

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 25 JUNE 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.

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

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), R Dobson (Principal Democratic Services Officer), S Ellis (Revenues Manager), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), S Joyce (Assistant Chief Executive – Finance), A Knight (Accountancy Manager), D Malins (Housing Development Manager), R Millership (Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal), B Tice (Principal Research Officer), M Tokley (Principal Accountant) and A Webb (Director of Corporate Services).

CA1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Dean, E Parr and A Walters.

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Essex County Council.

CA2 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 27 AND 31 MARCH 2014

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 and 31 March 2014 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Minutes of meeting held on 27 March 2014, Minute CA92, amendment to show that Mr Hugo is a resident of Aythorpe Roding, not High Easter.

Minutes of meeting held on 31 March 2014, amendment to numbering of minutes.

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

Councillor Chambers presented a report on a draft Discretionary Rate Relief policy, to formalise existing discretionary rate relief arrangements. The policy would enhance support for rural businesses and provide incentives for small/medium sized businesses to set up in Uttlesford, or to expand existing operations within the district. This would also lead to increases in Rateable Value, which would ultimately lead to income growth for the Council.

Councillor Rolfe referred Members to the objectives and financial implications of the policy set out in the report, and in particular to a change proposed to enhance discretionary rural rate relief for larger rural businesses. He drew Members' attention to the conditions and checks that would apply and to the costs.

Councillor Cheetham asked how funding would be managed for discretionary rate relief, and how the policy would be advertised. Councillor Rolfe said the policy would be operated on a first come, first served basis. The policy would be advertised via local media, and through the Council's database of businesses and contacts.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Finance explained how applications for rate relief would be determined. Any appeals would be determined by the Section 151 Officer. The policy would be subject to annual review and approval by the Cabinet as part of the budget monitoring process.

Councillor Morson welcomed the policy, and asked whether there would be an emphasis on supporting businesses in rural areas as a priority. He asked whether the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy should be linked with the Strategic Initiatives Fund, as he considered it ought to be longer term.

Councillor Rolfe said officers would assess claims on a first come, first served basis.

Councillor Chambers said the policy would be for a two year period, as it was important to be careful because it was impossible to predict local government finances in future years. The intention would be to carry on the policy, subject to review to ensure value for money was being obtained.

RESOLVED to approve

- a. the Discretionary Rate Relief policy as attached to the report to Cabinet, with an effective date of 1 July 2014
- b. the funding of the policy through the use of the Strategic Initiatives and Economic Development reserves as set out in the report.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Councillor Rolfe presented a report on the Council's economic development strategy for 2014 – 16, which built on the 2012-14 strategy. He referred Members to the funding sources and aims, and highlighted aspects such as a review of Council-managed car parks; the intention to provide business advice and to set up Town Teams for Stansted and Thaxted; and to build a business database. The Council aimed to capitalise on the Cambridgeshire life science corridor for the creation of jobs in the district.

Councillor S Barker declared a pecuniary interest in relation to superfast broadband, as she was a customer of Buzcom. She said the list of visitor attractions included one which was not in Uttlesford, and one which was now in private ownership. She asked for clarification about reference to a lease to Eastern Plateau, and asked whether the funding for provision of broadband would include mobile phone connectivity.

Councillor Rolfe said Eastern Plateau was a government funded body. Regarding the lease, he would supply more detailed information to Councillor Barker. He said the Cabinet proposed to ensure the last 7% of coverage for superfast broadband was achieved, and officers would also work with mobile phone providers.

Councillor Morson said he welcomed the initiative. He asked how the strategy had been developed and whether the emphasis was more on processes than on outcomes. He asked whether the Tourist Trail initiative would be completed.

Councillor Rolfe said the strategy was a continuation of the 2012-14 economic development strategy, which had already been well received, and the proposals had been brought to a business conference in January 2014 which had been attended by 70 local businesses.

Councillor Morson asked whether the strategy should have been brought to the Uttlesford Futures Board.

Councillor Rolfe said there had been close involvement with the lead officer for the Employment, Economy, Skills, Environment and Transport Group, ("EESSET"), which reported to the Futures Board. He was keen to see outcomes from the strategy, and the paper laid out the aims very clearly. Tourism was indeed key for Uttlesford and the sum of £23,000 had been identified to develop tourist information provision. Whilst he would revert to Councillor Morson on his specific question about the Tourist Trail, there were many individual initiatives such as the Tour de France and the new Saffron Walden Hall attracting world renowned musicians.

Councillor Cheetham welcomed the establishing of a business database. She asked whether sole traders would be included, as there were many single

person businesses in Uttlesford. She endorsed Councillor Barker's comments and asked that the latest technology be secured for mobile phone coverage, as many people now operated their businesses using mobiles.

Councillor Rolfe said these points were part of the strategy.

The Director of Public Services referred Members to the specific actions regarding mobile phone coverage listed at paragraph 4.2 of the report.

RESOLVED to approve the Economic Development Strategy 2014 -16 and action plan.

CA5

2013/14 OUTTURN

Councillor Chambers presented a report on the 2013/14 outturn which would be certified by 30 June 2014. The draft accounts would then be submitted to the Performance and Audit Committee on 22 July, and the audited accounts would be submitted for approval by that Committee in September.

Councillor Chambers said he was pleased to report a net favourable variance of £476,000 for the General Fund. He drew Members' attention to a temporary artificial surplus in the business rates bill. This money had to remain ringfenced so as to pay costs of any successful appeals against business rates. He explained that the Housing Revenue Account self-financing arrangement, now in the second year, had resulted in £3.38m of planned funding for housing schemes. Regarding the capital programme, the budget was £9.43m, and he had endorsed slippage requests totalling £1.903m, relating to schemes now scheduled to take place in 2014/15. The total capital expenditure in the year was £8.042m, which was only £2,000 above the budget. The Landsbanki issue had been resolved to the Cabinet's satisfaction.

In conclusion Councillor Chambers said the Council's finances had been used effectively to benefit local people, and he expected this to continue. The budget had been well managed and outcomes had consolidated the Council's strong financial position and he proposed the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Barker asked a question about the favourable variance of £2,000 in capital expenditure. She praised the inclusion of additional commentary in the report, as this was informative and transparent.

Councillor Chambers said he wished to acknowledge the contribution the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance had made to Members' understanding of the Council's finances, through his exceptionally clear and informative reports. This was Mr Joyce's last Cabinet meeting, as he was leaving the Council, and Councillor Chambers thanked him on behalf of all Members.

Councillor Cheetham said the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance had presented an excellent paper at the Planning Committee earlier that day, which had given a valuable explanation of Section 106 funding, and which she had asked to be made available to all Members.

In reply to the question by Councillor Barker about capital programme variance, the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance directed Members to the detailed breakdown in the report and appendices.

The Leader said it was a great pleasure for him to say this was the seventh successive year of a favourable variance in the Council's outturn. This had been achieved due to the efforts of staff in seeking savings, which was commendable.

Councillor Redfern questioned why there were unspent amounts within the budget for environmental services in relation to street cleaning, as she had recently received complaints about litter in Saffron Walden. She asked for money to be spent on street cleaning in the Town, and in other areas of the district.

Councillor Barker said the current budget for street cleaning had been spent in full and that checks were being made on the regularity of cleaning.

The Director of Public Services said he had recently increased the supervision of street cleaning. The reference in the report to an unspent element of the service investment budget, regarding Street Services Waste Management Capacity, related to recycling and not to cleaning. The reference to the Street Cleansing budget not having been spent was due to difficulty in sourcing drivers with appropriate licences for the intended 7 day a week street cleansing, and this issue was being looked at.

RESOLVED to approve

- a. the 2013/14 outturn position as set out in the report to Cabinet;
- b. the reserve transfers and reserve balances set out in the report, including the proposed transfers of the General Fund favourable variance to the Change Management Reserve, and the HRA favourable variance to the Sheltered Housing Reserve;
- c. the Capital Programme slippage requests.

CA6

DEVELOPMENT SITE – CATONS LANE, SAFFRON WALDEN

Councillor Redfern presented a report recommending development appraisal for a site at Catons Lane, Saffron Walden. The report described three options for development. The site was currently used as a parking court, but of the 38

garages on the site, 21 were not in use. Access to the site was very narrow, therefore negotiations were taking place with the tenant of the adjoining property, which was owned by the Council, to acquire part of the garden in order to widen it. Three development options had been considered by the Housing Board, which had recommended taking forward option 1.

RESOLVED

- 1 to approve the progressing of Development Scheme Option 1 for the site at Catons Lane, Saffron Walden;
- 2 To approve progress of the Development Scheme Option 1 for the above site to planning application stage, having regard to the estimated costs associated with the works.

CA7

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

Councillor Barker presented four reports on the Conservation Area Appraisals for the areas of Great Canfield, Great Easton, Great Hallingbury and Hadstock. The reports had been prepared in accordance with the Council's duty under section 69 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act 1990 to consider the designation of conservation areas and to undertake periodic reviews. Councillor Barker summarised some points of interest relating to each of the four areas, and in relation to Great Hallingbury, mentioning in particular the grave of Norman Mead, who was rightly remembered for his activity in opposing expansion of Stansted Airport. Councillor Barker said the conservation area appraisals had required much work from officers and local communities, and she thanked the Principal Research Officer for his excellent reports.

Councillor Barker drew to members' attention the fact that regarding Great Hallingbury, there were no proposed changes to the boundary of the conservation area.

RESOLVED

Conservation Area Appraisal, Great Canfield

- 1 To approve adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and its use in assisting the process of determining planning applications and implementing management proposals;
- 2 the Great Canfield Conservation Area boundary be formally amended.

Conservation Area Appraisal, Great Easton

- 1 To approve adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and its use in assisting the process of determining planning applications and implementing management proposals;

- 2 the Great Easton Conservation Area boundary be formally amended.

Conservation Area Appraisal, Great Hallingbury

To approve adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and its use in assisting the process of determining planning applications and implementing management proposals.

Conservation Area Appraisal, Hadstock

- 1 To approve adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and its use in assisting the process of determining planning applications and implementing management proposals;
- 2 the Hadstock Conservation Area boundary be formally amended.

CA8 ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Councillor Rolfe presented a report on assets of community value, following receipt of submissions from parish and town councils for consideration of two changes to the list of land in the district which under section 87 of the Localism Act 2011 was “land of community value”.

Regarding a submission to remove from the list the Parish Rooms, Rickling, Councillor Redfern asked why this should be considered when she recalled recently Members had refused to remove one of the existing assets of community value from the list.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Legal said that where an asset was no longer being used as an asset of community value it could be removed, but that where it was being used as such an asset it could not. In the case of The Parish Rooms at Rickling, these were in use as private offices.

RESOLVED

- a. To include on the Assets of Community Value list The White Horse PH, Newport;
- b. To remove from the Assets of Community Value list The Parish Rooms, Rickling.

CA9 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO JOINT COMMITTEES

Members considered the proposals for appointments to joint committees. Regarding a question about an appointment to the Essex Flood Management

Committee, which was not listed, Councillor Ketteridge said this appointment would be addressed in due course.

RESOLVED

- 1 To appoint to the Joint Parking Partnership Councillor S Barker;
- 2 to appoint to the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee Councillors Rolfe and Cheetham.

CA10 APPOINTMENT OF CABINET WORKING GROUPS

Members considered the proposed appointments to Cabinet Working Groups. Councillor Cheetham said as there was a vacancy on the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel she wished to propose that Councillor Godwin be appointed. Councillor Rolfe seconded the proposal, which was carried.

RESOLVED to appoint Members to the working groups set out in the report and to appoint to the Stansted Airport Advisory Panel Councillor E Godwin.

CA11 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered the proposals for appointment of representatives to outside bodies. Councillor Ketteridge proposed the substitution on the list of Councillor Salmon in place of Councillor Rich, to the Stansted Day Centre Management Committee.

Councillor Redfern asked Councillor Morson whether members of the Liberal Democrat Group would be attending meetings of the Local Plan Working Group.

Councillor Morson said that his Group would attend if those meetings were open to the public.

Members discussed the representation for the Council on the Essex County Strategic Partnership, as there was a lack of clarity from the Board as to whether the membership was the same as the West Essex Alliance. The Chief Executive said this matter was being looked at and would be resolved at a later stage.

RESOLVED to appoint Members to represent the Council on the outside bodies listed in the report, subject to an amendment that Councillor Salmon be appointed in place of Councillor Rich

to be the representative on the Stansted Day Centre Management Committee.

CA12 **NEW HOMES BONUS CONTINGENCY RESERVE**

Councillor Chambers presented a report recommending three projects for funding from the New Homes Bonus Contingency Reserve, which he said were intended to commemorate the centenary of the Great War. A proposal had been received from Mr Braybrooke to establish an RAF Memorial at Carver Barracks. The Leader had invited Mr Braybrooke to the meeting this evening to speak about the background to the proposal.

Mr Braybrooke made a statement (appended to these Minutes) about his long-standing aim for there to be an RAF Memorial at Debden.

Councillor Chambers thanked Mr Braybrooke and said his involvement in approving the design and location of the memorial would be appreciated.

Regarding the proposal to refurbish public toilets in Saffron Walden, members agreed that the approval of the Town Council be obtained regarding design.

RESOLVED

To approve:

- a. The allocation of a maximum of £33,000 for use as funding for the cleaning of war memorials and sowing of poppy seeds;
- b. The funding to be to a maximum amount of £550 per Parish;
- c. Retrospective funding to be allowed where the memorial has already been cleaned in 2014;
- d. Written applications to be sent to the Section 151 Officer;
- e. A sum of up to £5,000 be allocated for the establishment of an RAF Memorial at Carver Barracks;
- f. The £38,000 cost identified above to be funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve;
- g. The refurbishment of Hill Street toilets, Saffron Walden.

CA13 **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FUND**

Councillor Chambers presented a report which sought approval for projects to be funded from the Strategic Initiatives Fund, which was approved as part of

the 2014 budget setting process. Specific amounts were set out in a related report to be heard in Part II.

Councillor Barker declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest as a customer of Buzcom in relation to superfast broadband.

Members commented on the proposals. In reply to a question from Councillor Cheetham regarding a request from Stansted Parish Council for certain projects to be targeted for funding, Councillor Chambers said these proposals would be considered.

Councillor Barker asked for assurance that areas of all the district's larger settlements would be supported for provision of superfast broadband, and that the focus would not be confined to the area of Saffron Walden.

Councillor Chambers said he noted this request, and he agreed that it was very important for businesses in places across the district to be able to rely on good broadband.

Councillor Rolfe said that the money to be invested would support the provision of the final 7% of the broadband service, following the roll out of this service by Essex County Council; he took Councillor Barker's point and agreed that the benefit of the recommendations should cover the whole of Uttlesford.

Councillor Morson asked questions on the report: he wished to know who had decided the priorities for the recommendations; he asked whether they were too short-term; whether there should be funding allocated to car parks in the rest of the district, and not only in Saffron Walden; and whether in respect of Highways, the verges biodiversity fund would be reintroduced.

Councillor Chambers said the Cabinet had found £1m to spend on helping local businesses and aimed to look at where there were opportunities to best enhance the Uttlesford economy. It was essential to be careful with finances, therefore the fixed term contract for the Economic Development Officer was for two years only at present. Regarding car parks, the redevelopment of the Waitrose store would have an impact on the Town's car parks, and this was why they were included. However the Cabinet was in the longer term reviewing all the car parking in the district.

Regarding verge biodiversity, Councillor Chambers said there had to be a balance for maintaining pathways for walking as well as for biodiversity and he had not currently considered funding for this.

Councillor Rolfe said one of the tasks of the Economic Development Officer would be to develop a business district over the longer term. He agreed that the review of car parking would cover the whole district.

In reply to a further question from Councillor Morson, Councillor Rolfe agreed that the review of car parking carried out by Councillor Evans as part of the

Scrutiny Committee's work would be referred to in the district-wide review of car parking.

Councillor Ketteridge said the Cabinet had set up the Strategic Initiatives Fund on the basis that projects would be worked up in a timely and considered way, and other proposals would come forward in due course.

Councillor Rich asked for it to be minuted that, regarding an email from Councillor Jones of Stansted Parish Council for funding for various initiatives, he wished to seek assurance that these proposals would be considered; and that he sought assurance that car parking funding would not only centre on Saffron Walden. He asked Cabinet to bear in mind the impact on Stansted of its new Health Centre and a third new supermarket on the site which Barclays Bank was vacating.

Councillor Rolfe said the Catons Lane initiative would need to be discussed with Saffron Walden Town Council, as there had been concerns expressed that because it was free, it had not previously been included as part of the regular monitoring carried out by the Parking Partnership.

RESOLVED to approve, subject to the costs identified in the Part II report accompanying this item, the following projects to be funded from the Strategic Initiatives Fund:

- a. Economic Development Officer on a two year fixed term basis;
- b. Business Workspace Review;
- c. Swan Meadow Car Park capacity enhancement;
- d. A review of the potential for the extension of Catons Lane Car Park;
- e. Funding for the further roll out of Superfast broadband within Uttlesford;
- f. Matched Highways funding;
- g. Discretionary Rate Relief.

Councillor Ketteridge said this was the last Cabinet meeting of the Assistant Chief Executive-Finance. He wished to thank him for the work he had done. For seven years the Council had had good financial results and Members had benefitted from well-prepared financial reports which had enabled them to understand the finances. He thanked Mr Joyce very much and wished him well in his new role.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Finance thanked Councillor Ketteridge and said it had been an honour to serve five and a half years with the Council. He had enjoyed his time with the Council and was grateful to councillors for their

leadership and support, and particularly to Councillor Chambers, whose support and effectiveness he had appreciated.

CA14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED under Section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CA15 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FUND AND NEW HOMES BONUS CONTINGENCY RESERVE

Cabinet considered a report presented by Councillor Chambers recommending approval for funding of the projects identified for taking forward under the Strategic Initiatives Fund.

RESOLVED to approve the specific funding allocations for each project as agreed elsewhere on the agenda and that the remaining sum be retained as a contingency until this round of projects was completed.

CA16 LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTY

Councillor Redfern presented a report seeking approval for use of the powers for Compulsory Purchase Orders under section 17 of the Housing Act 1985, in respect of land identified in the report. Councillor Redfern said this was not the first time the Council had used these powers. Empty homes were a wasted resource and had the potential to adversely affect local housing markets. The proposed course of action would bring on to the market a property that had been empty for over ten years. The property in question was in poor structural condition and was continuing to deteriorate, with the increasing likelihood that it would detrimentally affect the amenity value of the adjoining row of cottages. Correspondence with the owner, who lived in London, indicated this property was not her main residence. The owner had been offered assistance to bring the property back into use; she had been informed about the PLACE grant scheme; and she had been advised that enforcement action would be considered.

Members asked questions about the evidence required to enable use of the powers under the Act; and what would happen to any possessions of the owners.

The Assistant Chief Executive-Legal said the powers under section 17 required the Council to have shown that it had taken steps to encourage the owner to bring the property back into acceptable use.

Councillor Redfern said any family possessions would be stored.

Councillor Redfern asked members to make every effort to attend the Housing Allocations Workshop on 17 July.

RESOLVED

1. That authority be given for the acquisition of the land identified in the report.
2. The Assistant Chief Executive Legal be authorised to make a compulsory purchase order to be known as the District Council of Uttlesford (name of property) Compulsory Purchase Order, under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 in respect of the land and property indicated on a map marked with the name of the Compulsory Purchase Order.
3. The Assistant Chief Executive Legal be authorised to fix the common seal of the Council to the necessary documents and make an application to the Secretary of State for confirmation of the Order.
4. The Assistant Chief Executive Legal be authorised to acquire the necessary interests in the land and property included in the confirmed compulsory purchase order by means of a general vesting declaration, on terms to be agreed by the Assistant Chief Executive Legal or on terms ordered by the Lands Tribunal.
5. That authority be given for an appropriate amount of works to be carried out to the property while it is in the Council's possession to deal with issues of safety and security, to abate environmental nuisances and to prepare the property for marketing. The costs incurred in carrying out these works to be recovered from the resale price.
6. That the Assistant Chief Executive Legal be authorised to dispose of the freehold interest in the property, on the open market, by the most suitable method and otherwise on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Assistant Chief Executive Legal.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm.

Public Speaking

Summary of the statement of Mr Keith Braybrooke

I would like to thank Members for the opportunity to speak. The subject of an RAF War Memorial at Debden Airfield has been in my mind for a long time, as there is currently nothing to show the location of the former airfield. Nature is obscuring the site, and whilst those who live in old rural Uttlesford know about it, it seems a pity that most people might never realise Debden Airfield existed. Other army camps have memorials, as does Stansted Airport, but there is nothing at Debden. We owe those airmen something better.

The distinguished history of Debden as a fighter airfield is certainly worth remembering: in the Battle of Britain there was much loss to 11 Group. I have written a full history of the airfield; I have spoken about its history to organisations in the United States; and the Debden emblem has been carried around the world.

I would wish to have some of the old buildings refurbished, for instance the Operations Room. A commemorative stone would serve to remind people that the establishment had a presence at Debden, as well as to remind us of those who were there. I would like to see this memorial sited where the community could see it, as currently the only memorial is within the grounds of Carver Barracks.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you.