

**ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 16 MAY 2017**

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

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic  
Services Officer), S Pugh (Head of Legal Services) and P Snow  
(Democratic and Electoral Services Manager).

**C1            TRIBUTES TO FORMER COUNCILLOR ALASTAIR WALTERS**

The Council paid tribute to former Councillor Alastair Walters.

The Leader said he was a good friend, a man of letters and a diligent councillor  
who was committed to the community he served.

Councillor Chambers remembered a tenacious man of meticulous detail who  
was passionate about his local community. He was a man who had done a lot of  
good in his life.

Councillor Freeman said it was the 50 year anniversary of the Shire Hill Nursery  
School, an institution Alastair Walters had been integral in establishing. An apple  
tree had been planted in his memory. Mr Walters was an excellent person to  
work with during the time they had shared on Saffron Walden Town Council.

Former Councillor, Mr LeFever, recalled his first day at Council and how Alastair  
Walters had been the first councillor to greet him. He described Mr Walters as a  
generous man who gave his time and energy for the benefit of the town. He was  
also a man of conviction; once he had set his mind on something, he would not  
give up. He said Mr Walters was not only a former councillor but a stalwart of  
Saffron Walden and asked for his passing to be marked appropriately.

The Council stood for a minute's silence

**C2            REMARKS OF THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Davey said it had been an honour to be Chairman of Uttlesford District  
Council. It had been a fantastic year in which he had raised £7,300 for his  
chosen charities through a number of events including a Garden Party, a Civic  
Dinner and Quiz Night. He had enjoyed the year in his role, and had attended  
over 60 civic engagements.

C3 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL**

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

C4 **STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Councillor Sell made the statutory declaration as Chairman of the Council for 2017/18. He thanked Councillor Davey for all the work he had done during the past year. The Chairman then presented a portrait and past Chairman's badge to Councillor Davey.

C5 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillors Richard Freeman and Lesley Wells had been nominated for the post of Vice-Chairman of the Council. The Chairman made it known to the Council that he had received a request from 5 members for the vote to take place by way of a ballot. Councillor Ranger requested a recorded vote, which was duly seconded. Under the Council Procedure Rules, the request for a recorded vote took precedence over the request for a ballot.

Councillor Wells was elected to the post of Vice-Chairman

The voting was as follows:

<b>For Councillor Freeman:</b>	<b>For Councillor Wells:</b>
A Anjum	G Barker
H Asker	S Barker
P Fairhurst	R Chambers
R Freeman	J Davey
N Hargreaves	P Davies
G LeCount	A Dean
P Lees	T Farthing
B Light	M Felton
J Lodge	S Harris
S Morris	E Hicks
A Gerard	S Howell
	D Jones
	M Lemon
	J Loughlin
	A Mills

	E Oliver
	V Ranger
	J Redfern
	H Rolfe
	H Ryles
	G Sell
	L Wells
<b>Totals: 11</b>	<b>Totals: 22</b>

**C6 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Councillor Wells made her declaration of acceptance of office.

Councillor Chambers spoke of his concern that information regarding a candidate that had been forwarded to councillors by an officer at the request of a member. He said that members should not involve officers in political matters. Councillor Richard Freeman said it was important to distinguish between involving an officer in a political matter and asking an officer to distribute information about Council business.

**C7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Artus, J Freeman, M Foley, T Goddard, J Gordon and T Knight.

**C8 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2017 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**C9 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman said he had looked up minutes for a meeting he attended back in 1998 and reflected that much had changed since he was first elected. He told members he believed we owed much to those who came before us.

The Chairman announced that he was delighted to nominate Support for Sight and Essex Wildlife Trust as his chosen charities for the year.

Important decisions would be made in the coming year and the Chairman hoped that whilst the debate would remain robust, acrimony would have no place in Council business.

## C10 **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader congratulated Councillors Sell and Wells upon their election and thanked Councillor Davey for his efforts as Chairman. He said The Chairman played an important ambassadorial role in representing the Council across the district. He also thanked Councillor Wells for her work as a Cabinet member.

He congratulated members who had been elected in the Essex County Council election, and noted that Councillor Susan Barker had been appointed to the ECC Cabinet with a portfolio for Communities. He also congratulated Councillor Gerard who had been elected as the District member for Newport at the by-election on 4 May.

He reported that the Council's major investment at Chesterford Research Park had been finalised. The Leader thanked Adrian Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services), Richard Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services), Nicola Wittman (Assistant Director of ICT & Facilities), Councillor Howell and all the team for their hard work. This was a great achievement and would help the Council meet its financial targets in the short and medium term.

The Leader informed members that Councillor Ranger would be replacing Councillor Wells as the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnerships. He explained that Cabinet would be reverting back to the tradition of deputies to each Cabinet post.

