

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 19 MARCH 2015 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
Councillor J Redfern – Executive Member for Housing
Councillor A Walters – Executive Member for Community Safety

Also present: Councillors E Godwin, S Howell and R Lemon.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), D Barden
(Communications Manager), M Cox (Democratic Services
Officer), C Chapman (Operations Manager), R Harborough
(Director of Public Services), R Millership (Assistant Director –
Housing and Environmental Services), C Oliva (Solicitor) and A
Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

CA103 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cheetham, Dean, Rich and Wells.

Councillor Redfern declared a non- pecuniary interest in item 17, as her husband had been involved in the meeting broadcasting project.

Councillor S Barker declared a non- pecuniary interest in item 11, Local Council Tax support scheme as a Member of Essex County Council.

CA104 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CA105 MATTERS ARISING

i) Minute CA93 HRA 2015/16

Councillor Redfern reported that the sheltered scheme at Reynolds Court, Newport had recently gained full planning permission.

CA106

PETITION IN RELATION TO LOWER STREET CAR PARK STANSTED

The Cabinet considered a petition submitted on behalf of the Stansted Business Forum, traders and local residents of Stansted who had expressed concern at the use of the UDC's car park in Lower Street, Stansted. The petition claimed that the car park was now 90% full of commuters, which was denying customers' access to car parking and affecting trade in the area. The petition asked what the council was intending to do about this situation.

Mr Goldsmith, the organiser of the petition was not present but had agreed for this to be dealt with in his absence.

In response, it was explained that the car park had recently been remodelled to accommodate a construction compound for the adjoining development but there had been no reduction in the number of spaces. Under a proposed development agreement the car park would be extended and the layout revised to increase capacity. It was noted that the car park had always been available to commuters, but if it was established that the percentage of spaces used for this purpose was posing a problem there could be a new tariff to limit long stay parking or restriction on maximum length of stay.

The council was conducting a comprehensive review of car parking provision and charging for the whole of the district and recommendations would be brought to Cabinet. The Leader expressed sympathy with the petitioners and hoped that the review would assist in finding a solution .

The council's response would be sent to the petition organiser.

CA107

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Councillor Chambers presented the Asset Management Plan and Strategy for 2015/16. This included the list of the council's non-housing assets with the strategic objectives and the guiding principles for their use. He highlighted the projects that had been completed during 2014/15, the items carried forward and the new action plan items for 2015/16.

Councillor Rolfe drew attention to the progress being made in maximising the use of the council owned buildings with the involvement of other local agencies. He asked for an additional point to be added to the strategic objectives 'to invest in new assets if for the longer term benefit of the council'

RESOLVED to approve the Asset Management Plan with the inclusion of the additional strategic objective as set out above.

CA108

PAY POLICY

Councillor Chambers presented the Pay Policy for 2015/16. This set out the council's pay and remuneration schemes and the criteria for the forthcoming year. The policy reflected the recent pay award and included two changes –

the introduction of the living wage for all employees from 1 January 2015 and the automatic enrolment of all employees in pension scheme.

In answer to a Member question, it was confirmed that the council had a policy for conducting employee appraisals and these were up to date.

RESOLVED to approve the Pay Policy for recommendation to Full Council.

CA109 **DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF**

The Cabinet was advised of Government changes to the Discretionary Rate Relief scheme announced as part of the autumn statement. This was to increase the amount of transitional relief and extend the scheme for a further two years. Local authorities had been asked to use their discretionary powers to implement these changes rather than through an Act of Parliament.

Councillor Chambers asked that the scheme continue to be publicised as since its introduction last year it had been helpful to rural communities.

RESOLVED to approve the Discretionary Rate Relief with the following amendments

- a. The scheme is extended to 31 March 2017
- b. The increase of transitional rate relief from £1,000 to £1500.

CA110 **LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

Councillor Chambers explained two amendments that had been made to the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme, which reflected recent legislative changes to the eligibility for persons from abroad and the introduction of Universal Credit. These amendments did not make any policy changes to the scheme. He reiterated that the council's scheme was still the most generous of all Essex Authorities.

RESOLVED to approve the amendments to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme as detailed in appendix A

- a. Legislative changes relating to persons from abroad and the introduction of Universal Credit.
- b. Annual uprating of the specified premiums.

CA111 **REVISIONS TO THE RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE SETTING POLICY**

Councillor Redfern presented a report which set out the changes to the Rent and Service Charge Policy in response to the Government's guidance on rents for social housing.

The guidance set out five areas to be considered, as follows

- 1) To increase the inflation factor to CPI plus 1%.
- 2) Cessation of formula rents.
- 3) Transition of void properties to target rent at re-let.
- 4) Rents for new homes at up to 80% of market rent
- 5) Market rents for households with incomes of at least £60,000

The council's was proposing to amend its policy in respect of items 1) and 2) above for existing tenancies. The change to the formula for the inflation factor from RPI + 0.5% to CPI + 1% had been supported by the Tenant's Panel and had subsequently been adopted by the council. This would be of benefit to tenants as it would result in a smaller increase in rents.

The cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of these changes would be approximately £250k per year. The financial implications of the revised Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy have been modelled into the HRA business plan.

In relation to points 3) and 4) the council's existing policy already allowed for the rent of void properties to be moved directly to formula rent levels at re-let and for affordable rents to be charged on new build properties.

In relation to point 5) the Government expected that the tenants with an income of over £60,000 to be identified by self-disclosure, but for existing tenants there was currently no legal grounds under which the local authority could demand this level of financial information. Although Members supported this initiative it was not proposed to incorporate this ability into the revised policy. However it would be reviewed if future legislative changes facilitated collection of the necessary financial information.

RESOLVED to note the Government Guidance and approve the amendments to the Rent and Service Charge setting policy as set out in points 1) and 2) above.

CA112 **MEMBERS NEW HOMES BONUS SCHEME – PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Cabinet was informed of the payments that Members had made from their £2000 allocation under the New Homes Bonus Scheme, and details of the projects they had supported in their wards.

As part of the 2015/16 budget this amount had been increased to £3000 per annum. Councillor Howell commented that this scheme had been a positive initiative and of great value for local communities.

The report was noted

CA113 **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FUND**

The Cabinet considered three proposals for the use of the Council's Strategic Initiatives Fund.

Councillor Barker asked whether the business plans for these projects would be considered by Cabinet. She was advised that the cycle strategy would focus on the provision of cycle stands and small scale works and would be administered by a dedicated officer. In terms of the Neighbourhood Plan this fund would support the setting up and development of this initiative and a report on how this would work would be considered by the Planning Policy Working Group.

A tender process was required as soon as possible in relation to the installation of PV panels at the museum store and vehicle workshop at Shire Hill and Cabinet would be updated on progress in due course.

RESOLVED to agree the allocation of the following items from the Strategic Initiatives Fund

- i. £50,000 for the Cycle Strategy as asset out in paragraph.
- ii. £100,000 towards the cost of Neighbourhood Plans.
- iii. £150,000 for the installation of photovoltaic panels on the two buildings at the Shire Hill depot.

CA114 **CLIMATE LOCAL COMMITMENT**

Councillor Barker presented a report which provided information on the Climate Change Initiative developed by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the rationale for signing up to the Climate change Local Commitment and producing a UDC local strategy and action plan. The report set out progress to date and the issues and concerns that faced the council and the district in relation to fuel poverty and health, carbon reduction and climate change adaption. Members pointed out that the council had made significant progress in this area through its planning, waste and energy efficiency policies.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Council to sign up to the Climate Local Commitment.
- 2 Endorse the Climate Local Strategy and Action Plan for Uttlesford District Council.

CA115 **S106 STANSTED COMMUNITY POT**

The Cabinet considered a request from Foresthall Park residents and Stansted parish council to allocate funds for the provision of picnic benches and bins at Rochford Square. This payment would be from the Stansted community pot, which comprised the financial contributions received through the 106 legal agreements intended to mitigate the impact of the new development at Rochford Nurseries/Forest Hall Road Stansted. The project had been assessed against the required criteria.

RESOLVED to allocate a maximum of £2,110 to provide three picnic benches and three litter bins at Rochford Square, subject to agreement with the developer(s) as required.

CA116 **MEETING BROADCASTING**

Councillor Ranger presented the report which explained that the council had been working with a local business to develop a system to broadcast live committee meetings and to make recordings publically available on the council's website. The development had taken place over the last 6 months and was now ready for the Council to adopt.

The report set out details of the system and the number of people that had listened to the recordings. Two future enhancements had been suggested that would be undertaken by a third party. These were to embed the voice files directly into the committee management system and to link the microphone system which could then announce the member who was about to speak.

The Chairman supported this initiative as part of the transparency agenda and to make council meetings more accessible to the public.

RESOLVED to

- 1 Formally adopt the use of the Audiominutes broadcasting system for meetings of Full Council, Cabinet, Planning and the Uttlesford Planning Policy Working Group.
- 2 Agree to the use of the system at other key meetings as set out in paragraph 11 of the report.
- 3 Agree, subject to proof of concept design and testing, to the additional enhancements as set out in paragraphs 18 and 19 of the report.

CA117 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CA118 **MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY CONTRACT**

The Cabinet considered a change to the arrangement for the processing of dry recyclates collected by the council

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Council terminates the current MRF contract with effect from 4th May 2015 and places a new contract with the successful bidder for the Uttlesford lot through the joint procurement process led by Basildon Council.
- 2 Additional costs to those estimated in the budget for 2015/16 be met from the waste management reserve

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm