

**ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 17 MAY 2016**

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

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), D Barden (Communications Officer), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

C1 REMARKS OF THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

Councillor Harris said it had been a privilege to be Chairman of Uttlesford Council over the past year. She thanked Members for their support at her charity events and reported that in total she had raised £8,600 for the Downs Syndrome Association and Cancer Research.

She said she had thoroughly enjoyed her year and had attended numerous engagement including church services, civic dinners, school concerts, Remembrance Day and events with the High Sheriff and Local MP. She had also chaired the Community Panels. Particularly notable was the 75 year anniversary service of the 101 squadron at St Paul's Cathedral and her recent attendance at the Queen's Garden Party.

She said that chairing the Council meetings had been fairly challenging at times. At the start of the year she had asked members to maintain decorum during the meetings and on the whole this had been achieved. However, in the upcoming months there would be decisions to be made in relation to the new Local Plan and she urged members not to make this a personal issue and to demonstrate fitting behaviour.

She thanked her father and husband who had accompanied her to all her events. She gave particular thanks to Janine Corby, the PA to the Chairman and Leader who had been truly wonderful and a great support.

She finally thanked her vice-chairman Cllr Davey for his help during the year by attending events when she was unavailable and assisting her during the council meetings. She wished him all the best for an enjoyable year as Chairman.

C2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Having been nominated at the previous meeting Councillor Davey was duly elected as Chairman of the Council.

C3 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Davey made the statutory declaration as Chairman of the Council for 2016/17. He thanked Councillor Harris for all the work she had done during the past year. He said she had been incredibly efficient and effective and would be a hard act to follow.

The new Chairman then presented a portrait and past Chairman's badge to Councillor Harris.

C4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Having been nominated at the previous meeting, Councillor Sell was duly elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

C5 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Sell made his declaration of acceptance of office. He thanked the Council for this honour and said he would do his very best to support Chairman during the year.

C6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Anjum, M Foley, J Gordon, T Knight, J Loughlin, E Parr, J Parry and J Redfern.

Councillors Asker, R Freeman, Fairhurst and Morris declared their interests as Members of Saffron Walden Town Council.

C7 MINUTE SILENCE

The Council stood for a minute silence in remembrance of former Councillor Alan Row, who had been a long serving member of the council.

C8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2016 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

C9 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The new Chairman announced that he would nominate Essex Air Ambulance and Uttlesford Community Travel as his chosen charities for the year. His consort would be Linda Parish.

C10 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Rolfe added his congratulations to Councillor Davey upon his election and thanked Councillor Harris for her efforts as Chairman and for being a great ambassador for the District.

He announced changes to the Portfolio Lead Members, as follows

- Cllr G Barker – Children, Families and Education
- Cllr Harris – Health, Wellbeing and Air Quality

There would be no Lead Member for Depots, Maintenance and Highway Rangers, these would revert to Cllr S Barker's portfolio.

He said he would like the Cabinet to appoint a Health and Safety Champion and asked Members to let him know if they were interested in filling this role.

Councillor Redfern was unable to attend tonight's meeting, but she wished to thank Members for their support for her moon walk team, which had completed the marathon distance in just over 7hrs and raised over £10,000 for breast cancer charities.

C11 **REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE**

The Council received the report on the allocation of seats to the Council's committees in accordance with the political balance provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

RESOLVED that the political balance of the Council and the allocation of seats set out in the report be agreed

C12 **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES 2016/17**

The Council agreed the appointment of committees, and their chairmen and vice-chairmen where indicated, in accordance with the nominations received from each of the political groups.

Planning: R Chambers, P Fairhurst, R Freeman, E Hicks, J Lodge, J Loughlin, A Mills, H Ryles, V Ranger (c), J Davey (vc)

Licensing and Environmental Health: A Anjum, G Barker, R Chambers (c), J Davey, R Gleeson, T Goddard (vc), J Gordon, E Hicks, S Morris, J Parry

Performance and Audit: G Barker (vc), M Foley, J Freeman, J Gordon, S Harris, N Hargreaves, D Jones, B Light, E Parr, E Oliver (c)

Scrutiny: H Asker, G Barker (vc), R Chambers, P Davies, A Dean (c), M Felton, S Harris, B Light, E Oliver, G Sell.

Standards A Anjum, K Artus (vc), H Asker, A Dean, N Hargreaves, J Loughlin, D Jones, T Knight (c) G Sell.

C13 **APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS 2016/17**

The Council agreed the appointment of the Council working groups, and their chairmen where indicated, in accordance with the nominations received from each of the political groups.

Constitution Working Group: R Chambers, A Dean, J Freeman, S Harris, B Light, E Oliver, J Parry, V Ranger (c).

Electoral Working Group: A Anjum, J Davey, T Farthing, T Goddard, N Hargreaves, S Howell (c), D Jones, G Sell.

Local Joint Committee: A Dean, S Morris, H Rolfe

In answer to a question from Cllr Lodge, the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal said that there was no requirement for the cabinet working groups to be politically balanced, but this had been the practise at Uttlesford since the cabinet system had been introduced in 2011.

C14 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE TO SERVE ON THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

The Leader proposed Councillor Gordon to serve as the Council's member representative on the Essex Police and Crime Panel.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Gordon to this position.

C15 **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Leader made a statement summarising the council's position at the end of 2015/16. He said the Council's finances were sound but there were challenges ahead. Much depended on the outcome of the New Homes Bonus consultation but he was confident that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) would address future challenges. There had been a modest increase in Council Tax and a plan had been put in place to make the Council more effective and to increase income through better utilisation of its assets. Positive points to note was the districts high collection rate, a reduction in empty properties, an increase in supplier invoices paid on time, and an unqualified Audit Opinion and Value for Money statement.