## 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 **GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Council received the proposed terms of reference for the new GAP Committee.

Councillor Ranger said that *Item 20 y. (Duty to adopt a code of conduct for members under the Localism Act 2011)* could not be included in the terms of reference for the GAP committee as this was a Standards Committee

responsibility. He asked for this clause to be omitted from the final draft. Councillor Oliver pointed out a typographical error on Item 20 v.

RESOLVED to adopt the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee's Term of Reference subject to the deletion of the reference to the Code of Conduct.

C13

### **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES 2017/18**

Councillor Fairhurst put forward the following proposal, which was duly seconded:

*"To call for a report to the next Council meeting with proposals for the establishment of an investment committee to oversee the Council's commercial investments through Aspire and to give advice to the Council and its Cabinet on further commercial investment by the Council through Aspire."*

Councillor Howell, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration, said there was no need for an Investment Committee. Full Council was, in a sense, an Investment Committee, as all investments would come to Council where each member had an equal vote. He said that Aspire was a stand-alone entity and the governance structure was deliberately put in place to keep it separate from Councillors. Aspire would appoint two non-executive Directors to guide the board and provide scrutiny. In his view, a Committee would disenfranchise the majority of Councillors and therefore he would be voting against the proposal.

Councillor Ranger said he did not understand why the proposal had been put forward. Large investment decisions had been taken in the past, with respect to the Council's housing stock, which had not required an Investment Committee. He would be voting against the proposal.

Councillor Ryles agreed and asked all members to work together and to put party politics aside in the interests of the district.

Councillor Lemon said he would be voting against the proposal as it would limit his participation in matters relating to investments and Aspire.

Councillor Loughlin said the proposal made the assumption that Councillors were not up to the task of making commercial decisions based around Aspire, and she did not agree with that view.

Councillor Richard Freeman said he had been to all presentations regarding Aspire but had played no part in the related decision-making. All options brought before Councillors had been pre-determined and therefore the decision-making process had not been inclusive. He would not have chosen to invest in a Science Park based in the UK. He questioned the competency of local authorities to run investments of this kind and told members that this would bind eight consecutive Council Administrations.

Councillor Lodge said the proposal was not intended to cause a political squabble but to find some cross-party consensus. He personally agreed with the investment in Chesterford Research Park, although members in his party did not. The point was that the investment committee would be composed of external independent members who could give specialist guidance on investment opportunities.

The Leader expressed appreciation for Councillor Lodge's comments. He reassured members that any major decision would be based on empirical evidence and on external expertise. The non-executive members would bring due diligence to the process.

Councillor Fairhurst said he was disappointed in the discussion. He had the best of intentions and this was not meant to be a debate fuelled by party politics.

The proposal was put to vote and was rejected.

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

**Planning:** R Chambers, J Davey, P Fairhurst, R Freeman, E Hicks, M Lemon, J Lodge, J Loughlin (vc), A Mills (c), L Wells

**Substitutes:** A Gerard, G LeCount, V Ranger, H Ryles, G Sell

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

**Substitutes:** D Jones, J Freeman, H Asker, R Freeman, J Loughlin

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

**Substitutes:** A Anjum, A Dean, J Freeman, M Lemon

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

**Substitutes:** A Gerard, A Mills, G Sell, L Wells

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

RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Committee Membership.

C14

## **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.

**Public Engagement Working Group:** A Dean, P Fairhurst, M Felton, S Harris, M Lemon (c), B Light, J Redfern

**Local Joint Panel:** A Dean, S Morris, H Rolfe (c)

RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Working Groups.

C15 **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.

C16 **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Leader made a statement summarising the Council's position at the end of the 2016/17 year. He said it was important to remember that there was a Corporate Plan for the district which he hoped had cross-party consensus. The past year had been a busy one, particularly with regards to the Local Plan. The future of housing in the district was taking shape, analysis would be carried out to ensure the most appropriate sites would be put forward and the proposals would come to Council on 11 July as part of consideration of the draft Local Plan.

He said the commercial investment would help to tackle the Council's financial challenges in the medium term. Longer term issues would be addressed in the year ahead. Council tax had been raised by just under 2% to ensure local services were protected. Other areas of development included the establishment of a new waste depot and the investment in new waste vehicles.

The Leader was delighted to confirm that 35 additional council houses had been built in the past year and spoke of the progression made on the sheltered accommodation at Reynolds Court.

In terms of engagement, a Youth Council had been established and the Leader welcomed the young members who had attended the meeting. Progress had been made on member development and the parish forum. He thanked the Youth Engagement Working Group for all its work and told members that it would have a wider remit as the Public Engagement Working Group in the future.

