

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN on 31 JULY 2014 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe – Leader (Leader)  
Councillor S Barker – Deputy Leader and Executive Member for  
Environmental Services  
Councillor R Chambers – Executive Member for Finance  
Councillor J Cheetham – Executive Member for Aviation  
Councillor V Ranger – Executive Member for Communities and  
Partnerships  
Councillor J Redfern – Executive Member for Housing  
Councillor A Walters – Executive Member for Community Safety

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

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), R Dobson (Principal  
Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public  
Services), A Knight (Acting Assistant Director – Finance), D  
Malins (Housing Development Manager), R Millership (Assistant  
Director Housing and Environmental Services), M Perry  
(Assistant Chief Executive – Legal) and A Webb (Director of  
Corporate Services).

CA17

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Leader welcomed all present to the meeting, which was his first as  
Leader. In particular he welcomed Councillor Menell as the Lead Member for  
Children and Families, and Councillor Ranger who had taken on the portfolio  
of Communities and Partnerships. The Leader reminded members that this  
meeting was being broadcast.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Godwin and A Dean.  
The Leader informed Members that Councillor Dean had emailed questions to  
be raised on his behalf under Matters Arising.

CA18

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2014**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2014 were received and signed  
by the Leader as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING****i) Minute CA4 – Economic development strategy**

A question from Councillor Dean was read out. Councillor Dean asked for a response to a question which Councillor Morson had raised about a “tourist trail” for the district, as some tourist signs had been installed but the trail had not been completed. Councillor Dean asked whether the Leader agreed that the scheme should be either completed or removed, and whether anyone had been given responsibility for the scheme.

The Leader said the draft tourism strategy included linked signage. A meeting of the Uttlesford tourism team which included tourism business representatives was to take place in August and the Leader would then respond to Councillor Dean in writing.

**ii) Minute CA5 – 2013/14 Outturn**

On behalf of Councillor Dean a question was read out regarding street cleaning and recycling. Councillor Dean had not yet received a response to his previous question on whether there was a link between a missed performance indicator on missed bin collection and staff sickness absence.

Councillor Barker said she would write to Councillor Dean.

Councillor Barker said in relation to a reference at the last paragraph in the Minute to the difficulty in sourcing drivers with appropriate licences for the intended 7 day a week street cleaning, that there had continued to be problems with recruiting suitable drivers for street cleaning operations, so an existing staff member was now being trained.

**iii) Minute CA6 – development site, Catons Lane, Saffron Walden**

Councillor Redfern said a local press report had stated incorrectly that planning permission had been given at the Cabinet meeting for the development of the site. In fact the decision made by Cabinet was for the proposals to be progressed to the planning application stage. She had made The Saffron Walden Reporter aware of this fact.

Councillor Cheetham suggested that Councillor Redfern should write a letter to the newspaper which would enable the misinformation to be corrected in the letters pages.

**iv) Minute CA13 – Strategic initiatives fund**

On behalf of councillor Dean a question was read out. Councillor Dean wished to know, in relation to references which Councillors Chambers and Ketteridge had made to other projects coming forward, such as those submitted by Stansted Parish Council, what channels and

mechanisms existed for consideration of other projects, and asked for assurance as to their transparency.

The Leader said that as Councillor Chambers was not yet here, he would answer. He said the strategic initiatives fund had been set up for the economic development of Uttlesford and to secure investment in local enterprises. An amount of £600,000 had been agreed, so there was a balance of £400,000. Options for councillors to put forward projects would arise and any proposals would be looked at by the Scrutiny Committee. Proposals submitted by Stansted Parish Council included a number of items which were parish-specific, so other funding sources for those elements had been identified. However, Cabinet was open to considering funding public conveniences within the proposed , as one of the proposals.

Councillor Cheetham said she had been impressed by the presentation by Mr Braybrooke regarding a war memorial for Debden Airfield. She asked for an update.

The Director of Corporate Services said the initiative was being led by Councillor Chambers and Councillor Ketteridge, who would be progressing the project.

The Leader said he had attended the beating of the retreat at Carver Barracks recently, which had shown a good concord between the base and the community.

CA20

## **HATHERLEY COURT, SAFFRON WALDEN**

Councillor Redfern presented a report on a detailed development appraisal for the sheltered scheme at Hatherley Court, Saffron Walden in order to improve the accommodation for tenants. The proposals had been prepared following a review of the Council's sheltered housing. Proposals for both this report, and for the following one, had been considered in depth by the Tenant Forum and Housing Board, and both schemes had their full support.

Councillor Redfern said Hatherley Court was constructed in the 1990s. The building was sound and was in an excellent location. However of the scheme's 26 units, 18 provided bedrooms of very limited size, and all had very small poorly designed kitchen areas. There were other attributes which made the scheme unsuited to modern living, such as the situation of the common room on the second floor, and the absence of a dedicated mobile scooter store/charging area.

Tenants living at Hatherley Court had been informed at an early stage of the review that the Council was considering options for the scheme. Initially tenants had been very supportive, but after the last meeting of the Housing Board, they had submitted a petition opposing the proposals. However subsequently it had been ascertained that some of the signatories had not known what it was they were signing, and the organiser of the petition had

stated that she did want to opt for the proposals after all. Councillor Redfern said that on 19 August tenants would be visiting a new build scheme, which should put their minds at rest.

Councillor Redfern drew to members' attention the features which were planned for the remodelling at the scheme, as set out in the report at paragraph 16. She said the estimated cost for the build for this remodelling scheme was £1,699,223 which allowed for phased development costs and contingencies such as any further surveys.

Councillor Cheetham asked whether there were empty flats for tenants to stay on site whilst the works took place, as perhaps the petition had indicated fears about disruption on the part of tenants.

Councillor Redfern said there would be empty flats and that tenants would remain on the site.

Councillor Barker said £1.7m total costs resulted in a cost per flat of £63,000. She asked how much tolerance was built into the figures, and whether the figures would change as the plans became more detailed ready for planning application stage.

Councillor Redfern said it would be necessary to progress to the next stage in order to firm up the costs. The proposals would be brought back to Cabinet once the most accurate information possible had been obtained. Until that time, these proposals represented anticipated costs, and she intended to keep a tight rein on costs.

Councillor Walters said this was an excellent location, and he was delighted to hear about these proposals.

Councillor Chambers said the figures were an estimate, and the proposals being agreed tonight were "in principle". Whilst he hoped the figures could be negotiated down, it was preferable to give Cabinet a good indication of possible costs at this stage.

Councillor Lemon welcomed the proposals for both this scheme and for those in the next report, and said he was pleased the Council was supporting sheltered accommodation in Uttlesford.

The Leader said Councillor Redfern would no doubt publicise these proposals. He asked a question about the predicted life of the project.

The Housing Development Manager said the proposals would "future-proof" Hatherley Court for the next 30 to 40 years, as the fabric of the building was still very good.

**RESOLVED** To approve a recommendation from the Housing Board at its meeting of 22 July 2014 to progress to the planning application stage proposals to remodel Hatherley Court.

**REYNOLDS COURT, NEWPORT**

Councillor Redfern presented a report for a detailed development appraisal for the sheltered scheme at Reynolds Court, Newport in order to provide more suitable modern accommodation for tenants. There were two options for the scheme, to develop or to remodel. Much consultation had taken place with tenants, the Tenant Forum and Newport Parish Council. The proposals had been considered by the Housing Board. Tenants had been on a coach trip to see examples of both a new build scheme owned by a housing association at Linton, and a remodelling scheme by the Council at Vicarage Mead in Thaxted. The trip had been a very rewarding opportunity to see how engaged the residents were with the plans.

Councillor Redfern took members through the report. The scheme comprised 31 units, 22 of which were bedsits, which was a form of accommodation that was outdated and which was regularly refused by prospective tenants. Long term void units had contributed to substantial levels of rent loss for the scheme. There were other attributes that made Reynolds Court unsuited to modern living, such as the absence of lifts, the poor size of the communal kitchen, and the lack of any area for mobile scooters. The scheme was however in an excellent location with good access to transport links and other facilities. Investment to make the scheme fit for purpose would increase demand for the accommodation.

Councillor Redfern said there were two options: option 1, to remodel the scheme at an estimated cost of £1,568,000 and option 2, new build, at an estimated cost of £7,374,110. The first option would change the bedsit flats to 1 or 2 bedroom flats, but would reduce the total number of units from 31 to 21 and would not change the communal areas layout and would not resolve existing issues with these areas. The second option would increase the number of units to 43; it would result in a thermally efficient building with reduced running costs; and would provide the new facilities listed in the report. The proposals were for a three-storey building with a barrel roof construction, with a sedum finish. Councillor Redfern said Housing Service officers had done a first class job in ensuring tenants understood the options being presented. The majority of tenants preferred the new build. The remodelling option would not "future proof" the building, whereas the new build would provide thermal efficiency and provision of better facilities with a contemporary appearance. If the scheme were redeveloped tenants would be moved from one part of the scheme to another. Tenants seemed to be comfortable with this proposal.

Councillor Redfern said the estimated costs allowed for risk elements, which as the project progressed would be either firmed up or eliminated. If funding exceeded £5m, the costs would need to be found within the HRA Business Plan. The HRA Business Plan included many suggested projects from members, some of which could be delayed if this funding was required for this scheme. Councillor Redfern asked members to approve option 2.

In response to questions from members, Councillor Redfern said the Council had experience of building works, and would engage with neighbours whilst building works were carried out. Regarding the impact of the three-storey building on neighbouring properties, she considered the design was sympathetic to its setting and Planning Committee would ensure the plans achieved the right outcome for the area.

In response to questions about renewable energy for this scheme, and for the council's new build projects in general, the Housing Development Manager said a barrel roof design would enable enhanced efficiency of solar energy provision and that in general it was necessary to ensure the fabric of a building was suitable for whichever form of energy was to be used, whether thermal, solar or gas.

Councillor Cheetham agreed with these points, and asked about the sedum roof which was currently being considered for the new build option.

The Director of Public Services said a sedum roof was beneficial for drainage, so in areas such as Newport where flooding had been an issue, there were possible benefits to having a sedum roof which would be looked at in detail.

Councillor Howell said the cost per unit of the rebuild was quite high, working out at £75,000 per unit, however this option increased the number of units which was a point of merit. In view of Councillor Redfern's comments regarding the HRA Business Plan, he considered the Scrutiny Committee should look at the HRA Business Plan, and asked the Director of Corporate Services to take that comment to the Leader of the Scrutiny Committee. However Councillor Howell said he endorsed the proposal.

RESOLVED to approve recommendations from the Housing Board at its meeting of 22 July 2014:

- a) That the redevelopment option be progressed
- b) That the redevelopment option be progressed to the planning application stage, with particular emphasis on firming up the total scheme cost.

CA21

## **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Leader proposed a change to the list submitted to Cabinet for appointments, in that councillor Menell would be the Council's representative to the Uttlesford Council for Voluntary Service. He was pleased to welcome Councillor Menell to the meeting in her new capacity as Lead Member for Children and Families, and was also pleased to announce that Councillor Davies would be the Lead Member for Sport, and Councillor Oliver would be the deputy executive member for aviation. Regarding the membership of

Uttlesford Futures, he would be making a further recommendation at the next meeting.

RESOLVED to appoint to the following outside bodies:

Council for Voluntary Service – Uttlesford – Councillor Menell

Essex County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee -  
Councillor Ranger

Essex Flood Management Committee – Councillor S Barker

Local Government Association – General Assembly – Councillor  
H Rolfe

The Cabinet noted that Councillor Rolfe was the Council's representative on the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board.

**CA22 APPOINTMENTS TO CABINET WORKING GROUPS**

RESOLVED To appoint to the Museum Management Working Group Councillor V Ranger in place of Councillor H Rolfe.

**CA23 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO JOINT COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED to appoint to the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee Councillors H Rolfe and V Ranger.

**CA24 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 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**CA25 URGENT BUSINESS – KEY DECISION**

Members considered a verbal report by the Director of Public Services regarding an item which required an urgent key decision to be made in respect of a default on payments by a supplier to the Council and to set in

place plans regarding ongoing service provision, both interim and in the longer-term.

The circumstances leading up to the situation requiring this decision to be made were explained in detail. Officers asked Members to consider options for a contingency plan, including re-negotiation of the contract. Officers explained in detail the risks attached to certain options.

Members discussed the proposals and asked a number of questions to which answers were given.

RESOLVED to approve a programme to recover debts owed to the Council by a supplier of services and to pursue other actions as recommended by officers.

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.