The Council would be setting up a company to be called ASPIRE, which would be launched at Cabinet on 26 May. Its objective was to generate income through the effective use of assets. The Council would continue to use reserves for community projects.

The Council had discussed the issue of devolution during the year and whether to join the proposed Greater Essex Devolution Deal. Members had noted what was a happening elsewhere in the country and would consider its involvement in the project in the Autumn.

In the housing area, he said that 48 affordable had been built since the start of the housing development programme. There had also been considerable investment in the current stock, including the installation of solar panels on council owned homes. There had been developments at Mead Court, Stansted and at other sheltered schemes.

The Council was looking to support the provision of superfast broadband and was lobbying superfast Essex and BT Openreach to achieve the 92% coverage target, and was supporting a voucher scheme for access to superfast broadband.

Under the communities' area, the council continued to support the work of the LSP. It was looking to create a one stop shop multi agency centre in Saffron Walden and was assisting the management of Faircroft in the purchase of the property and support its ongoing work. The Police had moved to the council offices and UDC was funding two PCSO's in the district. He said that Health and Wellbeing was now a key element of UDC work.

Customer Services remained a major priority. The Customer Services Centre had recorded a record number of calls at first point of contact. He congratulated the Planning services on meeting all its performance targets.

In relation to waste and recycling, he said the Council provided a good service but improvement could be made. There would be future campaigns in relation to recycling and keeping the district tidy.

In summary, the Leader said good progress had been made this year but there was still much work to do. He informed members that Michael Perry, the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal would be retiring in August. He thanked Mr Perry for his commitment, support and wisdom during his time at Uttlesford. He also paid tribute to Geoff Smith, the Head of Environmental Services who would be retiring at the end of June.

Councillor J Freeman said that at a recent meeting the Director of BuzzCon had reported that the company had been accepted as the new Government provider. This should lead to a more concerted effort to roll out Broadband in the district.

Councillor Asker raised a planning issue in relation to a proposed development at Lime Avenue, Saffron Walden. She understood there had been sound planning reasons for refusing the application but felt that the comments raised by SWTC had not been taken into account. She said there was little point in consulting the Local council if its responses were ignored.

The Chief Executive said the parish/town councils' comment, along with all other representations were taken into account. However, the planning officers and committee had to consider all the evidence and take a balanced view when coming to its conclusion.

C16

ANNUAL REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor Chambers questioned the absence of a written report for this item. It was confirmed that written reports would be provided in the future.

i) Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dean outlined the work of the Scrutiny Committee over the past 12 months. The committee had a number of new members and had received external training on the scrutiny process.

One main area of consideration had been the report on the Local Plan preparation from the Planning Advisory Service. This had been a useful review and the recommendations had been taken forward in the work on the new Local Plan.

Members put forward suggestions for areas to be reviewed and these had been included in the programme in addition to the items for pre-scrutiny. Recent meetings had considered the LCTS, air quality, a district wide car parking review, the 2016/17 budget and had established a task group to look at the council's enforcement service. The future timetable included the Building Control Partnership, a review of the cabinet system, quiet lanes, the relationship between ECC/UDC particularly around Planning and Highways and a review of the NEPP.

Councillor Dean thanked the Committee for all the work it had done over the past year.

ii) Performance and Audit Committee

Councillor Oliver, the Chairman of the Committee said that as the committee had not met for three months, it had not had an opportunity to consider its annual report. However he outlined the work carried out during the past year.

The committee had started the year with training from an external provider on the core functions of an audit committee.

It had considered the Statement of Accounts 2014/15, which had noted specifically an increase in the value of the council's housing stock and the long term liability of the council's share of the ECC pension deficit. The 2014/15 accounts had been published early in preparation for next year's new deadline. In relation to the 2014/15 accounts the external auditor had issued an unqualified opinion on the Financial Statements and an unqualified opinion on the arrangement for Value for Money.

The Annual Governance report 2014/15 had identified no significant issues or errors. The Audit letter had referred to the reliability of the accounts and that proper arrangements had been put in place for the use of resources.

The committee had also reviewed the work of Internal Audit, which included the Annual Governance Statement and progress reports on the day to day audit work. It had carried out the annual committee self- assessment and actions had been identified for 2016/17. Each meeting also reviewed the performance indicators and the Council's risk register.

Councillor Oliver thanked officers and Members for their support and assistance over the year.

C17

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Cllr Harris declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Fritch Green Parish Council

Councillor Harris asked a question about the Fritch Green development and the provision of community facilities. It had been hoped that these would soon be in place, signed off and passed over to the management of the charitable trust. However there were now 3 major issues.

1. It was not possible to use the pathways safely, as the stone and gravel was not bedding down properly.
2. There was no maintenance plan or details for the new playing fields, when they would be ok to use, and the upkeep required. There was nothing currently being done to maintain this facility.
3. There was an issue with payments to the subcontractors who had provided the play equipment and it was likely that this would be removed.

The S106 agreement stated that there should be no house building on the site until the playing fields had been completed, but work was still continuing. There had been a 10 year delay in the provision of these facilities and the parish council was asking that UDC, as the Planning Authority to legally enforce the agreement and push to get the work completed.

The Chief Executive said that a written response would be send to Fritch Green Parish Council.

C18

MATTERS RECEIVED FROM COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

At the last meeting, the chairman of the Constitution Working Group had announced the date of 28 June 2016 for a meeting of the group. There was now a Local Plan workshop planned for this date and the Constitution WG meeting would be rearranged.

C19

PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – CHANGE OF DATE

Councillor Oliver asked the Council to agree to reschedule the July meeting of the Performance and Audit Committee in order for the committee to receive the audited accounts from external audit.

RESOLVED that the date of the Performance and Audit Committee be changed from 21 to 28 July 2016.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm