

COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 28 JULY 2015 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor S Harris – Chairman.
Councillors A Anjum, K Artus, G Barker, S Barker, R Chambers, J Davey, P Davies, A Dean, P Fairhurst, T Farthing, M Felton, J Freeman, R Gleeson, T Goddard, J Gordon, N Hargreaves, E Hicks, S Howell, D Jones, T Knight, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, A Mills, S Morris, E Oliver, E Parr, J Parry, V Ranger, J Redfern, H Rolfe and L Wells.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), J Brucher (ICT Infrastructure Support Analyst), J Game (Support Analyst), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal), P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and A Webb (Director of Finance Corporate Services).

ESSEX FIRE SERVICE PRESENTATION

Prior to the meeting Mike Clayton and Paul Bowers of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service gave a presentation to members about the future of the fire and rescue service in Essex following the issue of a recent consultation document covering the period 2015-2020.

C21 PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PRESENTATION OF PETITION

John Black and Rachel Roberts attended the meeting as residents living near to the Reeve Road play areas in Stansted to present a petition asking for the Council not to agree to the replacement of play equipment at these locations.

Mr Black made a statement which is appended to these minutes.

Councillor S Barker read a brief response to Mr Black's statement acknowledging receipt of the petition and stating the Council would be involved in the working party set up in Stansted and would work to achieve a sensible conclusion so the land could be handed over to the parish council.

C22 HONORARY ALDERMAN APPOINTMENTS

The Chairman said that former councillors Jim Ketteridge and Jan Menell had been nominated for the award of the position of honorary alderman. She invited both former members to join her before paying tribute to their long and distinguished service in various guises during their tenure as councillors.

She then presented both former councillors with certificates acknowledging their status as honorary aldermen of Uttlesford, after which photographs were taken.

C23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Asker, Foley, R Freeman, Loughlin, Ryles and Sell.

C24 MINUTES

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 26 May 2015 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C25 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported on the various functions and other events she had attended. These included:

- Garden party at Capel Manor College, Enfield and in Rochford
- Civic church services in Chelmsford and Southend
- Rotary book awards, Saffron Walden
- Jack Petchey awards to girl guides
- The Essex Scouting Association AGM
- Reception at Stow Maries airfield
- Thaxted primary school and carnival
- Race for Life in Chelmsford

Councillor Harris notified members about a forthcoming tour of Easton Lodge gardens followed by afternoon tea. A quiz night had been planned for 15 October. The Christmas church service would be held at Holy Cross Church in Felsted on 15 December. Finally, the civic dinner would be held on 22 April at Bishop's Stortford golf club and would have a St George's day theme.

She had very much enjoyed her year of office to date and thanked her PA Janine Corbey for the help and support she had offered in organising her diary. To date she had raised nearly £2,000 for her nominated charities.

C26 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader updated the Council on a number of relevant issues.

He first paid tribute to the Chief Executive John Mitchell who had indicated his intention to retire in January 2016 on reaching the age of 60. Mr Mitchell had steered the Council from a perilous condition in 2008 to a point where it was widely acknowledged as a well-run organisation. The spirit and feel of the Council was a tribute to his stewardship over the past seven and a half years.

Among the matters reported by the Leader were:

- The local plan process – he mentioned the revised method of operation of the Planning Policy Working Group emphasising the importance to the Council of the work being undertaken. The PPWG was already operating successfully as a cross party group and he proposed a briefing for

members to be held in early September. The briefing would also cover the question of devolution (see below for further details).

- Devolution was an important issue for the future of local government. The agenda for this had recently been accelerated. The Council must help to shape and influence the framework for the delivery of services throughout Essex. A letter of intent had already been sent to the Minister about the prospect of establishing an Essex assembly. This would replicate developments in other areas such as Manchester and Cornwall. A response would be made to the straw man and this would be reported to members.
- Local Enterprise Partnership – a proposal was being pursued for the creation of a LEP for Essex for which appropriate representations would be made by way of submission to the Secretary of State.

Councillor S Barker summarised her written report as already circulated. She urged councillors to alert her if they became aware of any listed buildings or heritage sites placed at risk by neglect. She reported plans to initiate a best kept village street competition to highlight pride in local communities. Finally, she referred to the recent murder in Stansted and confirmed that the Chief Executive would undertake a domestic homicide review.

Councillor Howell reminded the meeting that the Chancellor had indicated that government savings of £37m had to be made by 2020. Departments that were not ring-fenced faced cuts of either 25% or 40% as agreed.

This Council was well placed to face these challenges because of the regime of careful financial management followed over a number of years. However, the intended cut in social housing rents was a change to the rents formula and would have an impact on income.

C27 CHAIRMAN'S URGENT ITEMS – ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK GROUP TO ADVISE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman agreed to the inclusion of this item on the grounds of urgency.

The Leader proposed appointing a task group to advise the Council on the process for appointing a new Chief Executive and then to recommend an appointment. The task group would be formed to consist of three Conservative members and one each from the Residents for Uttlesford and Liberal Democrat groups. Two advisors would also be invited to attend meetings and the first job of the group would be to determine whether to advertise or recruit to the post and how that should be done.

RESOLVED to appoint a Chief Executive's Appointment Task Group comprising five members to be nominated by the three group leaders on the basis of a 3/1/1 split, to advise the Council on the procedure to be adopted in recruiting a new Chief Executive, and then to act as the panel to conduct interviews before recommended an appointment to Council

C28 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Councillor Dean thanked Councillor S Barker for her positive intent to work with Stansted residents to find a solution to the issue of the play equipment at the Reeve Road play areas.

Councillor Lemon asked: following the statement by the Leader of Essex County Council that a second runway at Stansted was inevitable, will the Council continue to oppose expansion at Stansted Airport?

Answer from the Leader: yes, the Council will oppose expansion at Stansted totally, absolutely and unequivocally. The Manchester Air Group intended to apply for an increase to more than 40m passengers a year; this would focus minds and require a firm response. The Council was working with Harlow College to establish a unit specialising in engineering and service skills. The development of a business park north of Stansted was something that should be explored.

Councillor Knight: the encouragement of visitors and tourists was being jeopardised by the payment of fees for anyone setting down visitors at the airport. Some relaxation of this policy was essential.

Answer from Councillor S Barker: in the event of a planning application these issues would be addressed. There was a need to discuss a number of associated issues with MAG.

C29 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Leader gave a brief update from meetings of the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board. There was a special focus on the National Health Service with a view to bringing health and social care provision closer together. There had been a recent rise in hospital admissions and the transition from hospital to home had to be addressed.

C30 MATTERS RECEIVED FROM COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

(i) Constitution Working Group recommendation on the procedure for honorary aldermen

Councillor Ranger proposed the adoption of a recommendation from the Constitution Working Group to incorporate into the Constitution as Article 18 an agreed procedure for the appointment of honorary aldermen, as set out in the report to this meeting, subject only to the substitution of the following words for article 18.1.3:

18.1.3 Nominations for the title may be made in writing by any existing Member of the Council and shall be made before the annual meeting of the Council following an ordinary election of councillors.

The proposal was seconded and would now be deferred to the following meeting of the Council for adoption.

C31 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 2015/16

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor S Barker as the Council's substitute member of this panel

C32 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES – CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A request was received from the Liberal Democrat Group to substitute Councillor Parr for Councillor Dean as a member of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Parr to the Standards Committee in place of Councillor Dean

The meeting ended at 8.20pm

PUBLIC SPEAKING STATEMENT

John Black for Uttlesford District Council Meeting 28/07/2015

Good Evening, Madam Chairman and Members

My name is John Black, I live on Reeve Road, Foresthall Park, Stansted. I am here to present our petition concerning play areas. I have a 4 year old son and we live less than 50 metres from the play areas and use them regularly. I am here with Rachel Roberts, another resident of Forest Hall Park, who has two young children and also uses the play areas on a regular basis.

Reeve Road has two small play areas with play equipment aimed at preschool children. These parks are used frequently by children living on the development and by those visiting relatives or on their way to collect siblings from St. Mary's School.

The planning department at UDC has demanded that Croudace Homes remove the play equipment before handing the space over to Stansted Parish Council, after concerted lobbying by a small number of residents of Reeve Road. Correspondence we have seen and our experiences of trying to organise a community children's treasure hunt at Easter have confirmed that the residents involved would prefer that there were no equipment at all in these open spaces and that games and gatherings of people should be strongly discouraged by signage.

Our online petition containing some 300+ signatures shows that there is considerable opposition to the removal of this play equipment. A resident who lives right next to the play areas, is also very supportive of our cause. Foresthall Park is a thriving and friendly place to live. We all benefit from the advantages of living on a well-planned and attractive development. Part of living on a housing development means getting along with our neighbours. We are sympathetic to the concerns of the residents, but suggest that they are, perhaps understandably, grossly exaggerating every 'single' incident, or occurrence in an attempt to emphasise their points.

We dispute that the equipment was not on the plans when the houses were purchased. The plans we have seen, dated 11.01.2011 show the current equipment clearly, including locations, photographs of each item and the height of the slide. We believe the equipment is entirely appropriate for the age group and is neither attracting older children nor being misused; it is in excellent condition. We are indeed delighted that Croudace Homes have provided beyond the 'bare minimum'. There are no reported problems with congregating teenagers, noise or antisocial behaviour and people do not routinely arrive in cars to use the parks. Indeed, a search of the online 'crime hotspots' reveal no reports of anti-social behaviour, or vandalism in these play areas.

We also dispute the residents' contention that the parks will be unkempt and badly maintained once they are handed over to the parish council. Current open spaces in Stansted indicate that this fear is entirely unfounded.

Whatever the residents were told by the developer at the time of purchase the open spaces were always clearly indicated. It appears that some residents would like to benefit from the pleasant aspect of living opposite these lovely parks but prevent

anyone from outside 'The Square' using them. Some residents have told children and parents that they are not permitted to use the footpaths to access the parks, as these are private property. Someone was also 'cable tying' the gates closed to prevent people using the parks.

Stansted Parish Council has offered a sensible solution to set up a working group involving residents on both sides of the debate to find a compromise that works for everyone, and what we should acknowledge is that the needs of the children are paramount in all of this. We would like to ask UDC to support this option and not have the 'will of a few imposed unfairly upon the majority'.

Thank you for your time and consideration.