

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN on 26 MAY at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe (Leader)  
Councillor S Howell (Cabinet Member for Finance and Administration)  
Councillor J Redfern (Cabinet Member for Housing and Economic Development)  
Councillor L Wells (Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships)

Also present: Councillors A Dean (Liberal Democrat Group Leader and Chair of Scrutiny), J Lodge (Residents for Uttlesford Group Leader) and E Oliver (Chair of Performance and Audit Committee).

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive - Legal), and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

**CA1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Barker.

Councillor Howell said he had a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 11, Procurement Strategy as his employer had been awarded a contract, but the Monitoring Officer had granted him dispensation to speak and vote on this item.

**CA2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**CA3 BUSINESS ARISING**

**i) Minute CA109 – Leader’s Decision, Common Car Park**

Councillor Dean asked if there was evidence to support the effect of the imposition of the 2, 3 or 4 hour maximum stay charge at the Common car park. He was advised that this would be discussed when the petition was presented at item 8.

Councillor Redfern said she had declared an interest in this item at the last meeting, but it was now clear that this declaration was unnecessary as the proposal would not have an impact on her business.

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

### **i) Performance and Audit Committee**

Councillor Oliver reported on the recent work of the Performance and Audit Committee.

He said that due to recent staff changes within the Finance department, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services was now the only qualified accountant currently working in the authority. It had not been possible to recruit to the vacant posts and the authority was currently relying on agency staff.

In reply, the Chief Executive said plans were in place to address this. Officers were looking at what was required in the Finance department. It is also likely that there will be a report to council recommending changes to the Pay Policy statement to facilitate the attraction of suitable candidates to these and other posts.

The committee had approved the draft Annual Governance Statement and received reports from Internal Audit on its rolling programme. It had also carried out its self- assessment exercise, and as a result had requested site of the council's procurement arrangements and this had been discussed at the last meeting.

The Performance Indicators and Risk Register were considered at each meeting of the committee. There had been a discussion about the reporting of accidents and it had been agreed that in future there would be a regular accident report from the Health and Safety Officer setting out the subsequent action taken.

### **ii) Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Dean said the last meeting had considered the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. There had been a discussion on whether there should be a change to the minimum council tax contribution in the light of the shortfall in Government funding. He referred to a question he had put to officers, that whether in future the council should go back to basic fundamentals, as the original calculation was no longer relevant having been based on the shortfall in funding when the council took on the scheme. He thought the council should now consider what was right and what was affordable in terms of the contributions to be made by the least well off.

The meeting had also discussed the contribution made to parish councils as part of the council's scheme and whether this should continue or if the parish councils should be asked to adjust their own tax rate to achieve their precept.

Councillor Howell said he had attended the meeting as portfolio holder and felt there had been a useful discussion on this item. He said the minutes showed that a range of issues had been discussed, which reflected the views of all members.

Councillor Dean said the Scrutiny Committee was also investigating the relationship between UDC and ECC. The main focus was on the highways Service and the communication between the two authorities.

## CA5 **REFUGEE WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Redfern said there was little activity to report but the council was continuing to press ECC with its offer to accommodate refugees in the district.

The Leader said information would be obtained from ECC on the current situation, future numbers and the timetable going forward.

Councillor Dean asked if the council would be ready for the arrival of the refugees as he understood that the original identified properties had been re-let. The Leader said it was not practical for the council to retain empty properties but he was confident that it would be able to respond when required.

## CA6 **PETITION**

Councillor Richard Freeman presented a petition on behalf of Saffron Walden Town Council. The petition stated the following and contained 1855 signatures.

“We, the undersigned are strongly opposed to the changing of the car parking limit at The Common car park, Common Hill from maximum stay of 4 hours to 2 hours.

We are opposed to this change on the following grounds:

1. 2 hours is insufficient time for shoppers to park, browse and return to the car
2. 2 hours is particularly insufficient time for those with disabled blue badges or who experience difficulty in walking
3. Reduction in time does not help to encourage or promote further trade in the town and does not encourage greater footfall
4. We believe that this reduction from 4 hours to 2 is not conducive to encouraging trade or footfall into the town and initial feedback from visitors and tourists is that they wish to stay longer but are unable to walk the distance from Swan Meadow car park”

Councillor Freeman said the Market Square was a vital asset for the town, and attracted visitors from home and overseas. A survey of visitors, carried out prior to the change in charges, had found that the physical appearance of the town was important, but ease of access was a key attribute.

The town traders had asked for the maximum stay to revert to 4hrs as they felt this was vital to the continued vitality of the town. The knowledge that a 4hr stay was an option gave a feel good factor for visitors. He said this was only a

small percentage of the car parking available but it was very important to the town and he asked the Cabinet to reconsider its decision.

Cllr Rolfe said the Common was previously a maximum 4hr stay car park, but the recent consultant's report on parking in the district had raised the importance of churn to ensure a frequent turnover of cars, which would lead to increase footfall. In Saffron Walden short stay car parking was catered for in the Market Square and long stay car parking at Swan Meadow. The other car parks would be medium term to encourage churn.

When the new charges were introduced , there had been a strong reaction from traders that the 2hr maximum stay was affecting their business. The Council had responded to this and an Executive decision had been taken to increase the maximum stay at the Common Car Park to 3hrs. This was in line with the charge at the Fairycroft car park and was felt to cater for most visits. Blue badge holders could still park for longer than 3hrs at the Common. He said he thought that 3hr maximum stay was the right balance but the position would be reviewed after 12 months.

Cllr Freeman replied that the consultants were experts on car parks but not experts on Saffron Walden. It was a unique town and delicately balanced as had become apparent when the Waitrose car park was closed earlier in the year.

Councillor Lodge said that new signage for the Swan Meadow car park was very important. There was a negative perception of Swan Meadow but it was an excellent long-term car park and not too far to walk to the town.

Jacqueline Portway spoke to the meeting on behalf of the market traders. She said she had many contacts in the town, all of whom supported the return of the 4hr maximum stay. She circulated a letter in support from the manager of Santander bank in Saffron Walden.

She said there had been mayhem when the 2hrs had been introduced so she had drawn up the petition in order to get something done. The small shops in the town depended on visitor numbers, and they needed sufficient time to shop and stay for lunch. She said that many people found Swan Meadow difficult to use, it required signage, lighting and toilets. She thought that 3 hrs was not a sufficient length of time and asked for the 4hr maximum stay to be reinstated.

Cllr Rolfe said he was aware of the passion and concern in the town. However, the new arrangements should be given time to bed in. The impact of the 3hr stay would be assessed as well as putting in place the new signage for Swan Meadow and the council would review the position after 12 months.

CA7

## **FAIRCROFT HOUSE**

*Cllr Lodge declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of ECC.*

The Leader presented a report, which proposed that the Council assist with the purchase of Fairycroft House, Saffron Walden. This building was in the ownership of ECC but it had stopped delivering services in 2014. In response to the closure of the building, rock musician Tim Atkinson had formed a Community Interest Company (CIC) and proposed to manage the building as an Arts and Media Centre. This was currently a very well used facility by local groups and there were many plans for the future.

It was explained that Fairycroft House CIC has raised a mortgage of £240,000 towards the purchase price of £400,000. Essex County Council had granted £80,000 from its Assisted Purchase Scheme and a further £80,000 was required to cover the full purchase price of the property. It was proposed that UDC fund the remaining £80,000 from the Strategic Initiatives Fund as it met the purpose and criteria for the grant, being of benefit to the local community/economy.

In answer to a question, it was explained that to protect UDC in the event of the building being sold, a charge had been placed on the property to protect its investment. This would last until 2036 and any repayment following a sale would be on a reducing scale over the 20 year period.

Members said this was a worthy and exciting scheme and supported the proposal.

RESOLVED to grant £80,000 from the Strategic Initiatives Fund to Fairycroft House CIC to assist in the purchase of Fairycroft House, subject to conditions and restrictions referred to within the report.

CA8

## **ADOPTION OF STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY**

At the meeting on 7 April, the Cabinet had asked for an amendment to the section of the policy relating to the renaming of existing streets. This was specifically for cases when the emergency services had problems locating a street and asked for it to be renamed. The new policy would allow the proposal to go ahead if a two-thirds majority of residents were in favour rather than the 100% currently stipulated in the scheme.

It was explained that a request for a change of name would be made to the town/parish. They would inform the district council who would print the list of properties to be consulted and the ballot papers, which would be distributed by the local council.

Saffron Walden Town Council had submitted a letter that raised concern at the lack of consultation on this amendment and particularly the reference to conducting a ballot, which could have resource implications for town and parish councils.

Councillor Richard Freeman addressed the meeting. He spoke about the importance of town and parish councils in this process, as it was clear that the best people to name a street were those who actually lived there. He understood there was legislation in respect of the naming of streets but was

concerned at the lack of consultation with local councils on the details of the proposed scheme. It appeared that sensible local suggestions might not be allowed under the new policy. There were still points to be addressed to avoid anomalies and he would like these to be considered before the policy was adopted.

Councillor Redfern said in her experience, it was the parish council views that were taken into account when new street name suggestions came forward.

Members agreed with the proposed amendment to paragraph 1.5.2. It was also suggested that local members should be informed about proposed new street names in their wards, and this should be written into the procedure.

#### RESOLVED

- 1 To adopt the revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy March 2016, to include an amended para 1.5.2 in relation to the renaming of an existing street.
- 2 To adopt the Street Naming and Numbering guide to the process, with an additional clause that district members should be informed about proposals for new street names in their ward.

CA9

#### **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

*Councillor Howell had declared an interest in this item but had received dispensation from the Monitoring Officer to speak and vote on this item*

Councillor Howell presented the Procurement Strategy for 2016/17. This set out the council's procurement activity and provided assurance to the external auditor that the council had a sound approach to procurement.

Cllr Oliver said the Performance and Audit Committee had identified a need to understand more about the procurement arrangements and had considered this report at its recent meeting. He said UDC had a very professional procurement service and passed on his thanks to the Council's Procurement Team.

RESOLVED to approve the Procurement Strategy 2016/17.

CA10

#### **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

The Cabinet received the revised version of the Statement of Community Involvement. This had been updated to include some of the suggestions from statutory bodies that had been received through the recent consultation. The document had been approved at the recent meeting of the PPWG and would be used as the basis for the consultation arrangements for the new Local Plan.

Members commented that some parish councils felt increasingly that their views on planning matters were not valued or taken into account by UDC. The Cabinet said thought should be given on how to improve communication and provide better explanation about decisions taken in the local area.

RESOLVED to approve the amended Statement of Community Involvement.

CA11

### **PROPOSALS FOR A REVISED AIRSPACE CHANGE PROCESS**

The Cabinet considered a report on the CAA proposal for a revised airspace change process, which was currently out to stakeholder consultation. The report explained the existing process, the need for change and gave details of the CAA's proposals.

The report concluded that the proposals should be supported, but set out some additional comments to be included in the Council's response. The Stansted Airport Advisory Panel (STAAP) had considered this item at its meeting on 10th May and the additional points raised had been included in the report. The Leader said he supported the new process as a more democratic and consultative approach.

RESOLVED

- 1 To support the CAA's proposal for a revised airspace process subject to the additional comments set out in the report.
- 2 To send the council's response via the dedicated online platform that the CAA has set up, by the consultation closing date of 15 June.

CA12

### **CABINET WORKING GROUPS 2016/17**

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 2016/17, and agree the membership as set out in the attached appendix.

CA13

### **REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

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

RESOLVED to appoint members representatives to outside bodies for 2016/17, as set out in the attached appendix.

**ASPIRE**

At the Cabinet meeting in December 2015, it had been agreed in principle to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). This would be a wholly owned subsidiary of the council to develop a range of commercial opportunities. The Cabinet was now asked to approve the establishment of a holding company and three subsidiaries, for rental, land agreements and property services. The Articles of Association for each company were attached to the report. These required the appointment of directors and advice received was that the private sector businesses looked more favourably on a board that was made up of council officers only.

The next steps included formal registration, work around taxation and preparing accounts for the companies. The initial proposals for Aspire rentals would be considered at the September Cabinet meeting.

In answer to questions, it was explained that the council would set the direction of travel and appoint the cabinet to the role of Shareholder Board. The cabinet would have certain responsibilities, control and direct the operation but would not be involved in the day to day activity. It had been decided to appoint subsidiary companies as they had a clear remit and were more able to partner with the private sector.

Councillor Dean said the council should give some thought on how to manage public perception as it could be seen to be changing its focus from social to market housing. Cllr Howell said he understood these concerns but felt the council could manage this tension as it already charged fees and carried out some commercial activities. He said the Council's social agenda would always be the dominant theme. Members were supportive of this initiative.

**RESOLVED to**

1. approve the establishment of the following companies
  - Aspire Holdings (UDC) Ltd
  - Aspire Rentals Ltd
  - Aspire Land Agreements Ltd
  - Aspire Property Services Ltd.
- 2 Agree the Articles of Association for each company as attached
- 3 Appoint the following directors to each company
  - a) Richard Auty (UDC Assistant Director of Corporate Services)
  - b) Nicola Wittman (UDC Assistant Director of ICT and Facilities)
  - c) Adrian Webb (UDC Director of Finance and Corporate Services).



CA15      **ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet received the Asset Management Plan for 2016/17. It included all the council's non-strategic assets and set out the strategic objectives and guiding principle for their use. It provided assurance to the external auditor that the council had a sound approach.

RESOLVED to approve the Asset Management Plan 2016/17.

CA16      **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 Stephanie Harris

CA17      **CHAIRMAN'S URGENT ITEM**

The Chairman reported on his attendance at a Devolution meeting earlier in the day attended by all the Leaders and Chief Executives. A vote had been taken on whether to proceed with the Greater Essex Devolution proposal. The area of contention was the requirement for an elected mayor. When the vote was taken to include the elected mayor the result was split, but when this was excluded the vote was unanimously in favour.

The group was aware that neighbouring authorities, Cambridge/Peterborough and Norfolk/Suffolk had recently agreed a devolution deal and there appeared to be benefits in terms of new infrastructure investment. The next stage for the Essex bid was to have discussions with Ministers and senior officials on a possible way forward.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm.

## Cabinet Working Groups 2016/17

	<b>No of Members</b>	<b>Membership</b>	
Community Achievement Panel	5	Aisha Anjum John Freeman Janice Loughlin Vic Ranger Julie Redfern	
Highways Panel	4 + 4 ECC members	<u>UDC Members</u> Robert Chambers John Freeman Alan Mills Geoffrey Sell	
Housing Board	10 + 2 tenant reps	Heather Asker Alan Dean Terry Farthing (vc) Marie Felton (c) Janice Loughlin	Alan Mills Sharon Morris Vic Ranger Julie Redfern Howard Ryles
Planning Policy Working Group	10	Susan Barker (vc) Paul Davies Alan Dean Stephanie Harris John Lodge	Janice Loughlin Alan Mills Edward Oliver Joanna Parry Howard Rolfe (c)
Museum Management Working Group	4	Robert Chambers (c) Barbara Light Geoffrey Sell Lesley Wells	
Refugee Working Group	5	Graham Barker Marie Felton Sharon Morris	Elizabeth Parr Julie Redfern (c)
Stansted Airport Advisory Panel	10	Keith Artus (c) John Davey Terry Farthing Paul Fairhurst Martin Foley Rory Gleeson	Thom Goddard John Lodge Edward Oliver (vc) Howard Ryles
Waste Strategy Panel	5	Susan Barker Terry Farthing Martin Foley Richard Freeman Lesley Wells	

## Representatives on outside bodies 2016/17

Organisation	Number	Representative (s)
Birchanger Wood Management Committee	1	Geoffrey Sell
Board of Turpins Indoor Bowling Club	1	Paul Fairhurst
British Red Cross Society – Essex Branch	1	Elizabeth Parr
Campaign to Protect Rural Essex	1	Simon Howell
Committee of the Friends of the Maltings	1	Vic Ranger
Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board	1	Susan Barker
Council for Voluntary Service – Uttlesford	1	Eric Hicks
Crawley Prize Endowment Charity	1	Robert Chambers
Dunmow Day Centre Management Cttee	1	Eric Hicks
Dunmow Museum Management Cttee	1	Vic Ranger
Dunmow Town Strategy Group/Town Team	1	Graham Barker
Essex County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1	Graham Barker
Essex County Strategic Partnership	1	Howard Rolfe
Essex County Traveller Unit	1	Susan Barker
Essex Flood Partnership Board	1	Susan Barker
Essex Waste Partnership Board	1	Susan Barker
Friends of Bridge End Gardens	1	Richard Freeman
Historic England Heritage Champion	1	Geoffrey Sell
Local Government Association - General Assembly	1	Howard Rolfe
LGA - Rural Community Partnership	1	Stephanie Harris
LGA – SPARSE Rural Assembly		Susan Barker
London Stansted Cambridge Consortium	1	Howard Rolfe
Parking and Traffic Regulation outside London Adjudication Committee	1	Susan Barker
Saffron Walden Arts Trust	1	Sharon Morris
Saffron Walden Day Centre Management Cttee	1	Sharon Morris
Saffron Walden Museum Society	1	Barbara Light
Stansted Airport Community Trust	1	Marie Felton
Stansted Airport Consultative Committee	1	Keith Artus
Stansted Day Centre Management Committee	1	Geoffrey Sell
Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group	1	Keith Artus
Takeley Day Centre Management Cttee	1	Derek Jones
Thaxted Day Centre Management Cttee	1	Martin Foley
Thaxted Guildhall Management Cttee	1	John Freeman
Uttlesford Carers	1	Joanna Parry
Uttlesford Citizens' Advice Bureau	1	Tina Knight
Uttlesford Community Travel	1	Elizabeth Parr

Uttlesford Transport Forum	4	Richard Freeman Mark Lemon Alan Mills Howard Ryles
West Essex Alliance	1	Julie Redfern
West Essex Transportation Board	1	Susan Barker