

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD,
SAFFRON WALDEN on 25 MAY 2017 at 7pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe (Leader)
Councillor S Barker (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services)
Councillor S Howell (Cabinet Member for Finance and Administration)
Councillor V Ranger (Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships)
Councillor J Redfern (Cabinet Member for Housing)
Councillor H Ryles (Cabinet Member for Economic Development)

Also present: Councillor A Dean (Chairman of Scrutiny Committee and Liberal Democrat Group Leader) and Councillor B Light (Deputy Leader of the Residents for Uttlesford).

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), F Butler (Senior Health Improvement Officer), F Gardiner (Anti Social Behaviour Case Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), A Knight (Assistant Director – Resources), L Madigasekera-Elliott (Public Health Improvement Practitioner – West Essex), S Pugh (Interim Head of Legal Services), M Watts (Principal Environmental Health Officer – Protection) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

CA01 LEADER’S WELCOME

The Leader welcomed Councillors Ranger and Ryles as new members to the Cabinet.

CA02 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Ray Woodcock made a statement on parking metres in Lower Street car park, Stansted Mountfitchet.

CA03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barker declared an interest as a member of Essex County Council.

CA04 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2017 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CA05

REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Dean said the Scrutiny Committee gave an annual report to Full Council and reminded Cabinet that the committee was always willing to take on board different items.

He quoted the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which said across the UK, confidence in scrutiny's ability to make an impact was down 8.5%, and 6% fewer people believed the process was member-led. Key reasons why scrutiny was not thought to have an impact included the belief that scrutiny committees simply rubberstamped Cabinet decisions, ignored the public's voice and did not address pressing issues. This might be something Uttlesford District Council would need to look to address and further training was being sought from the Office of Public Scrutiny to support the committee in undertaking its role.

CA06

DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF

Councillor Howell introduced the report. The discretionary rate reliefs would provide relief for small businesses and pubs. Revised criteria would enable Members to establish a scheme that is fair and targets those businesses who facing financial hardship due to their revaluation.

Councillor Howell said there was a slight amendment to the recommendation. It now read as follows:

'That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that the following, as set out in the main report and Appendix A, is approved

- a. The new discretionary rate reliefs for:
 - ii. Supporting Small Businesses Relief
 - iii. Pub Relief
- b. The revised criteria for Local Rural Rate Relief'

The recent recalculation of business rates had had a significant effect on local businesses, with some facing notable increases. The proposals would provide many of them with relief. He suggested officers examine what could be done to aid businesses, which were still badly affected, and report to members at Cabinet in July. The principle aim was to design a scheme that suited Uttlesford.

Councillor Redfern said there was an upside to the recent recalculation of business rates. Some small businesses were no longer paying business rates at all, which was a positive thing.

RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that the following, as set out in the main report and Appendix A, is approved

- a. The new discretionary rate reliefs for:
 - i. Supporting Small Businesses Relief
 - ii. Pub Relief
- b. The revised criteria for Local Rural Rate Relief'

CA07

PLANNING PERFORMANCE AGREEMENTS

Councillor Barker introduced the report. These agreements provided the opportunity for the Council to commit to a bespoke project timetable for pre application advice, determination of a planning application, and dealing with post decision matters, improving customer service for applicants.

The creation of a planning performance agreement would not fetter the authority of the Planning Committee in determining the outcome of each application, and normal controls, checks and balances would apply. However, the agreements were a good idea for establishing a timeline for major developments, so they would not be limited by standard time limits imposed upon applications.

In response to a question from Councillor Ranger, Councillor Barker said potential major developments should provide scope for communication with Elected Members and relevant community/residents groups.

The Director – Public Services said it was normal in pre-application discussions to advise applicants on how best to engage with the community, although it did not mean members or community groups would have representation at meetings while the application was being prepared.

The Leader said the Council was keen to see the developer, the planning authority and the local community interact better with each other. There was a need to formalise the importance of local authority agreements.

RESOLVED to

- a. endorse the offer to applicants for major development the option of a Planning Performance Agreement.
- b. To authorise the Assistant Director – Planning to negotiate terms for and to enter into Planning Performance Agreements with individual developers

CA08

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY

Councillor Redfern introduced the report. The proposals would enable the Council to respond to recent housing stock profiling and adopt a strategy to complement the wider strategic housing functions of the Council. The Strategy had already been seen by the Housing Board and Tenant's Forum.

In response to a question from Councillor Ranger, Councillor Redfern said the Council was looking to maintain standards of housing across the district rather than attempt to maintain individual properties.

Members questioned the reasons why Uttlesford had a higher rate of people suffering from extreme cold compared to the East of England. Officers explained this could include a higher proportion of older houses and those that

were heated by oil. The Council would learn more about this issue as it explored it further.

Councillor Howell said, as the Ward member for The Sampfords, his ward had the highest concentration of people suffering from excess cold, and the highest number of trip and fall hazards. The reason was likely to be the large number of very old properties. Council tax was a significant expenditure for many people, and so he welcomed the proposed assistance in the report. The character of Uttlesford's housing stock provided the Council with a very particular issue to deal with.

Councillor Redfern said the Council provided loans and grants for various issues, and she would encourage members to get in touch with the Principal Environmental Health Officer and his team.

