

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Lodge (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, D Eke, J Evans, N Hargreaves, P Lees and L Pepper

Officers in attendance: B Ferguson (Acting Principal Democratic Services Officer), S Pugh (Assistant Director – Governance and Legal Services), A Knight (Assistant Director – Resources), A Webb (Director – Finance and Corporate Services) and N Wittman (Assistant Director – ICT and Facilities).

Also present: Councillors C Day and M Sutton (Cabinet Deputies);
Councillor N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee).

CAB79 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from the Chief Executive and Councillors Asker, Barker, Dean and Pavitt.

CAN80 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

CAB81 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Day said consideration should be given to holding a stand alone Council meeting dedicated to the Budget. He said the agenda for the meeting held in February was too long and there was too much political point scoring on show.

The Leader said this would be looked at for next year.

In response to a Member question relating to the number of homes that have been granted planning permission in the past decade but have yet to be built, the Leader said the appropriate officer would be asked to produce a report to be shared with Members.

CAB82 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory updated Cabinet on the current work of the Scrutiny Committee. He said he was looking into the matter of school transport in the District, due to a number of incidents which dropped well below expected standards.

Councillor Day said he had been looking at this subject for some time and he would welcome assistance and support in dealing with Essex County Council in relation to school transport.

The Leader said he would meet with Councillors Day, Eke and Sutton to discuss the various school transport issues that they had encountered and the Scrutiny Committee would be kept up to date on their progress.

CAB83 OUTSIDE BODIES' APPOINTMENT

The Cabinet was asked to consider nominating a trustee for Stansted Airport Community Trust.

The Assistant Director – Governance and Legal Services said he had been sent information on the Stansted Airport Community Trust which he could circulate to Members. The information indicated that the Trust had no reason to meet in future as contributions from Manchester Air Group (MAG) had come to an end and there was no significant funding left to allocate.

The Leader proposed the nomination of Cllr LeCount and requested an investigation to ascertain the legal position as to whether contributions from MAG should continue.

Councillor Gregory said he welcomed Councillor LeCount's involvement in the Trust as it provided an opportunity to ensure the organisation was being run properly.

RESOLVED to nominate Councillor LeCount as a trustee of the Stansted Airport Community Trust.

CAB84 ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Councillor Pepper presented the revised Terms of Reference for the Energy and Climate Change Working Group (ECCWG). These had been revised to reflect the Green Party Group's formation and the Youth Council's request to participate in meetings of the ECCWG.

In response to Member questions, Councillor Pepper said the Youth Councillors would be nominated to sit on the working group by the Youth Council itself. She added that the community as a whole would be engaged on the matter of climate change by way of a conference and the ECCWG's strategy would be presented in draft form in the coming month.

RESOLVED to adopt the revised Terms of Reference as appended to the report.

CAB85 BUDGET OUTTURN FORECAST - QUARTER 3

Councillor Hargreaves summarised the report outlining the Budget Outturn Forecast for Quarter 3.

In response to a Member question relating to Superfast Broadband project, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said the £500,000 match funding had been rolled into the General Reserve as performance targets had not been met and the grant had been withheld.

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

CAB86 EXEMPTION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED to exclude the public and press due to consideration of a report containing exempt information within the meaning of section 100I and paragraph 3 part 1 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

CAB87 INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES 3 AND 4

The Leader said the investment opportunities before Members had been considered by the Investment Board and had been recommended for approval. He asked the Director – Finance and Corporate Services to present the report.

The Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlined the two investment opportunities and summarised the risks posed by the proposed acquisitions.

Members discussed the issues of parking, access and succession planning in regard to Investment Opportunity 3.

In response to a Member question, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said these would be direct investments of the Council and not purchased through Aspire, the commercial arm of the Council. He added that this approach was supported by legal advice.

The Leader said the potential risks had been debated at length during the meeting of the Investment Board and he was more than comfortable with the proposal, particularly as the opportunities before Cabinet would significantly diversify the Council's investment portfolio if accepted. He said the additional income generated by these investments would be used to maintain council services and fund the green agenda.

RESOLVED to endorse the conclusions of the Investment Board and that:

- a. The property purchases as set out are agreed:
 - i. Investment Opportunity 3, up to the sum of £21,500,000
 - ii. Investment Opportunity 4, up to the sum of £7,000,000
- b. The funding ratio is on an 80% interest only and 20% repayment basis.
- c. The purchase costs are capitalised.
- d. The purchases are made as a direct investment by Uttlesford District Council.
- e. To authorise the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget to conclude the acquisition; subject to recommendation f.
- f. To request Council to endorse the purchases and to authorise the necessary borrowing.
- g. The income generated in 2020/21 is allocated to funding the actions, including climate change, contained in the 2020/21 Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.

The meeting ended at 5.15pm.