

**CABINET held at FOAKES HALL, GREAT DUNMOW, on TUESDAY, 26
NOVEMBER 2019 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor J Lodge (Chair)
Councillors H Asker, J Evans, N Hargreaves, P Lees and
L Pepper

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), A Bochel (Democratic Services
Officer), A Knight (Assistant Director - Resources), R Millership
(Assistant Director - Housing, Health and Communities), S Pugh
(Assistant Director - Governance and Legal), A Webb (Director -
Finance and Corporate Services) and N Wittman (Assistant
Director - ICT and Facilities)

Also present: Councillors S Barker (Leader of the Conservative Group), C Day
(Cabinet Deputy for Community Safety – Police and Emergency
Services), A Dean (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group), N
Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee), B Light (Representing
the Green Party Group) and R Pavitt (Leader of the Uttlesford
Independent Group)
Councillors M Caton, P Fairhurst and A Gerard

CAB45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Armstrong and Eke and the Director –
Public Services.

CAB46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September were approved and signed as
a correct record, subject to Councillors Gregory and Sell being listed as present.

**CAB46 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE
COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)**

In response to a question from Councillor Light, the Leader said he would get
back to her about whether the strategy board for the Corporate Plan had been
convened.

In response to a question from Councillor Caton, the Portfolio Holder for Finance
and the Budget said a deliberate decision had been made not to carry out a
detailed consultation regarding the Council's priorities in Uttlesford Life this year.

In response to a question from Councillor Caton, the Leader of the Council said
the Council was planning to honour its commitment to providing a community
information service in Stansted Mountfitchet, and it was in the budget for the
upcoming year.

CAB47 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee said a notice of general exception had been published relating to a potential investment opportunity.

The last Scrutiny Committee meeting had been very fruitful, and the Committee continued to make good progress. Ongoing work included task and finish groups examining airport-related parking, planning obligations and conditions and major planning applications. The Committee had also examined the draft forward plan and had concluded the plan needed much further work.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee noted that the Committee was there to make a positive effect on the way the Council functioned and its proceedings should not be seen as a “Punch and Judy” opportunity.

CAB48 BUDGET OUTTURN 2019/20 - QTR. 2 FORECAST

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and the Budget gave a summary of the report which detailed financial performance relating to the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Treasury Management. It was based upon actual expenditure and income from April to September and predicted a forecast for the end of the 2019/20 financial year.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker, the Portfolio Holder – Finance and the Budget said that the rush of planning appeals would not keep continuing and that there would be more investments to fill the gap that was being created in the Council’s finances by the discontinuation of government funding.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said an overspend in the capital programme was caused by the work on the application for a new depot at Dunmow and the work on installing superfast broadband throughout Uttlesford. The Leader of the Council said these were projects that needed to be done and the Council was ready to do them,

RESOLVED to approve the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital programme outturn forecast position and the updated use of reserves.

CAB49 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and the Budget gave a summary of the report which gave members an update on the current Treasury Activities and other factors that may influence or affect the financial market.

The Leader of the Council said that the Council would be looking to make better use of reserves and income capabilities.

CAB50 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2020/21 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and the Budget gave a summary of the report which noted there was a requirement to annually review the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme and then to consult upon it before a decision is taken at Full Council in December on the final scheme. The consultation responses report was included in the report.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee noted that while the report had never come to the Scrutiny Committee, he had been given a briefing on it and had concluded since there was no substantial change then there was no need for the committee to examine it.

The Director – Finance and Corporate Services said the recommendation to Cabinet should read 'the Cabinet is recommended to approve the following proposals to inform the Local Council Tax Scheme for 2020/21' removing the words 'draft' and 'consultation'.

In response to Member questions, the Portfolio Holder – Finance and the Budget said that in previous years, consultants had been paid to carry out and analyse the results of the consultation, and that these results had not been useful for setting priorities. Around 7000 people had actively clicked on the link to the consultation, 2500 people had received the email notifying them of the consultation and the consultation had also been advertised in local newspapers. It was worth noting that those people who had been sampled by phone constituted a biased sample.

RESOLVED to approve the following proposals to inform the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21:

- i) The 2020/21 LCTS scheme is set on the same basis as the 2019/20 scheme and therefore the contribution rate is frozen for the fifth consecutive year.
- ii) The Council continues to protect Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and Carer's on a low income.

CAB51 FELSTED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Local Plan gave a summary of the report which noted that the examiner's report into the examination of the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan had been received. The Examiner had recommended proceeding to referendum if recommended modifications are made to the Plan.

RESOLVED

- i) to accept the Independent Examiner's recommended changes to the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan in full as set out in the Schedule at Appendix 2 and notes the recommendation that the amended Felsted Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a Referendum of voters within the Parish of Felsted to establish whether the plan should form part of the Development Plan for Uttlesford District Council.
- ii) approve the holding of a referendum relating to the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan on 30 January 2020 that will include all the registered electors in Felsted Parish.

Councillor Barker left the meeting.

CAB52 NORTH ESSEX ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Leader of the Council gave a summary of the report, which examined the North Essex Economic Strategy 2040 which had been developed through a partnership of Braintree District, Colchester Borough, Essex County, Tendring District and Uttlesford District Councils.

Councillor Pavitt said the strategy was very Colchester-centric, and that much of Uttlesford District's future was keyed to Cambridgeshire. It was important to talk more with South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils.

The Chief Executive said Uttlesford District Council needed a strong voice in the Local Enterprise Partnership Structure in order to gain funding. The councils of North Essex were seeking to work on their strengths together because it would not be advantageous to be a loan voice in the partnership structure.

RESOLVED to:

- i) approve the North Essex Economic Strategy (see Appendix);
- ii) note that strategy's priorities will contribute to the Essex Prosperity Prospectus and the SELEP Local Industrial Strategy;
- iii) note the partnership structures which are in place to facilitate the strategy;
- iv) note that an Action Plan will developed to guide delivery of key actions;
- v) and note that a process for reporting progress will be established by the partners.

CAB53 CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PLAN 2019/20 QUARTER 2 PROGRESS UPDATE

The Leader of the Council gave a summary of the report, which set out progress against the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan between July and September (Q2); although it provided more recent update where progress since the end of September had been significant.

Councillor Dean declared a non-pecuniary personal interest as his wife was the Chair of the Stansted Day Centre Management Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services said she would look into the lack of response from the District Council to the Stansted Day Centre.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Leader of the Council said the Council was committed to the continuation and enhancement of the day centre service.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Portfolio Holder for Housing; Communities, Youth and Health confirmed she intended to look into borrowing money and being innovative with it.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Chief Executive said that bids had been submitted to the North Essex Parking Partnership for funding for improvements to car parks in Stansted Mountfitchet and would be discussed by their board in December 2019, as opposed to December 2020 as stated on page 11 of the agenda pack.

The Leader confirmed that portfolio holders' priorities had been finalised and supplied to officers.

CAB54 REPORT FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REGARDING AECOM ENGAGEMENT

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee gave a summary of the report, which discussed a matter that Cabinet had referred to the Committee relating to the engagement of AECOM to review the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal. The matter had since been discussed at Scrutiny Committee on 24 September 2019 and it had been agreed that a note prepared by the Chair of Scrutiny should be taken back to Cabinet.

The timeline included in the report showed officers had worked diligently and effectively, and there was nothing to be found in supporting documents. However there had been a failure to inform the public of the challenges to the Sustainability Appraisal. This was an uncharacteristic oversight by an officer. At some stage, relevant committees had been misled about the timing of certain events, and it was to be assumed that this was inadvertent. The Sustainability Appraisal was at the heart of the local plan process, and this could cause concern to some residents. Misleading statements were unhelpful to the overall status of the Council. The original complainant was happy that the matter had been dealt with robustly.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Chair of Scrutiny for the detailed investigation and report.

CAB55 MUSEUM COLLECTIONS CARE AND ACCESS POLICIES

Councillor Evans gave a summary of the report which noted that Saffron Walden Museum was to undergo its next Accreditation review in January to July 2020. In

preparation for this, the Museum's key policy documents and forward plan had to be reviewed and formally approved.

RESOLVED to approve the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Access Policy.

CAB56 PROPOSED CHANGES TO CABINET COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Members noted that Councillor Fairhurst had since resigned from the Investment Board, and so the membership as listed in the report would need amending.

RESOLVED to approve the changes to the membership of the Assets of Community Value and Local Heritage List Committee, the Investment Board, the Planning Policy Working Group and the representatives on various outside bodies as set out in the report, with the amendment that Councillor Fairhurst is no longer a member of the Investment Board.

CAB57 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CAB58 REVIEW OF THE HOUSING REPAIRS AND FACILITIES SERVICES

The Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services gave a summary of the report which set out a proposal to enter into a joint venture arrangement with Norse Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of Norfolk County Council, for the provision of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) planned and responsive repairs, along with stewarding and cleaning services. The aim of the proposal was to provide a more sustainable model for the affected services and strive for the delivery of even higher quality for our tenants. The partnership would also support the local economy and help to protect and create local jobs.

In response to a Member question asking for feedback from the affected officers, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said the matter had been developed for quite some time and three months of due diligence had been done. The Chief Executive said meetings had been held with the affected staff and a formal consultation would take place. She said this was a mechanism which was advantageous to staff.

Councillor Dean said he was critical of how this had been handled, as it was a substantial piece of work that the rest of the Council did not know about and which had not been passed through the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chief Executive said officers had had to work at great speed to ensure there was no loss in service, and therefore there had been no time to send the report to Scrutiny Committee. The Committee could however observe how the partnership performed.

The Portfolio Holder – Council and Public Services said the Tenants' Forum and Housing Board had given their support in the matter.

In response to a question from the Chair of Scrutiny Committee asking whether the Committee might be able to oversee the process, the Leader said this was acceptable.

RESOLVED to

- i. Authorise the establishment of a joint venture partnership with Norse Group in accordance with the proposal appended to this report;
- ii. Agree to the formation of Uttlesford Norse Ltd (UNL) to provide cleaning, stewarding and HRA property services currently provided by inhouse teams and other commercial services;
- iii. Appoint Councillor Evans as a lead member to be consulted by officers on the development of the joint venture proposals, including the creation of the legal framework;
- iv. Authorise the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader and nominated member as set out in iii) above to settle the final form of the joint venture, including the transfer of services, subject to approval by the Council of the budget implications, and to take all such steps as he considers to be necessary, incidental or conducive to the implementation of the joint venture proposal.
- v. Invite the Chair of Scrutiny to nominate two members of the Scrutiny Committee to oversee the process.

The meeting ended at 21.15.