RESOLVED to approve the Private Sector Housing Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report, to be implemented with effect from 1st June 2017

CA09

HOME REPAIRS ASSISTANCE POLICY

Councillor Redfern introduced the report. The proposals would broaden the Council's ability to work with partners and deliver on a variety of schemes and initiatives to improve poor housing that ultimately aims to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. A part of the proposal included a loan which would not be paid back until the property had been sold.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker, the Principal Environmental Health Officer – Protection said the Council would investigate running a campaign to target the policy towards those who need it.

In response to a question from the Leader, the Principal Environmental Health Officer – Protection said funds for the Home Repairs Assistance Policy were provided by a capital grant out of Uttlesford District Council General Fund, and the Council were working with Essex County Council to look at funding some of the measures.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker, the Principal Environmental Health Officer said the Papworth Trust had shut down when funding was withdrawn by Essex County Council. Uttlesford Voluntary Trust was looking at different ways to engage with disabled households and aspects of the Home Repairs Assistance Policy would help with this.

The Leader thanked the Principal Environmental Health Officer – Protection and his team for two excellent papers.

RESOLVED to

- a. approve the new Home Repairs Assistance Policy 2017, attached as Appendix A to this report, to be implemented with effect from 1st July 2017

- b. approve transition arrangements for customers who are being dealt with under the existing Policy that will ensure applications submitted prior to 1st July 2017 are honoured in accordance with the former policy conditions

CA10

UTTLESFORD HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Councillor Ranger introduced the report. Proposals would enable the Council to influence numerous factors associated with ill health and work collaboratively to prevent future health-related issues. The core priorities for the Active Uttlesford board were informed by the Strategy. Work undertaken on each priority required long-term commitment and monitoring from a range of partner organisations.

Councillor Light welcomed the proposals. She suggested the Uttlesford Youth Council could be involved in some way, such as forming a working group to put forward the voice of young people. The Youth Council had already set up a working group to discuss mental health in schools, and she would be encouraging them to report back to the Council.

Councillor Ranger said the Active Uttlesford Network would be very useful for interacting with the Youth Council.

In response to a suggestion by Councillor Barker, she was informed that the Essex Fire and Rescue Service would be undertaking a project to identify vulnerable people who might feel more secure if a bolt and chain could be installed on their door.

The Leader commended the way the Strategy had been put together and recognised many of the topics covered were big issues. He asked how progress on these priorities would be measured. Officers explained that five sub-groups had been established which would each seek advice from a range of partners on how to progress on each priority and how to measure success on these. These partners had a range of specific expertise which would be very valuable.

Councillor Dean suggested brief reports on the progress of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the work of the Local Strategic partnership more generally should be sent out at regular intervals in the Members' Bulletin.

The Leader asked that members work with the Council's Communication Officer to keep members informed about the Strategy.

RESOLVED to endorse and support the Uttlesford Health & Wellbeing Strategy, attached as Appendix A to this report, to be implemented with effect from 1st June 2017.

CA11

DISPOSAL OF LAND AT DE VIGIER AVENUE, SAFFRON WALDEN

Councillor Howell introduced the report. The sale of this land would allow it to be incorporated into the adjoining mixed use development site, delivering new homes, areas for businesses and open space.

Councillor Light said she objected to the sale of the land. The town needed green lines and open spaces and the site could be used as a nature reserve.

The Leader said the area was impenetrable and it was not a public space. However, after discussion with local residents, an element of woodland would be retained as a bridge between the adjoining gardens and the new development. He would also be supporting a proposal for a pedestrian crossing on Ashdon Road.

Councillor Howell said the Council had a responsibility for all residents of Uttlesford, and many might consider it a disappointment if the Council missed the opportunity to sell the land.

Councillor Light said Councillor Freeman, a member of that ward and the Saffron Walden Town Council, had requested a footpath and a cycle way be installed as a form of access. The Council needed to be thinking about the social value of land as well, and some of the pieces of its land should be used as recreational or open space.

The Leader said it was the Council's policy to find the best use for the land it owned.

RESOLVED to

- a. approve the disposal of the piece of land known as Asset No.24 – Land at De Vigier Avenue, Saffron Walden
- b. delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to agree the terms of the sale.

CA12

APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader introduced the proposals.

Councillor Redfern suggested Councillor Ryles, as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, should be the representative on the West Essex Alliance.

RESOLVED - to make the proposed appointments of Cabinet Working Groups and to outside bodies contained in the report, with the following amendment:

- a. Councillor Ryles would replace Councillor Redfern on the West Essex Alliance

CA13

APPOINTMENT OF CABINET WORKING GROUPS

The Leader introduced the proposals.

Councillor Dean said he had left a position on the Housing Board vacant because he knew there were many members who were eager to be on it. However he would be happy to take up that position again.

Councillor Ranger suggested as the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnerships, he should be on the Museum Management Working Group.

RESOLVED - to make the proposed appointments of Cabinet Working Groups and to outside bodies contained in the report, with the following amendments:

- a. Councillor Dean would fill the vacant position on the Housing Board.
- b. Councillor Ranger would be added to the membership of the Museum Management Working Group.

CA14 **APPOINTMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE NORTH ESSEX
PARKING PARTNERSHIP**

The Leader nominated Councillor Ryles to be the representative on the North Essex Parking Partnership.

RESOLVED to appoint Howard Ryles as a Representative on the North Essex Parking Partnership.

CA15 **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE WEST ESSEX
WELLBEING JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Leader nominated Councillor Ranger and himself to be the representatives on the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Ranger and Councillor Rolfe as representatives on the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee.

The meeting ended at 8:25pm.