There would also be a focus on enforcement, as demonstrated by the appointment of a Cabinet Deputy with a portfolio for enforcement

In the upcoming year, Manchester Air Group of Stansted Airport had applied for a new terminal and it was almost certain that a planning application would be received to increase the capacity of the airport from 35 million people per annum to 43 or 45mpa. A new Technical and Professional Skills Centre would also be built at the airport, which would specialise in subjects such as engineering, business, finance and logistics.

He was delighted that the Council could support the local voluntary sector and said that Uttlesford was one of the most generous districts in the county. He spoke of a new project dealing with the problem of social isolation. This was a particularly important subject for Uttlesford due to the sparsely populated nature of the district.

There had been progress on broadband development and an announcement of a £500,000 investment would be made with the aim of hitting a 95% coverage target by the end of next year.

He said he was pleased with the KPI results to be presented to the Performance and Audit committee, which was now to be known as the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee.

In conclusion, the Leader thanked Councillors, Officers and his Executive support team, particularly Janine Corbey, for all of their hard-work.

Councillor Redfern, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, gave a Building and Housing update. She said the in-house building control team had continued to thrive and had a market share of 84%, significantly better than neighbouring authorities. There had been success in bringing back a number of empty properties into Council ownership and thanked the Empty Homes Officer for his patience and hard work. With regards to the Housing Register, 149 new affordable homes had been completed, 107 of these were affordable rental homes and 42 were shared ownership

Councillor Susan Barker, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, apologised that there were areas where bin collections had been delayed. She reminded members that there were 35,759 homes in the district, which equated to 3.7 million emptied bins a year. Targets had not been met but with more vehicles being put on the road, the district would be more resilient in future. She said that funding would be allocated to Grounds Maintenance and she was in correspondence with ECC to establish who was responsible for small, untended plots of land such as roundabouts or the area in Priors Green, Takeley which had been left unmaintained since the developers had left.

C17

## **MEMBERS QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES**

Councillor Richard Freeman said there had been problems with bin collections at new housing estates. This was unacceptable for residents who had purchased a new house and paid their local taxes. They would expect the waste collection service to already be in place. Councillor Barker said she would check the procedure with officers and reminded members of the safety problems experienced with the current fleet of waste vehicles that had led to delays.

Councillor Lodge asked why the Residents for Uttlesford party had not been appointed to any key Council positions in comparison to the Liberal Democrats, who had the Chair of Council, Scrutiny and the Vice-Chair of Planning. The Residents party had no comparable positions, although it was the larger party.

The Leader replied that the dispute here was not about political balance but rather 3 unique positions, earned through convention, consensus and merit.

Councillor Asker asked the Leader if there was any ongoing discussion with Stansted Airport regarding a second runway. The Leader assured members that there was no ongoing discussion and the Council was officially opposed to a second runway.

Councillor Asker asked about the maintenance responsibility for areas within housing estates and new developments. She had received many questions from the public in Saffron Walden regarding small pockets of land that seemed to be neither the responsibility of the Town Council nor the District Council, but owned by third-part developers who had no interest in the local community. She said this had led to anti-social behaviour and caused issues for residents. The Leader said the Council had far less 'power' over developers if planning applications went through on appeal. Councillor Susan Barker said the issues raised by Councillor Asker could be resolved and there was a procedure to follow if the pockets of land in question were brought to her attention.

#### **C18 REVIEW OF STANDARDS CODE OF CONDUCT AND PROCEDURE**

Councillor Jones presented the report in the absence of the Chairman of the Standards Committee, Councillor Knight. He proposed that the recommendations in the report for a new Code of Conduct and procedures for dealing with breaches of the Code should be approved by Council.

RESOLVED to adopt the revised Standards Code of Conduct and Procedure.

#### **C19 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEW 2016-17**

Councillor Dean presented the review of the work of the Scrutiny Committee for 2016-17.

#### **C20 PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE REVIEW 2016-17**

Councillor Oliver presented the review of the work of the Performance and Audit Committee for 2016-17.

#### **C21 MATTER RECEIVED FROM COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**

Councillor Ranger presented a revised Member-Officer protocol report, following the referral of the matter to the Constitution Working Group at the Council meeting on 4 April. Councillor Artus had proposed an amendment to the protocol and this had now been reviewed by the Constitution Working Group and agreement on wording had been reached. The group was now in a position to recommend the revised Member-Officer protocol to full Council.

Councillor Freeman asked for the following amendment:

- *To include the word 'Honest' in the 'to be' column – point 3.1, Working Relationships.*

RESOLVED to adopt the revised member-officer protocol including the above amendment.

C22

## **GAMBLING POLICY**

Councillor Susan Barker presented a report on updating the Council's Gambling Policy. Only minor amendments were proposed, although she highlighted the additional conditions put in place to protect vulnerable children and adults.

RESOLVED to approve the revised Gambling Policy with the new Statement of Principles to come into effect on 26 June 2017.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm