

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN on 25 OCTOBER 2012 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor J Ketteridge – Leader (Chairman).  
Councillor S Barker – Portfolio Holder for Environment.  
Councillor J Cheetham – Deputy Leader.  
Councillor R Chambers – Portfolio Holder for Finance and  
Administration.  
Councillor H Rolfe – Portfolio Holder for Community  
Partnerships and Engagement.  
Councillor A Walters – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety.

Also present: Councillors E Godwin, S Howell, M Lemon, D Morson, L Wells  
and S Sproul (Tenant Forum representative).

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), M Cox (Democratic  
Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), S  
Joyce (Assistant Chief Executive – Finance), M Perry (Assistant  
Chief Executive – Legal), A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning  
and Building Control) and A Webb (Director of Corporate  
Services).

**CA52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Asker and Ranger

*Councillors Barker declared an interest as a member of Essex County Council  
in respect of item 12, Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan.*

*Councillor Cheetham declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of  
NWEPA in respect of item 10 draft Aviation Policy.*

**CA53 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2012 were approved as a  
correct and signed by the Chairman subject to the deletion of duplicated  
words.

**CA54 MATTERS ARISING**

**Minute CA40 2012/13 Budget Monitoring**

Councillor Barker referred to projects being implemented under the HRA  
Business Plan. The meeting of the Housing Board earlier in the week had  
been informed that more external funding than expected had been secured  
towards wall insulation of oil fired properties by one of the companies

submitting a tender, so the HRA budget would have the capacity to fund another environmental improvement programme.

CA55

## **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

Councillor Morson asked whether the Revenues and Benefits Partnership project had formally been concluded and whether it was correct to say that there had been no cost to the council during this exercise. The Leader said that these questions would be addressed under item 7 on the agenda.

A56

## **REVENUE AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP REVIEW**

The Cabinet received a report which had been due to be considered at a meeting of the Joint Partnership Committee. This meeting had not taken place and both councils would now take the report to their respective Cabinet meetings for a decision.

The Chief Executive advised that no further work should be undertaken on the revenue and benefits partnership with Harlow. The proposed changes to local government finance in terms of universal credit and the localisation of council tax benefits were too far reaching and uncertain to progress the partnership at this stage. Also in the interim significant savings had been made in the Council's own service had there had been an improvement in performance with the collection rate now at 99%, the highest in Essex.

In answer to Councillor Morson's earlier question, it was explained that a grant had been received from Improvement East for this project. Any costs above the amount would be borne by Uttlesford, whilst any residual money would be shared by the two partners to support other partnership work. It was confirmed that final cost was well within the limit of the Improvement East grant of £200,000. It was also confirmed that no funds had been committed towards the purchase of a new computer system.

The Cabinet asked whether this decision would affect the relationship with Harlow Council. The Chairman said that although it had not been prudent to continue with this project, the Memorandum of Understanding was still in place and a future meeting between the Leaders and Chief Executives of the three member authorities had been arranged.

Councillor Barker congratulated staff on achieving the improvement in performance. She felt that this service should not now be considered for partnership working, particularly in the short term whilst staff were concentrating on implementing the changes to local government finance.

**RESOLVED** that that the Revenue and Benefits Partnership be formally terminated and the Joint Partnership dissolved.

CA57

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Councillor Rolfe presented the draft economic strategy. The document had been prepared by the recently appointed Economic Development Officer in consultation with local businesses and partners and aimed to identify the issues faced by the economy and how the district council and partners could help with growth and development. Initially the strategy would focus on delivering a few things where a real impact could be made and funding for these initiatives would come mainly from the £100,000 High Street Innovation Fund to provide support for business across the district.

Members welcomed the strategy as a positive move forward. Councillor Cheetham raised the problem of the poor mobile signal that was experienced in the south of the district which could hinder business development. She was advised that this issue had now been addressed in the document.

Councillor Morson asked if the strategy had considered links with schools in relation to their business programmes and work experience. Councillor Rolfe said that this had not yet been specifically addressed in the report but could be taken forward in the future.

### **RESOLVED**

- 1 To adopt the Uttlesford Economic Development Strategy 2012-14.
- 2 To approve the spending of the £100,000 High Street Innovation Fund as follows:
  - 2.1 Help for local people to start and stay in business £30,000
  - 2.2 Help for local businesses to start exporting or export more £5,000
  - 2.3 Help for business to expand in or locate in Uttlesford £4,500
  - 2.4 Help for town centres with their viability and vitality £35,500
  - 2.5 Help to persuade more people to visit Uttlesford £25,000

CA58

## **VILLAGE GARDEN WASTE BRING SCHEME**

Councillor Barker presented a report on the weekend garden waste service. There had continued to be a strong demand for this service despite the introduction of the subscription household bin option. It was intended that the skip service would be self-financing, paid for by the individual parish councils, although for this year only, it had been subsidised by 50%. Parishes had been consulted about their wishes for 2013 and the proposed timetable was appended to the report. The details of the financing were explained. The cost of the scheme had been less than anticipated which meant that the Parish Council's contribution was expected to cover 58% of the expenditure in 2012. Councillor Redfern said this was a much appreciated service and asked if it was possible to extend the length of the scheme by a couple of weeks. She

also suggested that the parishes could be subsidised for a further year at a lower amount of say 25%, moving towards full cost recovery for the 2014 season. Members said that the scheme had been conceived on the basis of full cost recovery and the parishes were aware of this. Also, as the costs of the scheme had been less than expected, there would be a relatively smaller increase for participating councils in 2013. This matter could however be considered as part of next year's budget consideration.

**RESOLVED**

- 1 Cabinet note the level of continuing interest in the Village Garden Waste Bring Scheme this year, notwithstanding the successful implementation of the subscription garden waste bin collection scheme
- 2 Subject to budget preparation for 2013/14, proposals be drawn up for a Bring Scheme for the 2013 season based on full cost recovery from participating town and parish councils

CA59

**RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT AVIATION STRATEGY**

Councillor Cheetham introduced a report on the Draft Aviation Strategy, which was currently out for consultation until 31 October 2012. The Council's response addressed the questions that were relevant to the district and was appended to the report. She thanked officers and the members of the Airport Advisory Panel for their input into the response.

There was concern that the Aviation Strategy Consultation had not addressed medium or long term plans for future airport capacity. It was now understood that an Independent Commission was to be established tasked with identifying and recommending to the Government options for maintaining the UK's status as an international hub for aviation. The final report would be published by 2015. Further details of the membership and terms of reference were awaited and the Council would need then to decide how it could best have an input into the Commission's work.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1 That the Cabinet agrees the Council's response to the draft Aviation Policy Framework.
- 2 That the Cabinet notes that it will be imperative for the Council to make submissions to the Independent Commission. .

CA60

**SECTION 106 SPORTS FUNDING SAFFRON WALDEN**

*Councillor Ketteridge declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council.*

Councillor Barker presented a report regarding the allocation of the remaining S106 monies provided for under the S106 legal obligation in relation to the Bell College development, Saffron Walden. The agreement provided for the provision of open spaces and sports pitches in Saffron Walden.

The report suggested that a portion of the funds be allocated for a particular project but the remaining be allocated to projects put forward by Saffron Walden Town Council. It was explained that this was the same process as for the previous allocation, with the Town Council consulting widely with local sports groups and any proposals being required to be signed off by Sport England.

Councillor Morson commented that there was no athletic track within Uttlesford and this could be kept in mind as a future project for the district. Cllr Barker responded that studies had shown that the population of the district was too small and dispersed to support an athletics track.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The allocation of £2,250 to the redevelopment of Caton's Lane Football pitches be approved.
- 2 UDC request project proposals from Saffron Walden Town Council for the remaining £62,486 for approval by the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control in conjunction with the Assistant Chief Executive – Finance and Cllr Barker and Cllr Chambers as the relevant Portfolio Holders.

CA45

### **GREAT DUNMOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA**

Councillor Barker advised that an application had been received from Great Dunmow Town Council for the designation of a Neighbourhood Plan area. It had proposed a plan area contiguous with the parish boundary of Great Dunmow. This demonstrated that the Town Council wished to plan for the whole area. The application had been advertised and the comments received were set out in the report. The plan was in its early stages but the type of policies included would need to be led by public consultation and conform with the strategic policies of the District Local Plan.

RESOLVED To designate the civil parish of Great Dunmow as the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan Area

CA46

### **WENDENS AMBO PARISH PLAN**

Councillor Barker introduced a report on the Wendens Ambo Parish Plan, which had been approved by the parish council. It aimed to describe how the

community could be developed to improve the lives of those who live there. The plan had been informed by a residents' questionnaire and public meeting which had received a good local response.

The parish council had asked that the plan be accepted as Council approved guidance in determining planning applications. Councillor Rolfe commended the plan and questioned how it would fit with the LDF proposals. He was aware that there was a strong feeling in the village about a proposed new site for office development. The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control confirmed that, as requested by the LDF working group, officers were looking at the draft allocation.

RESOLVED that the parish plan be adopted as Council approved guidance in determining planning applications and in preparing the Local Plan.

#### CA47 **LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The Cabinet received a report which updated the situation on the Draft Local Plan, the current work, outstanding studies and future programme. Councillor Barker said that a workshop on the Local Plan would be arranged for all members later in the year.

#### CA48 **REVIEW OF FEES FOR VEHICLES AND OPERATORS**

Councillor Walters presented a report regarding the review of licensing fees. He informed the meeting that in 2010 the Licensing Committee had identified that over a period of time there had been a surplus of income over expenditure for Licensing fees. As there was a legal requirement that income and expenditure should balance out, a fee structure had been approved to eradicate the surplus over a period of 3 years. However, there had been a recent increase in the number of licenses issued which had meant there was still a large surplus at the end of 2012/13.

It was projected that if the current fee levels remained the same this surplus would be reduced to £8k by 2013/14. Thereafter there would need to be a smaller increase to ensure that the council broke even going forward. The Trade had agreed to this proposal as their best interests would be served by price stability for the foreseeable future and a more modest increase coming into effect from 2014/15.

It was noted since the since the change of Governance arrangements in 2011, the responsibility for the setting of Licensing fees was now a function of the Cabinet. The Licensing Committee had considered this report at a recent meeting and had agreed with the recommendations.

RESOLVED that members note the report and approve no change to the existing fee structure.

CA49

### **GACES ACRE NEWPORT**

Councillor Chambers presented a report which proposed an amendment to the condition attached to the permission given at the last meeting for the Trustees of Newport Free Grammar to underlet land at Gaces Acre Newport to the Academy. This amendment would enable the lease on the land to be assigned or transferred to the successor charitable, or public body of the academy approved by the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED that

1. The condition placing an absolute prohibition on assignment or transfer of the Lease should be amended so that assignment or transfer of the whole or any part of the underlease is prohibited except where the assignment or transfer of the whole of the underlease is to a successor charitable, or public body of the Academy approved by the Secretary of State.
2. The amendment to the condition should be subject to a requirement on the Academy to notify the Council if any such assignment or transfer occurs.

CA50

### **WEST ESSEX HEALTH AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

The West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group had requested that this item be deferred whilst it sought to clarify a number of issues.

CA51

### **WEST ESSEX TENANCY STRATEGY**

Councillor Redfern presented the West Essex Tenancy Strategy. This had been produced together with Epping and Harlow Council and provided an overarching strategy which registered providers and the council housing departments should have regard to when deciding policy in relation to fixed term tenancies.

Mr Sam Sproul said that following on from this Strategy the Housing Board had discussed options for the Council's own Tenancy Policy and a draft would be brought to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet approve the adoption of the West Essex Tenancy Strategy.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN on 20 NOVEMBER 2012 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor J Ketteridge – Leader (Chairman).  
Councillor S Barker – Portfolio Holder for Environment.  
Councillor J Cheetham – Deputy Leader.  
Councillor R Chambers – Portfolio Holder for Finance and  
Administration.  
Councillor H Rolfe – Portfolio Holder for Community  
Partnerships and Engagement.  
Councillor J Redfern – Portfolio Holder for Housing.  
Councillor A Walters – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety.

Also present: Councillors E Godwin, S Howell, M Lemon, D Morson, J Rich, L  
Wells and V Ranger.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), R Dobson (Democratic  
Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), S  
Joyce (Assistant Chief Executive – Finance), A Parry-Jones  
(Project Officer), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal),  
and A Webb (Director of Corporate Services).

**CA61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

*Councillors Barker and Chambers declared their respective interests as  
members of Essex County Council and Essex Fire Authority in relation to the  
item on Local Council Tax Support.*

**CA62 WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed those present and explained that as this meeting  
was in addition to the published timetable, the agenda did not include  
consideration of minutes from the previous meeting or the standing items.

**CA63 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT – FINAL SCHEME PROPOSALS**

Councillor Chambers presented a report asking Cabinet to determine its  
recommendations to Full Council for the adoption of an Uttlesford Scheme of  
Local Council Tax Support (LCTS).

The Project Officer tabled supplementary pages to the report, comprising an  
additional worked example; updated information on other Essex LCTS  
schemes and a consultation response from the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Councillor Chambers referred to responses to the consultation, which included  
a number of expressions of concern that cutting support would result in  
financial hardship. The Secretary of State had a month ago announced an

additional Transition Grant fund of £100 million to be given to those schemes which ensured they did not result in significant hardship. Councillor Chambers said he had therefore concluded it was feasible and affordable to make adjustments in order to claim the grant and more importantly to alleviate the burden on low income households. He outlined the changes which were: to disregard from income assessment £25 of weekly earnings, child benefit and child maintenance income; and to set a cap on Council Tax support to 91.5% of the Council Tax liability. The average impact of £1.49 per week, was much less than the £6.09 which would have arisen under the original proposals. In order to pay for these proposals the Council would need to draw £212,000 against its reserves but this was a one-off. Councillor Chambers said he would review the scheme in 2013/14 and make necessary adjustments in 2014/15 to ensure the scheme was sustainable.

Councillor Chambers said these proposals were due to the Coalition Government's decision to cut benefit funding and get people off benefits and into work, and whilst it was with a heavy heart, he commended the proposals to Cabinet as being as fair as possible, consistent with the consultation responses, and affordable.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Cheetham, who asked whether the police had responded to the consultation; and how Councillor Chambers would deal with cases of exceptional hardship.

Councillor Chambers replied that the police had not responded to the consultation. Officers would deal with cases of exceptional hardship in accordance with principles approved by Council as set out on pages 31 and 32 of the report.

Councillor Barker said this was a very good report, and that this was not an easy subject. She asked about how the proposals would be made known to benefit claimants, and suggested notices be displayed in libraries with a press release to be issued to parish magazines. She asked for clarification of the impact on the parish precept.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Finance said the Government had published its ideas about how every parish council would change its precept but it had then reversed those proposals and said the parishes would not be affected. This decision was however yet to be formally confirmed. He would write to parishes this week to update them on the parish precept situation.

Councillor Morson thanked the Cabinet and officers for the consideration which had been given to the Liberal Democrat proposals. He said it was good to achieve maximum consensus. He commended the report and agreed it would be excellent for the Council to secure the Transition Grant to help those families who were worst off.

However he asked the Cabinet to consider a proposal from the Liberal Democrats, to increase the maximum support for claimants' Council Tax liability to 97.5% in Year 1 and 95% in Year 2 to be funded out of reduced

Council Tax discounts on second and empty homes; and to pay for an additional staffing resource to administer discount reductions concurrently at a cost of £60K to £75K, to be funded from reserves.

The Chairman said a great deal of work had gone into the proposals. Since the announcement of the Transitional Relief funding further extensive work had been carried out in a short space of time. He was very grateful to officers. It was the view of the administration that the Liberal Democrat option could not be pursued for the following reasons: that income from second home discounts and empty homes would be needed in any case as the proposals would require further adjustment in the longer term; and at 91.5% Uttlesford's rate of maximum Council Tax liability restriction was already significantly above that for any other local authority within Essex.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Finance said based on the Administration's proposals he anticipated this Council would be the only Essex authority to obtain Transition Grant funding, although there were many authorities in Essex applying.

The Chairman said he considered the Liberal Democrat suggestions were not very far from those put forward by his group and he thanked Councillor Morson for his initial expressions of support for the LCTS proposals.

Councillor Rolfe said the report's proposals were very fair and constructive. He asked questions about the calculation of estimated costs. The Assistant Chief Executive-Finance gave a brief explanation and said there would be an impact on budgets from bad debt, so the Council would be seeking a contribution towards collection costs from the County Council, Police and Fire authorities.

It was unanimously RESOLVED

1 To recommend that Full Council approve the following at its meeting on 11 December 2012:

- a) the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix F
- b) the UDC LCTS Scheme as set out in paragraph 43 of the report, pursuant to section 13A(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended)
- c) confirmation that council tax discounts for Empty Homes and Second Homes will be unchanged for 2013/14, with a view to reviewing the discounts for 2014/15
- d) UDC General Fund base budget funding for additional Recovery team resource of up to £40,000 (less any external contributions received)
- e) UDC General Fund base budget funding for exceptional hardship relief of up to £10,000 (less any external contributions received)
- f) Authority for the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance to submit a claim to DCLG for Transition Grant funding.

- 2 To approve alterations to the Executive Scheme of Delegation to add the following to the functions delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance:
  - a) the administration of council tax and business rates
  - b) the administration of housing and council tax benefits
  - c) the completion of grant claims for housing and council tax benefit and discretionary housing payments
  - d) the administration of sundry debtors
  - e) the administration of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS)
  - f) the determination of applications for Exceptional Circumstances Hardship Relief under the LCTS.

CA63

## **BUDGET STRATEGY**

Councillor Chambers presented a report summarising the financial outlook for the Council for the year 2013/14 and asking Members to approve a strategy for drawing up the budget for that year. He said due to housing growth the Council's government funding should increase. Combined with fiscal discipline the Council should have a revenue surplus in the next two years. The Administration felt it was possible to go further, and proposed that the District Council's share of Council Tax should be reduced by 1% next year. Taking inflation since 2010 into account this represented a 10% cut in real terms, so this measure would alleviate pressure on household budgets.

Councillor Chambers referred to public consultation carried out for the second year in order to gain public views on priorities for setting the budget. The consultation showed that sound financial management was seen as a priority, with reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in partnership with the police the next priority, and keeping streets and open spaces clean the third highest.

Councillor Chambers highlighted the fact that the Council had implemented the Housing Revenue Account business plan to improve and increase social housing in Uttlesford. He referred Members to the key actions and summary of budget strategy for 2013/14 set out in the report. He proposed the motion which was seconded by Councillor Rolfe.

Councillor Howell endorsed the report. He said this represented much hard work and demonstrated sound financial management over the preceding three years. The freeze of Council Tax over the last two years was good, and he welcomed the proposed reduction.

### **RESOLVED**

To approve the 2013/14 Budget Strategy and key actions as set out in the report.

**REDEVELOPMENT OF MEAD COURT, STANSTED**

Councillor Redfern presented a report recommending that the Council should proceed with a local authority new build scheme for the redevelopment of Mead Court, Stansted. She said the proposals had been allowed for in budgeting, and had been considered in detail by the Mead Court Task Group and Housing Board. She had invited onto the Task Group Councillor Salmon as he was also a member of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council so as to ensure balanced interests with the parish council. Drawings had already been obtained and she intended the scheme should proceed as soon as possible. She moved the proposals, which were seconded by Councillor Chambers.

The Chairman said this development represented a milestone for the Council and was a step forward.

Councillor Godwin welcomed the proposal and said she hoped the Council would continue to build more housing in future.

Councillor Lemon said he had visited Mead Court four years ago and had been shocked by what he had seen. He congratulated the housing department on getting this plan going.

Councillor Barker said work would be finished at Holloway Crescent before commencing Mead Court redevelopment and asked that lessons be learned from certain design flaws which in future schemes should be addressed.

Councillor Redfern said Officers and Members were doing their best and had done a good job. They took on board lessons from each project, but looking at the bigger picture Holloway Crescent had benefitted from five fantastic new bungalows and would soon have eight more houses.

Councillor Rich said it was wonderful to see this project on the agenda. Design matters should be considered at an appropriate stage. He welcomed the inclusion of Councillor Salmon in the discussions of the Mead Court Task Group. There was a strong message from the Parish Council that there was much open space around Mead Court at the moment and he asked that consideration be given to how best to utilise it.

In reply to a question regarding the timetable for work to be started, Councillor Redfern said building work itself would start in the year 2013/14, but that there was much to be done before that point.

Councillor Morson congratulated Councillor Redfern on the proposals. He had been asked to mention as a matter of policy that when any development was planned in any members' wards that they should be apprised, as they had been in this case.

Councillor Redfern agreed, with the proviso that it was not possible to involve Members at every detailed stage.

RESOLVED to proceed with a local authority new build scheme for the redevelopment of Mead Court, Stansted.

CA65

**OTHER BUSINESS: CAR PARKING FEES CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR 2012/13**

Councillor Barker presented a report asking the Cabinet to approve proposals for permitting free parking in certain car parks between Christmas and the New Year. The proposals were brought in order to support the vitality of the district's centres during the coming festive season.

Councillor Barker said the proposals would involve a potential loss of revenue of £2,000 which could be met from the positive variation of car parks income compared to the budget figure for the same period during 2011/12. She explained the proposals had come forward following various suggestions from the Town Councils and Saffron Walden Initiative, including free parking all day on certain days before Christmas, and free parking after 3pm on specific days. However, these suggestions were not feasible as there was no capacity in car parks to accommodate additional demand; and insufficient time to reconfigure ticket machines. A proposal for free parking after 3pm would be considered in determining fees and charges as part of the budget setting process for 2013/14. Councillor Barker proposed the motion which was seconded by Councillor Chambers.

Councillor Ketteridge said figures from the Parking Partnership last year indicated that car parks were full to capacity prior to Christmas but that this trend reduced in the period between Christmas and the New Year. This measure would therefore encourage trade and would benefit local businesses.

Councillor Rolfe asked about publicity for the proposals.

Councillor Barker said a press release would be issued and notices placed on the ticket machines in the car parks, and larger notices within car parks.

RESOLVED that car parking fees for the following car parks not be enforced for the period Monday 24 December to Tuesday 1 January inclusive:

- Angel Lane and Chequers Lane, Great Dunmow
- Lower Street, Stansted Mountfitchet
- Swan Meadow, Saffron Walden

The meeting ended at 7.55pm.