

**CABINET MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 26 OCTOBER 2016 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe (Leader)
Councillor S Barker (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services)
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: Councillor J Lodge (Residents for Uttlesford Group Leader).

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), S Pugh (Interim Head of Legal Services) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Mr Ken McDonald spoke to the meeting regarding the Local Plan and the decision to pause the plan preparation process and raised a number of issues that he would like to see addressed during this period.
A full copy of his statement is attached to these minutes.

CA56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Dean.

CA57 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 12 October 2016 would be considered at the next scheduled Cabinet meeting.

CA58 REFUGEE WORKING GROUP

Councillor Redfern said the refugee family had been housed in the district and were being well supported. She would report any further updates to the Cabinet but there was unlikely to be any more activity until after Christmas.

CA59 LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

CA60

SCRUTINY ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

The Cabinet received the minute of the Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2016, relating to the Scrutiny Enforcement Review. The Committee had recommended to Cabinet four actions for improvement to the service.

The Cabinet thanked the Scrutiny Committee for this work and welcomed the report. This would form the basis of the strategy that would be considered further by officers and presented to Cabinet at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that a report on the council's enforcement service be considered at a future Cabinet meeting, with the report to reflect on some of the recommendations in the Scrutiny Review of Enforcement.

CA61

STATION ROAD WENDENS AMBO

The Cabinet considered a recommendation from the Housing Board to sell a development plot at Station Road, Wendens Ambo. The site was identified following garden reductions and had outline planning permission for a single two-bedroom bungalow. Members were advised that due to the small size of the site, it would not be viable to develop the land for affordable housing. It had therefore been recommended that the site be sold on the open market with the proceeds to be ring fenced within the HRA.

RESOLVED that the site be sold on the open market by way of a tender and/or sealed bids, with a guide price for offers as advised by the selling agent. The guide price will be set to maximise competitiveness and interest in the plot.

CA62

FRAMBURY LANE NEWPORT

Councillor Redfern gave details of a scheme to develop a former garage site to provide council owned homes. A scheme for five – 2 bedroom houses had been drawn up and the Cabinet was now asked to agree to submit the planning application.

Members noted that the construction costs were relatively high, due to abnormal costs associated with the site, but it was still the intention to develop the whole site as council housing.

It was explained that the council's SPV, Aspire had considered the option of developing this site for private sector rented homes. However as this would require the transfer of the site to Aspire, with the HRA being compensated the market value of the site, this had been found to be commercially unviable.

The next stage would be to hold meetings with the Parish Council and residents about the proposals for the site.

RESOLVED that the site be progressed through the planning application stage, having regard to the estimated costs associated with this work, as detailed in the report.

CA63

UPDATING THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Cabinet received proposed amendments to the scheme of delegation of executive functions to reflect the changes to roles and responsibilities following the retirement of the Assistant Chief Executive - Legal.

RESOLVED to approve the amendments to the Executive Scheme of Delegation as attached to the report.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm.

Public Speaking Statement

Good evening. My name is Ken McDonald. I have lived in Uttlesford for 35 years.

I have **no** loyalty or leaning to any political party. I only wish to see Uttlesford develop a **sound** plan that passes inspection **and** does not destroy the character of our district.

I was surprised, delighted, and somewhat puzzled, by last week's announcement of a pause in your deliberations, especially by the news that an independent consultant has been asked to review progress – something I have been seeking for many months.

I **hope** this period will be seized as an opportunity to achieve three things:

- Firstly, for the independent review to consider the weaknesses that have been identified in the SHMA. Its lack of audit trails echoes a fundamental reason for the failure of the 2014 plan – I'm sure **none** of us want to see that repeated;
- Secondly, that the independent review considers the case for a lower house-building target, based on longer-term trends and not just the exceptional period of airport-related housebuilding, **and** considers whether such a basis might find acceptance at the examination in public;
- Thirdly, that **you** take time to **understand** the assumptions that underlie **your** plan and understand **how** those assumptions have led to a plan that seeks an increase of 38% in housing stock over just 22 years. Would **you** be able to stand in the dock and defend **detailed** challenges such as those that I have raised?

I have been unable to follow audit trails to the **key** conclusions in the SHMA, most notably the number of houses needed in Uttlesford. I am a chartered accountant, familiar with analysing figures. Now, if I can't follow the calculations, I suspect most reasonable people (including councillors and inspectors) will also not be able to.

I have been arguing that UDC is seeking to build **far more** houses than it needs – **firstly** because the SHMA failed to take account of local circumstances and **secondly** the over-willingness by councillors to rely on the figures emanating from the failed 2014 Plan. In 2014 the same fundamental forecasting mistake was made - basing future need on an atypical base period of exceptional 'airport-related' house-building.

I have been pursuing these points for almost a year. My background – as an independent, numerate person with audit experience and, I hope, a reputation for tenacity – appears to have counted for nothing. I have seen no glimmer of any attention being paid to my concerns. Concerns that have often been supported by a fellow chartered accountant, Mike Young.

I know accountants are boring, but we also tend to understand difficult or complex issues relating to numbers and forecasts.

Please, **please**, take time to understand what it **is** that you are proposing.