

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 28 OCTOBER 2014 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe – Leader.
Councillor S Barker – Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Environmental Services
Councillor R Chambers – Executive Member for Finance
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 A Dean, E Godwin, S Howell, M Lemon and J Salmon.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), C Canbolat (Specialist Accountant), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), A Knight (Acting Assistant Director – Finance), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive -Legal), B Tice (Scripting Officer) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

CA39

PRESENTATION OF PETITION – RESIDENTS OF DE VIGIER AVENUE

A petition was presented from the residents of De Vigier Avenue, Saffron Walden. It raised objection to the disposal of the wildlife haven to the rear of 16 -32 De Vigier Avenue, by Uttlesford District Council.

On behalf of the resident's group, Paula Stock made a supporting statement as follows:-

The petition containing 250 signatures is objecting to the proposed sale of Asset 24 at the rear of De Vigier Avenue by Uttlesford District Council

The land in question has been left undisturbed by man for over 28 years allowing trees, shrubs, bushes etc to grow and provide a haven home and nesting area for an abundance of wildlife including protected species, RSPB red coded birds and bats.

The wildlife area has flourished without any maintenance cost to the council and is an area that could be maintained by residents. The residents' group has received the support of many interested parties including Dr Gordon of the Essex Wildlife Trust and Mr Wright a former Essex Police wildlife officer who is also willing to help in the managing of the site.

All councils have a responsibility to encourage, protect and enhance the natural environment. There is also a responsibility to inform residents of any significant changes to their area and in the case of Asset 24 not to turn up in a bullish manor having only given one working day prior notice to strip a wildlife

area of part of its nesting habitat during the nesting season, which is not only wrong but also illegal.

The right thing for the council to do is to keep to its own published policy and leave Asset 24 as it has been for the last 28 years in our opinion and that of other residents one of the best wildlife and nesting havens of Saffron Walden

It would do the council no harm bearing in mind the forthcoming 2015 elections to gift Asset 24 the land in question to the Town Council.

The Chairman thanked the residents for attending the meeting.

CA40 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cheetham.

The Chairman confirmed that Councillor Mackman would be invited to future meetings of the Cabinet as the Leader of the newly formed group, Uttlesford 4 Residents.

CA41 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2014 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CA42 **MATTERS ARISING**

i) **Minute CA 36 - Assets of Community Value**

Councillor S Barker said that she had spoken to Councillor Cheetham and the ECC Cabinet Member and the matter would be discussed at the next parish council meeting.

CA43 **QUESTIONS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

Councillor Sadler spoke in support of the De Vigier Avenue residents. He hoped the Cabinet would recognise the strength of opinion against the sale of the land. He would support the transfer of the land to Saffron Walden Town Council but as this might be unlikely, he thought the suggestion for the residents to look after the site might be a way forward.

The Leader responded to the residents and outlined the action that was likely to be taken. The council would investigate the wildlife and general conservation status, the general state of the site and obtain a valuation. This would need to be undertaken outside the breeding season and was likely to be carried out next winter. He pointed out that the land remained an asset of the council but at this stage he was not prejudicing the outcome and the council would work with the residents to find a solution.

Councillor Dean asked when the Uttlesford tourist trail was likely to be finished off as it was only semi complete. Councillor Ranger confirmed that it was part of a larger project, which was also looking at accessibility for walkers and cyclists.

Councillor Dean asked if there were plans to carry out changes to the Catons Lane car park. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services advised that as part of the redevelopment of the site the Council had been looking at the opportunity to expand the car park, and some money had been set aside, but he was not sure if this had been progressed. He confirmed that the Town Council had been involved in these discussions.

CA44

REPORTS FROM PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Godwin asked about progress with the car parking report that had been prepared by the Scrutiny Task Group some time ago and had included a number of recommendations which should be taken forward. The Leader replied that the council was appointing consultants to carry out a car park assessment. They would be directed to the Scrutiny report and its recommendations would be taken into account. This consultant's report was expected to come before Cabinet in the New Year.

CA45

2013/14 TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Councillor Chambers presented the report on the annual statement of key treasury management activity and outcomes during the year, which was a requirement of the council's constitution.

For 2013/14 the following points were highlighted. All deposits and investments had been made in compliance with the council's approved Treasury Management Strategy and no short or long-term borrowing was needed to meet the council's commitments. It was also noted that the council had accepted the offer for the residual unpaid sum of the Landsbanki investment.

RESOLVED to approve the 2013/14 Treasury Management Outturn as set out in the report.

CA46

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AMENDMENT 2014/15

The Cabinet was asked to agree amendments to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2014/15. The changes were based on the advice of the council's consultants and were intended to maximise return on investment whilst reducing risk.

The first amendment was to the counterparty list. The Council's current policy was for a threshold rating of A- for all counterparty investments. Due to changes in Government support it was expected that some UK banks might

become BBB+ credit rated. It had been advised that the council continue to invest in these major UK banks with a maximum cash limit of £1m for up to 100 days.

The second amendment was to the cash limit, where it was recommended that there be an increase from £1m to a max of £2m per relevant counterparty. This was more practical for day to day activities.

In answer to a question it was explained that the approach was more cautious than 2013/14 but less restrictive than the original 2014/15 proposal.

RESOLVED to approve the amended 2014/15 Treasury Management Strategy counterparty list as set out in the report.

CA47

THE LIVING WAGE

The Cabinet received a report suggesting that the Council becomes a Living Wage employer. The Living Wage was calculated by the Centre of Research in Social Policy and looked at what households required to achieve a minimum standard of living. This was currently £7.65 per hour and 15 council employees were currently paid below this amount. To rectify this, at the current rate this would cost the council £8850 plus £400 for accreditation to the Living Wage Foundation. The precise costs would be reported to Full Council in December when the Living Wage figures for 2014/15 would be known.

Members welcomed this initiative, as something the council should pursue as a responsible employer. Councillor Dean commented on the possible impact on the affected staff in terms of their entitlement to tax credits. He also asked that this initiative should be publicised to encourage other employers in the district to take similar action.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the Council agrees to pay at least the Living Wage from 1 January 2015 and seek to obtain accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation from that date.

CA48

PCSO FUNDING

The Leader explained that for the last few years the council had matched funded, with the Police, four PCSO's at a cost of £60,000 per annum. The Police had withdrawn the scheme from March 2014. The Police had now approached the council as to whether it would like to fully fund any PCSO's.

RESOLVED that this item be deferred to allow a further review of the options and a firm proposal be brought to the next meeting.

CA49

UTTLESFORD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Cabinet received the latest version of the LDS, the project plan for the Uttlesford Development Plan. The revision reflected a change in the timetable for the production of the Gypsy and Traveller Site allocations DPD.

RESOLVED to approve the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS)

CA50

LAVENDER FIELD FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Members were informed of a request from owners of residential properties that had recently been flooded to draw up and implement a flood relief scheme. An application had been submitted to the council for grant aid under the Defra repair and renewal scheme to enable the council to draw down Defra funds to offset against the total cost of the scheme. The scheme was in the process of being prepared and the costed scheme would be considered by Cabinet in due course.

At this item Councillor Howell drew attention to the culvert in Saffron Walden - from the Common to Park Lane, which required repair. He understood that there was complexity around ownership and asked who was responsible as this was potentially a serious problem. The Director of Public Services said this was a known problem and the lead on this issue was being taken by the Environment Agency.

The report was noted.

CA51

BENTFIELD GREEN CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Councillor Barker presented the report on the Bentfield Green Conservation area. The report had been prepared and discussed with Stansted parish council who welcomed the findings in principle as a worthwhile document which was likely to strengthen the control of development.

Councillor Dean asked about the action that was likely to be taken in response, whether Article 4 directions would be served where appropriate and for there to be an active programme to implement the suggested improvements.

Councillor Barker said that the improvements mainly related to private dwellings so these could not be insisted upon. Article 4 directions would only be imposed if it was felt there was a particular problem. The appraisals would be subject to a periodic review to ensure the quality was retained and the plan was kept up to date.

The Leader thanked John Bosworth and Brice Tice, who had prepared the series of conservation area appraisals, for the amount of work carried out and the quality of the documents that had been produced.

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

CA52

HAZEL END CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Cabinet received the conservation area appraisal for Hazel End. This had been prepared in consultation with and was supported by the parish council.

Councillor Barker said that a notable feature in the area was that the doors of the properties owned by the Hassobury Estate were painted red and this should be mentioned within the document.

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

CA53

CHRISTMAS PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item on the grounds of urgency as a decision was required before the next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet considered a proposal to waive parking charges within the District Council managed car parks in order to aid traders and town centre vitality over the Christmas and New Year periods. This would involve a number of changes, the requirement to advertise and the provision of signage within the car parks.

Member welcomed the proposal which would support local businesses.

The Leader explained that the proposals did not include the Fairycroft/Waitrose car parks as these were not solely in the council's control. The rationale behind the proposal to limit the free car parking to after 3pm on Saturday was that on the busiest days it was beneficial for the retailers to see a continual turnover of spaces.

RESOLVED to agree the Christmas parking proposals as follows

1. Introduce 'free after 3pm' on all Council managed car parks except Fairycroft/Waitrose from 1 December to 23 December 2014.
2. Introduce free parking on all Council managed car parks except Fairycroft/Waitrose from Christmas Eve 2014 to Friday 2 January 2015.
3. Introduce free parking all day on Saturday 6 December 2014 at Crafton Green car park at the request of the owner, Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council and Lower Street car park due to the Frost Fayre.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm.