

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 18 JUNE 2015 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor Howard Rolfe – Leader
Councillor Susan Barker – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Environmental Services
Councillor Simon Howell – Cabinet Member for Finance and
Administration
Councillor Julie Redfern – Cabinet Member for Housing and
Economic Development
Councillor Lesley Wells – Cabinet Member for Communities and
Partnerships

Also present: Councillors Alan Dean and John Lodge.

Officers in attendance: John Mitchell (Chief Executive), Maggie Cox
(Democratic Services Officer), Roger Harborough (Director of
Public Services), Angela Knight (Assistant Director – Finance),
Christine Oakey (Procurement Manager), Michael Perry
(Assistant Chief Executive – Legal) and Adrian Webb (Director
of Finance and Corporate Services).

CA1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

CA2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2015 were received and signed
by the Chairman as a correct record.

**CA3 REPORTS FROM PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEES**

Councillor Dean, the Chairman of Scrutiny, outlined the committee's plans for
the coming year. At the first meeting members would receive external training
and consider the programme for the coming year. The committee would work
in two areas, to develop policy and also to hold the decision makers to
account. The focus would be more on internal UDC improvement rather than
scrutinising the work of other external organisations.

CA4

2014/15 DRAFT OUTTURN REPORT

Councillor Howell presented the report on the Council's 2014/15 outturn position. It summarised the financial performance for 2014/15 and the level of reserves as at 31 March 2015.

For the three areas of accounts the outturn position was as follows - General Fund, a favourable variance of 20k, HRA - an in year surplus of £2,314, Capital Programme - a net favourable variance of £116,000. The detailed figures in the report explained the key variances. Councillor Howell said that overall there were quite significant variations and there was potential to improve forecasting, but the process had been managed well and he congratulated the Finance team for completing the figures two weeks ahead of the deadline.

In answer to a question from Councillor Lodge, it was explained that a ring-fenced business rate reserve had been set up to allow for any shortfall that might arise from the introduction of the new business rate arrangements and changes in accounting practises. He was reassured that a high level of collection rate was still being maintained

Councillor Dean said that at the February Cabinet meeting, it had been stated that the pension deficit would be funded from reserves. It now appeared that this had been funded from the revenue underspend. He asked whether this meant that the council was now £900k better off. The Assistant Director – Finance clarified that the revenue balances underspend had been used to fund the 3 year pension deficit but the reserves had also reduced by £902k during the course of the year. This was detailed in paragraph 17 of the report, although this was a complex picture to explain as the council was also adrianin the process of introducing the new Reserves Strategy.

The next stage was to certify the figures by the 30 June, the draft accounts would then be submitted to the Performance and Audit Committee on 30 July and the audited account to the meeting in September 2015.

RESOLVED to approve

- 1 the 2014/15 outturn position set out in this report
- 2 the reserve transfers and reserve balances set out in the report,
- 3 the Capital Programme slippage requests.

CA5

PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Councillor Howell presented the proposed Procurement Strategy for 2015/16. The report set out the achievements against the 2014/15 priorities and action plan. It was noted that the year had been dominated by large housing contracts and there had been a number of unplanned pieces of work that had taken up resources. The action plan for 2015/16 was set out and a key point

to note was the need to take account of the new Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

In answer to a question, the Procurement Manager gave details of the council's new electronic ordering system (e-buy) and confirmed that it was capable of providing transparent information on the council's spending.

RESOLVED to approve the procurement strategy attached to the report

CA6

2016/17 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Councillor Howell presented the report on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS). The scheme was required to be reviewed annually and any proposed changes would be agreed by Full Council in December.

Councillor Howell said that Uttlesford had consistently applied the lowest percentage contribution of all Essex councils, from a contribution of 8.5% at the start of the scheme, rising to 12.5% for the past two years. It was proposed to maintain this level for 2016/17 and to continue with the other key elements of the adopted scheme. These included the subsidy for town and parish councils, the categories of discretionary protection and the rate of council tax discounts.

Councillor Howell said the number of working age recipients had decreased by a third, from 1300 to 920, since the start of the scheme which meant that that any increase of the percentage would have a greater impact on these recipients. The cost of the scheme was met by other council tax payers and with the expected reduction of the Government contribution there would be an additional impact on residents. With this in mind he said it would be necessary to look at the balance of the scheme and see if any adjustments would be required in the future.

Councillor Dean asked if he could be provided with information on the actual revenue raised to UDC from this scheme, if it was maintained at 12.5%. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services said the nature of the scheme meant that this figure was difficult to quantify but he would try to provide figures outside the meeting

In relation to the consultation, Councillor Dean asked about the information that would be provided, particularly about the council's current level of funds, which would give the public a fair picture of the potential options in order to make a judgment about whether the scheme should continue its current form.

Councillor Redfern felt there should be a review of the level of council tax discounts for empty homes, given the urgent need for housing in the district. She was advised that the scheme still had the potential to be amended in the light of comments received from the consultation.

RESOLVED that a consultation process be carried out on the following draft proposals

- a) The 2016/17 LCTS scheme is set on the same basis as the 2015/16 scheme and therefore the contribution rate is frozen for the second consecutive year.
- b) Provide discretionary subsidy for town & parish councils for 2016/17 in accordance with the principles set out in paragraph 25.
- c) The 2016/17 Council Tax discounts are set at the same rate as the 2015/16 discounts as set out in paragraphs 26 – 29.

CA7 CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL LITTLE EASTON

The Cabinet considered a report concerning the proposed designation of a conservation area for Little Easton. This study had been requested by the parish council. Members considered the document, the results of the consultation exercise and the proposed designated CAA areas.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Conservation Area Appraisal be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing management proposals.
- 2 The Little Easton Conservation Areas be formally designated

CA8 CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL QUENDON AND RICKLING

Councillor Barker presented the proposed conservation area appraisal for Quendon and Rickling. The report set out the key issues within the CAA, the results of the consultation exercise, the management issues and the changes proposed.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The Conservation Area Appraisal be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing management proposals.
- 2 The Quendon and Rickling Conservation Area be formally designated

CA9 ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

In accordance with Section 87 of the Localism Act, officers had requested submissions from Parish and Town Council regarding community value assets

in their area. The responses had been assessed and the following assets were recommended for adoption.

RESOLVED to agree to include the following on the Assets of Community Value list

- Felsted Allotments, Station Road
- Felsted Village Playing Area, Braintree Road
- Raven Crescent Play Area, Watch House Green
- Willows Green Play Area, Evelyn Road
- Banister Green

CA10 **GREAT CHESTERFORD PARISH PLAN**

The Cabinet received the village plan for Great Chesterford. This had been approved by the parish council following a residents' consultation. The purpose of the plan was to consider the future of the village and how it could be changed for the better. Members attention was drawn to key issues that has been identified.

Councillor Redfern applauded the considerable community effort involved in producing this plan.

RESOLVED to adopt the Parish Plan as council approved guidance in determining planning applications in the parish and as background evidence in the preparation of the Local Plan.

CA11 **DESIGNATION OF GREAT AND LITTLE CHESTERFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA**

The Council had received an application from Great and Little Chesterford Parish Councils for the designation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan Area. This had been advertised in accordance with the Regulations.

The Parish Council has proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan Area was contiguous with the Parish Boundaries of Great and Little Chesterford. This was considered to be the logical and sensible approach.

RESOLVED to designate the parishes of Great and Little Chesterford as the Great and Little Chesterford Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.

CA12 **CABINET WORKING GROUPS**

Members received the annual report of the Cabinet working group, the terms of reference, composition and membership.

RESOLVED to appoint the Cabinet working groups for 2015/16 as set out in the report

CA13 **REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Cabinet received the list of member appointments to outside organisations.

The Leader reported that it had been decided to dissolve the Futures Board. This was because the work of the Board was now conducted through four subgroups, chaired by independent members, and to meet together as a Board was considered to be unnecessary. Going forward it was hoped that the work of the sub-groups would be more closely integrated with the council's work streams. The sub- group chairs would meet to ensure that there was no duplication of work and the Annual Assembly would continue to be held.

There were still a few member appointments to be made, which would be circulated in due course.

RESOLVED to appoint members representatives to outside bodies, as set out in the report.

CA13 **APPOINTMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEES**

RESOLVED that the following appointments be made to the Cabinet Joint Committees

North Essex Parking Partnership
Councillor Susan Barker

Essex Health and Wellbeing Joint Committee
Councillors Lesley Wells and Graham Barker

CA14 **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

The Cabinet received an amended version of the Statement of Community Involvement. The document had been subject to a period of public consultation and the comments received had been considered by the Planning Policy Working Group. No further changes were suggested by the Cabinet members.

Referring to community consultation, Councillor Dean spoke of the danger of consultation fatigue, particularly in relation to the Local Plan and suggested that the Council should consider ways to re-engage the public.

RESOLVED that the amended Statement of Community Involvement, as set out in the report, be adopted

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm