our district,” Cllr Stock said.

“A key condition of awarding a grant would be to jointly fund a project which has other financial support. Like the Big Society Fund, grants would be awarded by a cross-party panel approving applications.”

Also, in the budget it was confirmed that there would be **£1.134m** funding to support investment in council assets as part of the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

A new Rural and Urban Investment Fund of **£1.2m** has been set up to help unlock economic growth in Tendring. The Rural and Urban Infrastructure Fund is aimed at kick-starting or seed-funding larger projects within the district.

TDC Leader Neil Stock OBE announced the new investment fund citing a new road and rail crossing at Manningtree station, a Thorpe-le-Soken bypass or upgrading the A120 as examples of projects it could support.

It is based on the model of the previous Coastal Improvement and Enhancement Fund – set up in 2011 this saw Tendring District Council (TDC) allocate £3m which in turn leveraged overall investment of £37m from government and partners to fund major sea defence works in Holland-on-Sea.

“It is my hope this new Rural and Urban Infrastructure Fund can be used in a similar manner to kick-start a much bigger project or projects to bring about vital improvement to key infrastructure within the district,” Cllr Stock said.

“Obviously, I want to make clear, the £1.2m in this fund will not be anywhere near enough to pay for any of those projects outright.

“But just as we did with the coastal improvement works, it could provide the seed-funding necessary not only to demonstrate our serious commitment, but also to provide the technical framework necessary for such projects to progress and succeed, and to attract the large-scale funding they will require.”

Also agreed were plans to spend the Revenue Support Grant from Government, which had not been expected this year:

- **£100,000** of funding for a three-year Housing Early Intervention Officer to support families at risk of homelessness.
- **£44,000** one-year (an initial trial) fund to perform additional public realm work, specifically targeted at removing litter, unwanted growth on our roads and pavements etc and generally making the district smarter.
- **£249,000** to support additional Corporate Enforcement work, with a planning and licencing priority in the first instance.

The Budget was approved unanimously by councillors at the meeting.

The Housing Revenue Account budget was also passed, which includes a **2.7% rise in council rents** – bringing the **average weekly rent to £82.42** – to allow continued investment in council-owned homes, following the ending of a previous government requirement to reduce rents by 1% each year.

“Over the past few months we have committed funding to key projects, such as rejuvenating Clacton town centre, the Starlings site in Dovercourt and work to Clacton Leisure Centre,” Cllr Stock added.

“These projects, along with others in the pipeline, will see further significant investment in our district. Along with those that will be emerging over the remaining three years of this term, we should not only see our own money

being ploughed back into the district but, by also working hard at our partnerships and constantly and with relentless positivity making the case for Tendring, we will be attracting external funding into our area.

Enforcement Action – A useful tool to improve housing standards

Tendring District Council's (TDC) Private Sector Housing team has had almost 470 requests for help so far in the 2019-20 financial year from tenants living in private accommodation – which makes up around 20% of the area's housing.

In the majority of cases improvement work was carried out by landlords after informal action was taken, while in 90 cases advice was given to support tenants to secure works.

In 153 cases the matter was referred to another council team or an external organisation for help and support.

In total TDC has taken formal enforcement action in 29 cases, including issuing prohibition orders, improvement notices, and penalty notices running into tens of thousands of pounds.

Paul Honeywood, TDC Cabinet Member for Housing, said, "There had been good work carried out even if most of it was unseen by the public. With nearly 20% of our residents living in privately rented housing it is important that we use all the powers available to us to make sure tenants are protected from landlords who do not comply with the law,"

"We have a very strong and effective private sector housing enforcement team who are dedicated to ensuring tenants live in decent and safe homes and will continue to work on their behalf.

"Over the past year some very strong action has been taken across the whole district to protect tenants from unsafe housing. This may involve using our own powers, or in some cases working with partners such as the police to clamp down on anti-social behaviour.

"I am pleased that following the introduction of additional powers for councils last year, along with our adopted enforcement policy, we have been able to use these extra tools in the box – as a last resort – to ensure action is taken to protect te

National Award Nominations

Tendring District Council has been shortlisted and are finalists in three PPMA (Public Services People Managers' Association) national awards. The PPMA covers Local Government, Central Government and a range of other departments such as the Bank of England and Ombudsman. TDC is the only organisation in the country to be nominated for THREE awards.

The award entries through to the final are as follows:

- **Best Apprenticeship Provider – the Council is nominated for Career Track.**
- **Best Employer and Trade Union Partnership – this application is based on the Council’s sound strategic and operational working relationship with Unison.**
- **Best Mental Health Initiative – the Council has provided a case study on the work with primary schools across the district, which supports both children and parents/carers with a number of wellbeing initiatives.**

The Council will know if it has been successful on 31st March 2020.

FREEPORT Status - A Terrific Opportunity for Harwich?

Establishing a freeport at Harwich could be a “terrific opportunity” for Tendring.

Reacting to the announcement by the Government earlier this month that it was looking to establish up to ten freeports in the UK, Cllr Stock said, “It was a concept he had discussed with the Secretary of State during a visit to Harwich before Christmas. A freeport has different customs rules to the rest of the country, in a move which is designed to increase productivity, promote innovation, boost global trade, and attract inward investment.”

Launching a consultation on the concept of a UK model of freeports, the Government’s stated aims are to set them up as national hubs for trade and investment, promote regeneration and job creation, and create hotbeds for innovation.

Cllr Stock said: “The devil, as always, will be in the detail and I will keep members informed as the consultation proceeds. We will engage to the fullest as it could represent a terrific opportunity for Harwich, and hence for the wider district.”

Alan Coley – District Councillor

15 February 2020

District Report on Behalf of:

Alan Coley, Carlo Guglielmi & Val Guglielmi

In an emergency which requires TDC’s assistance residents can contact the council’s Control Centre on 01255 222022, available 24/7.

General Information: If anyone witnesses any fly tipping occurring, please contact TDC’s Waste Management Team on 01255 686768.