

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2019 at 7.30 pm

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

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

Public speakers: D Brett, M Everett and T Mawer

C61 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Daniel Brett, Martyn Everett and Tina Mawer spoke at the meeting. Summaries of their statements are appended to these minutes.

C62 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Artus, Asker, Goddard, Harris and Mills.

Councillors Fairhurst and Freeman declared personal interests as members of Saffron Walden Town Council.

Cllr G Barker declared a personal interest in that he was married to Cllr S Barker, who was a member of Essex County Council.

Councillor S Barker declared a personal interest as a member of Essex County Council in relation to the Council Tax resolution in Item 13 and the motion regarding library services at Item 19.

In response to a Member question, the Assistant Director - Governance and Legal said there was only a need for district councillors to declare an interest as town or parish councillors if there was an item relevant to their organisation on the agenda. In this instance, the precept from Saffron Walden Town Council was a part of the agenda.

C63 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following changes:

C58: Councillor Ranger said 'he would arrange meetings with the users of the libraries at Stansted and Thaxted' to 'he would be happy to attend meetings requested by parish councils with the users of the libraries at Stansted and Thaxted.'

C59: Remove the words 'reinstate the council's failed monitoring equipment in order to' from the following resolution:

RESOLVED: DEFRA's response to UDC's Air Quality Annual Status report highlights that, "after distance correction, there are now no exceedances of the annual mean objective for Nitrogen Dioxide within the Saffron Walden AQMA, or any results within 10% of objective levels at positions of relevant exposure" and goes on to state that "The recent monitoring results are extremely encouraging, and the Council should maintain the strategy outlined within the Action Plan". This council welcomes this response and will continue its work to improve further the air quality in our District and urges the Cabinet to reinstate the council's failed monitoring equipment in order to return the air quality reporting to the more accurate local validation preferred by DEFRA.

C64 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman said she had attended a number of events since the last Council meeting. These had included:

- a range of carol services
- a production at the Harlow Playhouse
- the Uttlesford District Council Staff Long Service Awards,
- a Queen's Award presentation to Kestrel Liner Agencies
- the Essex Wing Training Corp Presentation Evening
- the opening of the London and Quadrant Independent Living Development in Saffron Walden

C65 **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Leader of the Council presented his report. He highlighted the following points:

- The opening of Harlow College at Stansted Airport. The College was now full and had a waiting list for future years. There was very positive feedback from some of those attending.
- There had been a conference held at Chesterford Research Park to discuss the role of digital in future housing. The technology emerging to drive a cleaner and more effective environment was very sophisticated and exciting. It would be a big part of the future.
- The London Stansted Cambridge Consortium Group was looking at the M11 Innovation Corridor. A cross-party meeting with representatives of Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire Council and the

Combined Authority had been held to share ideas on innovation in the area. The Leader had also had a meeting with the political advisor to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government to discuss better connectivity between the Ministry, the Department for Transport and the district authority.

- The Livewell Wheel diagram could be found on page 25 of the pack. This would be a key part of the way forward for the next administration. The Essex Partners Board and the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board were focused on connectivity between the NHS and local authorities, because the health service would not be able to take on sole responsibility for prevention and must do so in partnership with local government.

C66

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Councillor Ranger, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnerships, presented his report. He highlighted the following additional points:

- The work on developing the Sports Strategy for submission to the Local Plan examination continued to progress according to programme, and it was hoped it would be ready to submit to the Local Plan Inspectors in April.
- The Council had recently formed a small steering group with local sports groups in Saffron Walden to carry out a feasibility study for a modern high-quality multi-sports campus located in or near to the town. The Council aimed undertake an examination of the currently identified shortfall of sports facilities in greater detail, and to identify a cost-effective site to improve provision for a wide range of sports and activities. Work was beginning in parallel with working with clubs and organisations in the south of the district.
- Uttlesford had a foodbank delivered by a group of volunteers who were very professional in their work. The foodbank was now a registered charity. It had now signed a lease on premises in Shire Hill. It would be positive if the rent was securely funded. The next administration should consider raising a motion to contribute 1% of Members' allowances to pay the bulk of the rent.
- There had been a disagreement at the December Council meeting between himself and Councillor Hargreaves as to what should have been minuted on minute item C35 in the minutes of the October Council meeting. They had now agreed a substituted minute. This new wording now gave the impression that, should the Residents for Uttlesford become the administration in Uttlesford District Council, they would seek to remove from the Constitution, the protection which prevented decisions being made in secret.

C67

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Ryles, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, presented his report. He highlighted the following:

- The success of the Saffron Walden Business Improvement District, which had drawn more customers into the town.
- Gigaclear was planning to roll out Phase 3 of superfast broadband in July 2020.
- The Council was bidding to play a role in the Digital Innovation Strategy Zone (DIZ). It had submitted one bid for the Government's 5th Generation Rural Mobile Testbed Trials, and would submit a proposal for involvement in the Local Full Fibre Network to deliver full fibre connections to all GP practices in the DIZ area. He commended the Economic Development Team on this work.
- A procurement process for ticketing machines in car parks was underway.
- The Council was waiting on responses from residents to help find solutions to parking issues on Caton's Lane/Little Walden Road.
- He would be meeting with officers next week to put together a bid for Saffron Walden to be the first of Uttlesford's towns to apply for the Future High Street Fund. This would then follow with a bid for Dunmow in 2020. Only one bid could be submitted each year.

C68

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services presented her report. She apologised for the lack of a written report, and made the following points:

- The Local Plan had been submitted in January and two inspectors had been appointed. They had already sent a list of initial questions to the Council, and hearings on the plan would take place in July.
- The Police and Fire Commissioner's plan included an additional 215 additional police officers on the street and an additional 50 police staff, including a dedicated team for Saffron Walden.
- The Council had an exceptional Christmas with its bin collections. Missed bins were at an all-time low, new vehicles had been acquired and there had been an increase in litter-picking staff. A planning application for a new depot in Dunmow would be submitted in March.

C69

REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

The Portfolio Holder for Housing presented her report. She highlighted the following points:

- The Council had a team that worked on private sector housing. New licensing laws had come into force regarding house of multiple occupation (HMOs). Since October, the Council had licensed 11 HMOs and there were more pending.
- An application for redevelopment of The Moors at Little Dunmow would now go to the Planning Committee in April, rather than March.
- In the 2017-2018 year, the Council had sold 9 properties under the Right to Buy, and in the 2018-2019 year, it had sold another 8, with another waiting to be sold that week. When selling a property under the Right to Buy, the Council was only allowed to retain 30% of the receipts. This was

provided the Council could spend it on building a new property. The Council held £5 million in Right to Buy receipts, and the Council had a planned development programme in order to use these receipts. If the Council did not have this programme, it would have repay this money, and £400,000 in interest to the government. The debt cap for Council borrowing had been raised, enabling the cost of building new properties to be covered.

- She had been working with Councillor Dean and a team to look into what types of housing it would be necessary to supply in the three new garden communities.

C70 REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration declined to speak on his report as he would be discussing the budget proposals, the business rates relief and the pay policy later that evening.

C71 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN (UP TO 15 MINUTES)

Councillor Dean said in certain areas the standard of workmanship as superfast broadband was being installed had been poor. A number of verges had been left in appalling condition, and junction boxes left open. This needed to be sorted. One site on Foresthall Road had exposed a lot of litter.

In response to this, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development said sometimes contractors just intended to leave the soil in the trenches to settle. He asked that Councillor Dean to send him an email in order that he could follow the issue up.

Councillor Dean said the Council intended to invest over £100 million in commercial investments. However there was nothing in the capital programme for housing to take into account the lifting of the borrowing cap. He asked if the Portfolio Holder for Housing could confirm that the Council would be investing money, where it could, in Council housing.

In response to this question, the Portfolio Holder for Housing said that the Investment Strategy did not include investing in council housing as a commercial proposition. Instead there was provision in the Housing Revenue Account for investment in council-housing. There was an ongoing programme to deliver as many council homes as possible, and the Council would be looking at how the raising of the debt cap could be used. The Council had already done a lot to deliver council homes. The lifting of the debt cap was recent, and the Council might well borrow further to invest in council housing.

Councillor Sell asked if it would be possible to provide paper copies of the agenda pack for budget meetings in the future. This would be conducive to good decision-making. He said it was regrettable there was no mention of libraries in

the Leader's report. He asked if Councillor Rolfe could explain his actions regarding library services since the last meeting.

In response to these points, Councillor Rolfe said it had been decided that digital copies of agenda papers were the right environmentally-friendly strategy. He would reserve his comments on libraries for the debate at Item 19.

Councillors Knight, Jones and Loughlin supported Councillor Sell on his point about hard copies of the agenda. Councillor Knight said it was difficult to skip through pages of the agenda with ease on the iPad. Councillor Jones said the Council should take into account that some people might wish to follow the Council's work on paper, and that the Council might benefit from having a debate on the issue. Councillor Loughlin said her iPad was now not working, so she had had to borrow a paper copy in any case.

Councillor Lees said she was a big fan of no paper and that people could print off important sections of the agenda if they considered it necessary.

Councillor Lodge asked if the Councillor Ranger could explain his statement suggesting that should the Residents for Uttlesford become the majority party at the Council, the group would seek to remove the protection which prevented decisions being made in secret.

In response to this question, Councillor Ranger said Councillor Hargreaves was now on record as having said that a recorded vote trumps a secret ballot.

Councillor Gerard asked a question on behalf of one of his residents. He said on 19 October 2018, a report on planning application UTT/18/1027 had recommended refusal, but the following day, a decision notice was issued granting approval. The Leader issued a press release stating that he would apply to the High Court to have the decision put aside. He asked where the Council was in the process and what lessons had been learnt from the error.

In response to these questions, the Leader of the Council said that mistakes happen. The next step was for the court to set a date for the hearing. The developer had not yet indicated whether they were going to oppose the application. There had been no tardiness on behalf of the Council. It was a bold decision for the Leader of the Council to take action against his own council, but he did it because it was the right thing to do.

The Assistant Director – Governance and Legal said unfortunately it does take a long time for a case to be listed in the High Court, but that there had been no delay on the part of the Council.

Councillor Lemon asked whether the Council would be installing electric charging points in car parks in the near future.

In response to this question, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development said there was no one size fits all approach that could be taken with electric charging points. This lack of uniformity across the country made it difficult, but he would take the issue up with the parking team.

BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration presented the report. The Council was required to prepare detailed reports to enable the annual budgets for the General Fund and Council Tax, Housing Revenue Account and the Capital Programme to be set. The Section 151 Officer was also required to provide Members with a Section 25 report giving advice and assurance on the reserves position. The Council also had to provide a number of supporting strategies. All of these documents were presented in the report.

He had been asked by Councillor Dean, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, to clarify that there was no vote at Scrutiny Committee on the budget, and the report to Council was wrong to state that it had endorsed the budget.

He reflected upon the last four years as a Council. The very significant challenge of a one third cut in government funding had been navigated, and the Council had protected services, continued to invest in additional priority services, undertaken a significant programme of capital investments and some important strategic investments, built up a sinking fund to the relocation of the Dunmow Depot, funded the Local Plan, and put in place the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, which was by far the most generous in Essex. This had been done by a combination of efficiencies and identifying an additional source of income.

A 2.99% increase in Council Tax was proposed for the coming year. Over the last ten years, Uttlesford Council Tax had only increased by 2.8%, and Uttlesford continued to have the lowest rate of Council Tax than any other district in Essex.

The Council faced significant financial challenges in the future. Government funding was likely to decline by over 50% in the next five years, from £6.6 million to £3.1 million. There was likely to be a growing deficit going forwards, though the reserves would likely smooth the process. There was scope for efficiencies and increasing council tax, but this would not plug the funding gap. It was therefore proposed to add another aspect to the Investment Strategy. The Council's investment in Chesterford Research Park was forecast to bring in £1.7 million in 2019/20, and had been a valuable first step. There was capacity to expand the park, but it would not grow fast enough to meet the challenge. A resolution to agree in principle further expansion of the investment strategy was therefore proposed.

An item regarding the governance structure for a significant increase in investment would come to the following Council meeting. It was important for Council to be the decision-making body, but a new structure would ensure early engagement from a wide-range of councillors, non-executive and professional advisors. It was important that decisions on investment must be taken in standalone meetings, or at the beginning of meetings. It was important to see beyond the next election.

Some Members expressed support for the view that decisions on investment should not take place at the end of meetings, and should have standalone meetings. These decisions were so important that a wrong decision could put the Council in jeopardy.

Councillor Dean said as Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, the group was satisfied with the broad proposals, and recognised the likely need to bridge a looming funding gap. He asked whether the Council could now openly lobby for fair funding from central government. The Liberal Democrats were concerned about lack of controls and accountability regarding investment and would therefore abstain on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Investment Strategy. He asked for separate votes on these items.

Some Members expressed the view that it was a shame that councils had been put in a position where they were being encouraged to invest in order to generate income, although a solution to the funding gap was needed.

Councillor Fairhurst said the difficult situation the Council was being put in should not be a licence to speculate. There was a need for prudent investment and the current Investment Strategy did not meet the standards necessary for such a strategy. An investment committee was needed to assess important issues. He was happy to hear the Council was going to discuss this.

Some Members criticised the lack of detail in the Investment Strategy, and expressed concern about the governance of current and further commercial investments. A means of exercising better governance over the Council's investments was needed, for instance by a panel with a specific role to monitor this. Matters such as commercial investment had to be considered carefully, and should include input from a selection of experts, as any investment had to be a risk the Council could manage. Councillors could not turn themselves into entrepreneurs, and it was dangerous to speculate with public money.

Councillor R Freeman said scientific input on a proposed investment panel would be useful.

The Leader of the Council said Councillor Howell had been outstanding over his four years as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration, and would be stepping down in May. Members seemed to respect the budget and the need for investment. Most local councils had been investing commercially for longer than Uttlesford and so were more experienced. There seemed to be cross-party support for a panel to manage governance in investment, and officers would do work on what this panel would look like. It could be possible to add a new member to the Aspire board who had knowledge of scientific research. The Council was continually lobbying for fair financial support from central government, and the government in turn was looking seriously into district council financing and health and social care.

Councillor Sell proposed the following amendment:

This Council resolves to withdraw financial support from the establishment of a running track at Carver Barracks, Debden. It therefore resolves to

transfer the allocated financial support of £500,000 which is currently earmarked within the Strategic Initiatives Fund (SIF) to a new reserve for community infrastructure including sport provision.

He said he had not supported the original decision to dedicate funding to the running track at Carver Barracks. There were many examples within the district where funding for sport was required, and allocating so much money to one athletics track was not putting it to good use. It was important to think about what was best for the residents of the entire district.

Some Members supported the view that prudent to allocate the money to a new reserve for community infrastructure. It would be wrong just to allocate all funding to the same place. Other clubs across the district were in need of investment.

Other Members said they would be opposing the motion. The planned running track would be a great facility in a great place. It would be wrong to back down from the decision and it was a good opportunity to get an expensive project completed at a reduced cost.

Councillor Knight summarised how the progress with the running track had proceeded over the past four years. The most contentious issue had been a clawback clause which would have allowed the Council to claim back a certain amount of the funding if the Barracks closed before 2030, and nobody had been prepared to guarantee that it would not close by that date. Now it had been confirmed to stay open until 2032. Plans were that 90% of the time the new track facility would be used by residents of the public. It was a great opportunity to spend only £500,000 on a £12 million project.

Councillor Felton left the meeting at this point.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Chief Executive it had now been clarified that the Barracks would not close until 2032, and in fact its usage might intensify. This had just been through email exchange and so was still subject to proper due diligence by the Council and the defence establishment.

Councillor Knight said money had been ring-fenced due to the clawback clause so that the Army could afford to pay back the Council if the Barracks closed before 2031. Only by removing this clause could construction go ahead, because otherwise the funds would have to stay ring-fenced.

A majority of members voted against Councillor Sell's amendment, which was defeated.

Councillor Howell said it appeared Members were almost all in agreement. He had heard Members' comments about risk, but the Investment Strategy had to be the solution to the challenge. There would be a debate about governance in April, and for the time being, Members would only be voting on the principle of investing additional money.

Councillor Chambers had left the meeting by this point and took no part in the vote.

