

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 27 MARCH 2014 at 7.00pm**

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

Also present: Councillors J Davey, M Lemon, E Parr, J Salmon and L Wells.

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

CA91 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman informed the meeting that the proceedings were being sound recorded.

CA92 PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Mr Hugo, a resident of High Easter spoke to the meeting in relation to item 10, Developer Contribution Guidance. He said he had recently be granted planning permission to built a house for his family and had been shocked to learn that under the S106 agreement he would be required to make an affordable housing payment of between £25 - 36K. He was building an affordable house for his family but this payment would make the project unviable. He was aware that other councils did not have this policy and also that recent Government advice had recommended the CIL contribution should be removed for self builds. He agreed with the revised recommendation proposed in the report and asked the Cabinet to support this.

CA93 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Godwin, Howell and Ranger.

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 14- A Board policy as a member of Essex County Council.

CA94 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record.

CA95 **QUESTIONS FROM NON – EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Morson asked Councillor Barker about the on-going problem of inappropriate parking outside the Henham and Ugley Primary School. In order to address the problems, the school governors had met with the NEPP Enforcement Officer and agreed an extension to the parking control. However, subsequently the partnership officers had advised this would not be possible. It appeared that local agencies were not being listened to by the Partnership.

Councillor Barker said she was aware of the issues at this site. One problem had been the legality of the zigzag lines, but the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order was now in place and there was the option to deploy the camera car to monitor the situation. The parking partnership's technical officers had looked at the situation at the school and had judged that additional restrictions would not help the problems. She had to rely on this professional judgement. However, she was happy to meet with officers, together with Councillor Morson to explore alternative solutions.

CA96 **DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTION GUIDANCE**

Members recalled that at the last meeting the Cabinet had decided to amend the recommendation to require an affordable housing financial contribution from individual dwellings. Two additional pieces of information had since come to light that had not been available at the time.

Following the revised decision, a further viability study had been carried out, which concluded that the majority of single unit applications would still require a viability assessment. This was contrary to the aims of the guidance, which was to simplify the process. It had also become clear that the payment would have a significant effect on some individuals planning to build their own homes. The Government was also proposing changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to exempt payment from self-builders where CIL is payable.

The recent meeting of the Local Plan Working Group had considered this information and asked officers to prepare a revised report for discussion. The consensus was to return to the original recommendation but to include certain assurances, in particular to ensure that developments of more than one dwelling could not be applied for separately.

It was noted that the DCLG would be consulting with local authorities regarding contributions for development of under10 units and the scheme might need to be revisited in the light of this information.

RESOLVED that the revised Developer Contributions Guidance which does not collect contributions for affordable housing on schemes for individual units, as a material planning consideration.

CA97 **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

Councillor Chambers presented the Council's Procurement Strategy 2014/15. This was refreshed annually and showed how it contributed to the Corporate Plan priorities and demonstrated to the external auditor that the council had a sound approach to procurement. The report explained the contracts that had been awarded, which were dominated by housing contracts, and the contribution to savings against budget.

Councillor Cheetham referred to the action 'to seek engagement with the London Stansted Consortium'. The Assistant Chief Executive – Finance said this was a key objective in the Strategy, to co-operate with partners to reduce procurement spend.

In answer to Members questions the Procurement Manager said the council had recently introduced a new purchase order system and was considering various possibilities in relation to e- procurement.

RESOLVED to approve the Procurement Strategy attached to the report.

CA98 **ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Councillor Chambers presented the annual report of the Council's Asset Management Plan and the proposed strategy for 2014/15. The plan included a complete list of the council's non-housing assets and sets out strategic objectives and guiding principles for their use. It provided ongoing assurance to the external auditor that the council has a sound approach as part of the 'value for money' opinion.

It was explained that the assets relating to housing were considered by the Housing Board.

Councillor Chambers said that unlike other local authorities, Uttlesford had inherited relatively few assets so it was important to plan carefully for the best use of these. Councillor Rolfe thought the council should focus on how to enrich its assets to provide longer term financial benefit.

RESOLVED to approve the Asset Management Plan attached to the report.

CA99

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Councillor Chambers reported two proposals for the use of council's assets in partnership with other organisations.

The first was the use of the Lodge House at the Saffron Walden offices by DWP (Job Centre Plus) as a training centre. The necessary building work would be completed by the DWP but thereafter there would be no charge for the use of the facility. The initial agreement was to 2016.

It was clarified that the facility would be used as a training centre rather than a job centre type facility. It would however be equipped with a computer and internet access and it was expected that the facility would develop over time.

The second area, in collaboration with ECC, was to relocate the library service in Thaxted from its current location in Clarence House to the Community Information Centre. This would enable the TIC to be open for more hours than at present.

The Cabinet supported these initiatives as an example of good partnership working providing benefit for the district.

RESOLVED to approve

- 1 the partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the use of the ground floor of the Lodge for an initial 2 year period.
- 2 the partnership with Essex County Council's Library Service to use the Thaxted Community Information Centre (TCIC) as the new location for the library.

CA100

FLOODING BUSINESS SUPPORT SCHEME

It was reported that the Government had put in place a support scheme for businesses affected by flooding since 1 December 2013. Government funding of £22,500 had been received for the scheme, which would be administered by the Council.

Members asked about publicity for the scheme and were advised that affected businesses would be contacted. The scheme would also be publicised on the council's website and via a press release.

RESOLVED

- 1 To agree the principle of operating the scheme to support all small and medium sized business in flood affected areas that have been impacted by the floods and suffered a significant loss of trade,

- 2 To authorise the Assistant Chief Executive – Finance to determine the arrangements for claiming financial support and to administer the scheme

CA101 **WALDEN CASTLE**

Councillor Chambers explained that Walden Castle was a scheduled ancient monument owned by the council and was currently on the Buildings at Risk register. The Council had responsibility for its maintenance. A budget had been approved for consolidation and repair of the ruins and the work on this had commenced.

A master plan had been prepared looking to the next stage of the project. Councillor Chambers felt the site had great potential and his vision was to link the Castle and Museum site to ultimately be one of the town's main tourist attractions.

The Director of Corporate Services said there were plans to extend the Museum and there would be a further document looking at a joint brief for the site in collaboration with the Museum Society.

RESOLVED to approve for recommendation to Full Council the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in the report.

CA102 **A BOARDS POLICY**

Councillor Walters introduced a report, which considered the council's approach to placing A-boards and advertising material on the public highway. Following some concern about this issue a working group had been established with an aim to find a balance between the potential hazard created for footpath users and businesses wishing to attract custom.

The group had decided that the ECC policy was appropriate and although the district did not have delegated powers of enforcement it was agreed that there should be some guidelines in place.

The council currently charged for issuing consents under the Highways Act for items to be placed on the highway, but the Cabinet did not think it was appropriate to do so in the case of A Boards.

The document would be circulated to all businesses and to the Town Teams.

RESOLVED TO

- 1 Adopt the Uttlesford District Council A-Board Approach.
- 2 Encourage businesses to work within the existing Essex County Council policy and the Uttlesford Guidelines for Businesses – A-Boards.

- 3 the Council should not require businesses to apply for consent for A-Boards

CA103

SCRUTINY CAR PARK REPORT

Councillor Barker introduced the report, which responded to the Scrutiny Committee review of car parking submitted in October 2013. The report had investigated the provision of car parking in Dunmow, Thaxted, Saffron Walden and Stansted. It had included public consultation with residents and analysis of data on car park usage and income levels.

The Cabinet was now looking to take this forward, using ideas from the scrutiny report, and to undertake further new work.

There had been a number of recommendations in the Scrutiny report that could be implemented quickly and some action had already been taken.

The area of work not yet considered related to charges and layout of the car parks. The report set out the issues that would be covered in this report. The 2014/15 budget had allocated £80k for a review of car parking capacity within the district centres. It was likely that there would be a series of recommendations arising from the reviews rather than one report.

The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control updated the situation with the Waitrose extension and car park. The first of 15 legal agreements had been signed; initial work was to be carried out in May. Negotiations were continuing with regard the main rebuild, scheduled to start the first weekend in January. The agreements would maintain the position of the council and the Pig Market Trust.

Councillor Morson said that Councillor Evans, who had led the scrutiny review, was unavailable this evening, so he was passing on her comments. She was concerned at the length of time this item had taken to come to Cabinet. It now appeared that suggestions were being implementing with no reference to her and the review was being subsumed into a wider report.

Councillor Morson felt that after the detailed and extensive review, Councillor Evans should be privy to any decisions made. He referred to the specific recommendations listed in paragraph 4 of the Scrutiny report asked how these would be addressed,

Councillor Barker said that the Cabinet greatly appreciated the work undertaken by councillors Evans. Of the Scrutiny recommendations, some were management issues, which could be implemented straight away. Others still required full costings before they were taken forward, other recommendations relating to reviewing tariffs was not being considered at the present time.

The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control said he would be happy to contact Councillor Evans and discuss the approach being taken.

RESOLVED to

- 1 To note the Scrutiny report on car parking and the progress to date.
- 2 Agree the scope of officers' work as per paragraph 14 of the report and request a detailed report with costings for Cabinet at the earliest opportunity

CA104 **FELSTED PARISH PLAN**

The Cabinet received a copy of the Felsted parish plan, which had been adopted by the parish council in December 2013. It had been produced with the involvement of local residents, described how the community could be developed over coming years and contained a plan for achieving the identified actions.

RESOLVED that the parish plan be adopted as council approved guidance in determining planning applications in the parish and as background evidence in the preparation of the Local Plan

CA105 **LITTLE DUNMOW CAA**

The Cabinet received the Little Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal. The report set out the key issues in the appraisal, the results of the consultation and the changes proposed. The parish council had welcomed the document as a worthwhile likely to strengthen the control of development.

RESOLVED that the Conservation Area Appraisal be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications for implementing management proposals

CA106 **WRITE OFFS**

The Cabinet received details of housing benefits debts that were recommended for write off.

RESOLVED to authorise the write-off of the irrecoverable debts, for Housing Benefit of £37,889.13.

CA107 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

AGREED under Section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in

paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CA108

WRITE OFFS

The Cabinet received details of council tax and housing benefits debts and overpayments that were recommended for write off. It was noted that the third item on the schedule had been withdrawn.

RESOLVED to authorise the write-off of the irrecoverable debts, for Housing Benefit and council tax as set out in Appendix B.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.