

MEETING OF CABINET held in the COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN at 7pm on THURSDAY, 24 MAY 2018

Present: Councillor H Rolfe (Chairman)
Councillors S Barker, S Howell and J Redfern

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), R Dobson (Principal Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director - Public Services), S Pugh (Assistant Director - Governance and Legal) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

Also present: Councillor A Dean (Liberal Democrats Group Leader and Chairman of Scrutiny Committee), Councillor J Lodge (Residents for Uttlesford Group Leader).

CA1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Ranger and Ryles.

CA2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2018 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CA3 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Dean said the Scrutiny Committee had started to consider its programme of work for the year. The Committee's task group on affordable housing had met and whilst it was early days, discussion was underway to assess whether the District's needs for social and affordable housing had changed. A report would be brought to the Committee.

Councillor Barker said issues around waste and recycling had also been identified by the Scrutiny Committee, and that a report on actions would be taken to the Committee.

CA4 DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

The following delegated decisions taken by Executive members were noted:

- Decision by Councillor Rolfe published on 1 May 2018: to amend the membership of the Governance Board for Garden Communities to include the Cabinet member for Housing.
- Decision by Councillor Ryles published on 18 May 2018: to agree the content of the draft Baseline Service Statements for car parking, street services and environmental health, relating to the Saffron Walden Business Improvement District (SWBID); to agree the content of the draft

SWBID operating agreement; to agree to the publication of the above documents on the SWBID website and for officers to make them available for scrutiny by local businesses throughout the BID ballot period at the Council offices.

CA5 **ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE COMMITTEE**

Members considered a report recommending the establishment of a committee of the Cabinet to determine whether nominations of land or buildings as assets of community value should be accepted. As this was an executive function it could be delegated to a Cabinet committee or to officers.

Councillor Barker said that establishing a committee to consider such nominations would permit greater flexibility in dealing with nominations as these were subject to a statutory time limit of six weeks for a decision to be made following receipt of the nomination. Cabinet would continue to receive nominations for assets of community value when practicable, but in addition to the need to meet the statutory deadline, there might be occasions when the volume of business to be considered by Cabinet was such that it would be more convenient for nominations to be referred to the committee. In due course she anticipated the committee's remit would also encompass the heritage list function.

RESOLVED

- 1 to appoint an Assets of Community Value Committee of three members to consider nominations which cannot, in the view of the Assistant Director: Governance and Legal, be conveniently considered by Cabinet.
- 2 To appoint as members of the above Committee the Portfolio Holders for Communities and Partnerships, Environmental Services and Finance and Administration.
- 3 That Cabinet receive a verbal report on any forthcoming determinations by the Committee or decisions made by it since the date of the previous meeting of Cabinet.

It was agreed, in response to a comment from Councillor Dean, that members should be informed of any nominations of assets of community value in their respective wards.

CA6 **APPOINTMENT TO THE VOLUNTARY SUPPORT GRANTS COMMITTEE**

Members considered appointments to the Voluntary Support Grants Committee. At the suggestion of Councillor Rolfe, Councillor Ranger as Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnerships was proposed as Chairman.

RESOLVED

- 1 to appoint as members of the Voluntary Support Grants Committee Councillors Simon Howell, Vic Ranger and Howard Rolfe; and
- 2 that Councillor Ranger be appointed Chairman.

CA7 WORKING GROUP APPOINTMENTS

Councillor Rolfe invited comments on the proposed appointments to the working groups, set out in the schedule included in the agenda papers.

Councillor Lodge confirmed he was content with the proposed appointments.

Councillor Dean said he was content with the appointments, but queried the need for two of the working groups, as they had not met for some time. The working groups in question were the Refugee Working Group and the Waste Strategy Panel.

Councillor Barker said it was easier to have the Waste Strategy Panel in place, should it be required to meet.

Councillor Rolfe said he agreed both these working groups might be necessary and that it was preferable that they were appointed in readiness for potential meetings if required.

RESOLVED to appoint membership of the Cabinet Working Groups, and where indicated, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen, as set out in the report to the meeting.

CA8 OUTSIDE BODIES APPOINTMENTS

Members considered proposed appointments to the outside bodies, set out in the schedule included in the agenda papers.

RESOLVED to appoint the Members identified in the report as the Council's representatives on the outside bodies listed in the report.

CA9 APPOINTMENTS TO NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP

Members considered the appointment of representatives to the North Essex Parking Partnership.

RESOLVED to appoint as the Council's representative to the North Essex Parking Partnership Councillor Howard Ryles, and Councillor Vic Ranger as substitute member.

CA10 APPOINTMENT TO WEST ESSEX WELLBEING JOINT COMMITTEE

Members considered the appointment of representatives to the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee.

RESOLVED to appoint as members of the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee Councillors Vic Ranger and Howard Rolfe.

CA11 **SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Members considered the report of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which had been presented to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 27 March 2018.

The report sought Cabinet's views on the recommendations and an indication as to how Cabinet wished to be involved in developing the Council's response to the proposals, so as to inform discussions between officers and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, so as to prepare an action plan for presentation at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Howell gave his response to the report. He said the role of Scrutiny was an important one, and whilst the report acknowledged some strong positives, it was also important to reflect on areas identified for improvement. He recommended that in reading the report, members should not "cherry-pick" points which endorsed their own view.

Councillor Howell referred to the phrase "Scrutiny's job is to hold the executive to account", and said he found it frustrating that this aspect could be used to permeate almost everything: it was important to take the document as a whole, rather than just that one element. One of the key aspects of Scrutiny was to improve decision-making, and it was in that area that he considered Scrutiny had a particularly valuable role to play. There were examples where Scrutiny had done that well, specifically, when the decision had been taken to invest in Chesterford Research Park, and in relation to the call in of a contentious decision regarding De Vigier Avenue. Scrutiny had functioned best where political hats had been left at the door.

Councillor Howell said he recognised the critical role the Chairman had played in the culture of the Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Dean was highly knowledgeable and very experienced, as a longstanding councillor. It was important that the Committee tried to avoid a narrow political agenda or "headline grabbing". He very much welcomed the report. He noted the recommendations of the CfPS report in addressing the weaknesses in current arrangements, two or three of which related specifically to the Cabinet, that is, that the Leader and Cabinet members should be directly accountable and visible, and that there should be structured meetings to discuss Scrutiny, which he endorsed. He would continue to attend Scrutiny, if invited; he was keen to continue to discuss the budget, the consultations on Local Council Tax Support, budget priorities, all other aspects that came up. He moved the recommendation that Cabinet accept the recommendations of the CfPS report.

Councillor Lodge suggested that one of his Group's members of Scrutiny Committee be invited to join in discussions as to actions arising from the report.

Councillor Rolfe said this was a matter for the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Dean said if Cabinet were in broad agreement with the recommendations, then discussions should be arranged outside this meeting. Those discussions, with Councillor Howell, if he was representing the Cabinet, should aim to agree what needed to be done. There were other members of the Scrutiny Committee such as the Vice Chairman who might need to be involved.

Councillor Dean said, in response to Cllr Howell, there was need for offline discussion, in relation to one or two points. One point came out of the CfPS conference, regarding the way local government was working these days, particularly in relation to finance-raising other than through Council Tax and central Government grants, for the need for a Scrutiny mechanism. Unless he had missed something, prior to the decision to invest in Chesterford Research Park, there had been no involvement of Scrutiny. Independent Scrutiny was one area where pre-scrutiny in future did need to engage better. A further point for discussion offline was what was meant by “holding the Cabinet to account”? Discussion was needed on that, and Cllr Howell has expressed concern at “headline grabbing”. This aspect could be a good thing, it had been identified by the CfPS report author, and should be discussed.

Councillor Dean said that if Cabinet did accept these recommendations, he considered officers should arrange dialogue to turn them into reality, to avoid carrying on as usual. The Committee was willing to change, but it was necessary for both parties to learn how to do so, in which case he would be delighted.

Councillor Rolfe said he applauded the initiative of commissioning the report. It was important to take the package as a whole.

RESOLVED to accept all the recommendations in the Centre for Public Scrutiny report as presented to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 27 March 2018.

CA12 **GARDEN COMMUNITIES DELIVERY GOVERNANCE BOARD**

Members received an update on the Garden Communities Delivery Governance Board. Councillor Rolfe said most of the areas of discussion of the working group were commercially sensitive, so the meetings were not held in public, but updates would be provided to the public meetings of the Cabinet. Recommendations made by the working group would be made in due course to Cabinet.

The report was noted.

CA13 **ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE RE-NOMINATION OF THE ALLOTMENTS, HIGH RODING**

Members considered a report regarding a re-nomination of the land known as The Allotments at High Roding. On the basis that there was a valid nomination and that there was current use of the allotments which furthered the interests of the community, members agreed with the recommendation of the report.

RESOLVED that The Allotments at High Roding be re-listed as an asset of community value for a period of 5 years from today.

CA14 RIGHT OF WAY IN LITTLE CHESTERFORD

Members considered a report seeking a grant of a right of way, in relation to a private access road owned by the Council, to facilitate the development of a residential property.

RESOLVED that

- 1 right of way be granted for the for the benefit of a new property in the rear garden of Millfields, Walden Road, Little Chesterford for which planning permission has been obtained by the owners, over the private access road which runs adjacent to the property, subject to the payment of a premium, the requirement to contribute towards future maintenance and limitation to the new property.
- 2 The Assistant Director – Housing has delegated authority to negotiate the appropriate consideration having taken advice from an independent valuer, and relevant legal terms and conditions.

CA15 S106 FUNDING AUBREY BUXTON NATURE RESERVE

It was noted the item had been withdrawn.

CA16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman said there was no other urgent business, other than to make it known that Rebecca Dobson would be taking on the role of the Council's Democratic and Electoral Services Manager following the retirement of Peter Snow.

The meeting ended at 7.35pm.