RESOLVED

1. To approve the Section 25 Report - Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves
2. To approve the Investment Strategy

A recorded vote was taken on the Investment Strategy recommendation as follows:

For the recommendation: Councillors G Barker, S Barker, Davey, Davies, Farthing, J Freeman, R Freeman, Gordon, Hargreaves, Hicks, Howell, Jones, Knight, Lees, Lemon, Oliver, Ranger, Redfern, Rolfe, Ryles, Wells

Against the recommendation: Councillors Fairhurst, Foley, Gerard, LeCount, Light, Lodge, Morris

Abstain: Councillors Dean, Loughlin and Sell

3. To approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy

A recorded vote was taken on the Medium Term Financial Strategy recommendation as follows:

For the recommendations: Councillors G Barker, S Barker, Davey, Davies, Farthing, J Freeman, Gordon, Hargreaves, Hicks, Howell, Jones, Knight, Lemon, Oliver, Ranger, Redfern, Rolfe, Ryles, Wells

Against the recommendations: Councillors Fairhurst, R Freeman, Gerard, LeCount, Lees, Light, Lodge, Morris

Abstain: Councillors Dean, Foley, Loughlin and Sell

4. To approve the Treasury Management Strategy
5. To approve the Capital Strategy
6. To approve the Capital Programme
7. To approve the Housing Revenue Account proposals
8. To approve the General Fund Revenue and Council Tax proposals
9. To approve the Council Tax Resolution as follows:

9.1. To note that on 11 December 2018 the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, acting under delegated authority, calculated the Council Tax Base for 2019/20:

- (a) Taxbase for the whole Council area is 39,185.91 Band D equivalents, before adjusting for Local Council Tax Support discounts
- (b) For the whole Council area, the estimated value of Local Council Tax Support discounts is a taxbase reduction of 1872.76 Band D equivalents
- (c) Taxbase for the whole Council area, after adjusting for Local Council Tax Support discounts is 37,313.15 Band D equivalents. This being the figure to be used for precept calculation purposes
- (d) For dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as shown in Annex 1.

9.2. To determine that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2019/20 (excluding town/parish precepts) is £5,657,106.

9.3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2019/20 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the Act):

- (a) £76,382,726 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by town/parish councils.
- (b) £67,311,642 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
- (c) £9,071,084 Being the amount by which the aggregate of 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (including town/parish precepts).
- (d) £243.11 Being the amount at 3(c) above, divided by the Council Tax Base shown at 1(c) above, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including town/parish precepts),

- (e) £3,413,978 Being the aggregate amount of all special items (town/parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Annex 1),
- (f) £151.61 Being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by the Council Tax Base shown at 1(c) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Town/Parish precept relates.
- 9.4. To note that Essex County Council and the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Act for each category of dwellings in the Council's area and these are shown in the table in point 5 below.
- 9.5. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Act, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the table below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2019/20 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
	£							
Essex County Council	846.96	988.12	1,129.28	1,270.44	1,552.76	1,835.08	2,117.40	2,540.88
PFCC - Essex Police	128.64	150.08	171.52	192.96	235.84	278.72	321.60	385.92
PFCC - Essex Fire	48.30	56.35	64.40	72.45	88.55	104.65	120.75	144.90
Uttlesford District Council	101.07	117.92	134.76	151.61	185.30	218.99	252.68	303.22
Aggregate amounts excluding Town/Parish Councils	1,124.97	1,312.47	1,499.96	1,687.46	2,062.45	2,437.44	2,812.43	3,374.92

- 9.6. Determines that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZD(1) of the Act, and as shown in the calculation below.
- (a) Percentage increase defined by the Secretary of State as constituting an excessive increase for 2019/20: maximum increase of £5 or 3%
- (b) Percentage change in the Council's basic amount of Council Tax:

2018/19 amount £147.21
2019/20 amount £151.61

Percentage increase: 2.99%

The figure at 6(b) is less than the allowed increase at 6(a) above and therefore the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2018/19 is not excessive and no referendum is required.

- 9.7. Amounts payable in each town/parish at each band, comprising aggregate sums derived from all precepts are set out in Annex 2.

A recorded vote was taken on the Council Tax recommendations as follows:

For the recommendations: Councillors G Barker, S Barker, Davey, Davies, Dean, Fairhurst, Farthing, J Freeman, R Freeman, Foley, Gerard, Gordon, Hargreaves, Hicks, Howell, Jones, Knight, LeCount, Lees, Lemon, Lodge, Loughlin, Morris, Oliver, Ranger, Redfern, Rolfe, Ryles, Sell, Wells

Abstain: Councillor Light

Councillor Farthing left the meeting at this point.

C73 BUSINESS RATES RETAIL RELIEF

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration presented the report. He said the Council did not set business rates but it did collect them. A consequence of a revaluation exercise was that 1370 businesses across Uttlesford received 100% relief and there were reduced rates for 294 other businesses. This meant 49% of businesses throughout Uttlesford paid no or reduced rates.

Proposals in the report were for a rate relief programme lasting 2 years for retail businesses with a rateable value of less than £51,000. 268 businesses would benefit from the scheme, and it would be applied in accordance with the guidance issued by local government.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Adopt the discretionary Retail Relief Discount for the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 as set out in this report and the attached Business Rates Policy (Appendix B) under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- 2) Delegate authority for decision making on awarding Retail Relief to eligible businesses to the Section 151 Officer.

C74 PAY POLICY

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration presented the report. He said the pay policy complied with all government directives and guidance. The policy was in place to accord with good governance and transparency requirements, and provided extensive information on the Council's pay policy.

He noted on average, the Council paid its female employees slightly more than its male employees, and there was no significant pay gap.

RESOLVED to approve the pay policy.

C75 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2019-2023

The Leader of the Council presented the report. He said the Plan was consistent with the previous plan. Three additional bullet points had been added to the bottom of the Plan to underpin the Plan's priorities as important considerations for how the Council delivers its services.

The bullet points were:

- to manage and minimise the environmental impact of our activities
- to maximise the use of digital and SMART technology to enhance well-being
- to demonstrate our commitment to diversity and inclusion

RESOLVED to approve the Corporate Plan refresh 2019-23.

C76 THAXTED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services presented the report. The Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan had undergone a successful examination and referendum in accordance with neighbourhood planning regulations. There had been a 35% turnout 896 people voted of which 861 endorsed the plan.

Councillor Foley, as one of the ward members for Thaxted and the Eastons, commended the work of those who worked to see the plan to completion.

The Leader of the Council congratulated the group on the work they had put in.

Councillor Gerard, as a member of the Newport Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, said he understood the amount of work that had been put in and congratulated the group on their achievement.

RESOLVED to approve that the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan is formally 'made' as part of the statutory development plan for the District.

C77 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2019/20

This item was deferred until the following meeting.

C78 NOTICE OF MOTION RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR LIGHT

This item was deferred until the following meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.00.

Minute Item 1

Public speaking:

Daniel Brett said he would welcome the cancellation of the running track at Carver Barracks in favour of a new reserve for community infrastructure across the district. It was unfair that vast reserves were allocated to Saffron Walden when Stansted sports provision was underfunded. He said the Council was currently investing in a niche asset, but the programme lacked coherent strategy and ignored emerging risk. There needed to be a constant examination of risk across several asset classes. One investment should not make up such a big proportion of the Council's assets under management. Brexit was a big risk as tenants of properties at Chesterford Research Park might not renew their contracts. It was crucial the investment strategy was not linked to the local economy.

Martyn Everett said there had been a lot of cuts to libraries over the years, but they were important services for socially excluded people. They contribute footfall to town centres, generate activity and add £7 of social value for every £1 local authorities £1 spend on them. The County Council's plan to close 44 libraries and reduced hours and staffing at the remainder, would deprive a third of current users of libraries of their local libraries. There was a definite need for libraries. Many people throughout England had low literacy and numeracy skills, which led to low pay, poverty and ill health. Essex County Council had a legal obligation to provide this service. It made such a profound improvement to people's lives, councillors should be fighting to keep libraries open.

Trina Mawer said she had set up a library, and to do so was very difficult. It was important for towns to have proper libraries. A library without a librarian was not a library, but a room of books, and could not be run by volunteers. The Leader of the Council had kindly offered for UDC to pay the rent on Thaxted Library, but this was not what was needed. Thaxted deserved a library, with a librarian. The Ambition for Public Libraries document published by the government said skilled staff were vital for the service. Much was wrong with Essex's proposed scheme for libraries, which aimed for 7 outcomes, but you needed libraries to get these outcomes.