

CABINET held at ZOOM - [HTTPS://ZOOM.US/](https://zoom.us/), on WEDNESDAY, 27 MAY 2020 at 7.00 pm

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

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

Also present: Councillors A Dean (Liberal Democrat Party Group Leader), N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee), B Light (Green Party Group Leader) and R Pavitt (Uttlesford Independent Party Group Leader)

CAB1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence nor any declarations of interest.

CAB2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

CAB3 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory provided a summary of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 May. He said he had been impressed by the Leader and the Chief Executive in regards to the council's response to the Covid-19 public health emergency and congratulated officers and the Chief Executive for ensuring key services had continued.

Another discussion point that had arisen from the meeting was the Scrutiny Committee's disappointment with the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan. He said the document would lead to systemic uncertainty due to the lack of specifics covered in the Plan. For instance, the Committee wanted to know what elements of the Plan would be discontinued in the context of the Covid-19 recovery. He said the Committee were not satisfied with the phrase "if resources permit" and wanted to see far more prioritisation in terms of what could feasibly continue. He said he appreciated that these were unprecedented and challenging times but further work was needed to clearly demonstrate how the Corporate Plan would be implemented.

Councillor Gregory said the final point from the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting was in relation to the Local Plan process. He said there had been a lack of identifiable progress in the four weeks since the Extraordinary Council Meeting when the decision had been taken to withdraw the previous emerging Local Plan. The Committee had expected to see clear outline proposals for the next Local Plan and suggestions regarding the governance arrangements at this stage in the process.

The Leader said that the current crisis was unprecedented and work on the Local Plan was dictated by necessity; the past four weeks had not been business as usual at the council. He said he disagreed with the alarm shown by the Scrutiny Committee as it had taken fourteen years to develop previous Uttlesford Local Plans and they had failed; he was determined to get this Plan right and that would involve dedicating time to the planning stage of the process. He said the Local Government Association had been putting together Terms of Reference and a first draft was expected imminently, which Members could expect sight of in a couple of weeks. He said the Administration would not be rushed and they would take the time required to get the Local Plan right.

CAB4 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

Cabinet noted the delegated decisions taken by the Executive since the previous meeting.

CAB5 CABINET MEMBERSHIP

The Leader welcomed Councillor Freeman as the Portfolio Holder for Public and Council Services and Councillor Day as the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety and the Police and Fire Service Liaison.

The Leader thanked Councillor Asker for her service in Cabinet during the previous year.

Councillor Dean said it was important that Cabinet Members remained accountable and noted the absence of written reports at Full Council meetings.

CAB6 APPROPRIATION OF LAND WEST OF WOODSIDE WAY GREAT DUNMOW - WITHDRAWN

Item 9 had been withdrawn to allow further advice to be sought from legal counsel.

CAB7 CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE – QUARTER 4 2019/20

The Leader introduced the report to the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan update.

In response to a Member question, the Leader said Councillor Freeman, as the relevant Portfolio Holder, would look into the operating arrangements of Stansted Day Care Centre, particularly whether the building was owned by the parish council.

CAB8 CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PLAN FOR 2020/21

The Leader introduced the report on the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan for 2020/21. He said much work had gone into producing a plan that was comprehensive in scope, although he acknowledged that due to the unprecedented public health emergency the Plan could not be implemented in full.

In response to a Member comment regarding the delivery of sustainable settlements and locally led development corporations, the Leader said it was fair to say that this was an aspiration and would be subject to decisions taken during the new Local Plan process.

In response to a Member comment relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) policy and the risk that the Council would be left behind in terms of implementation, the Leader said he was in favour of CIL but a decision had not yet been made.

In response to a Member question pertaining to the delivery of affordable homes in the District, and the lack of measurable outcomes contained in the Delivery Plan, Councillor Lees said these were unprecedented times and it was not in the public interest to state an arbitrary number when there was so much economic uncertainty. Clarity was particularly needed in regard to the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. She said the Administration would remain ambitious in its aspiration to build affordable homes.

In response to a Member question relating to the maintenance of council homes, the Director – Public Services said the Capital Programme did include work to maintain properties and the programme would be pursued once resources became available.

In response to a Member comment regarding the need for smarter targets, milestones and measurable outcomes, the Leader said as the financial picture became clearer, further work would be carried out on the Delivery Plan.

Councillor Gregory said whilst he agreed that there was no point in publicising arbitrary targets for the sake of it, it would be helpful to state what areas of the Corporate Plan would be delivered in the current context, and in what areas the council would struggle to meet targets.

Councillor Hargreaves said the first objective of the Administration would be to meet basic services and bills; the current situation was unprecedented and it was near impossible to forecast how things would be following the recovery. Central Government policy would have a significant impact on how the council

moved forward and it was not clear what the rules would be in areas such as borrowing.

Councillor Pepper said the world currently faced two crises in the form of climate change and Covid-19. She said she would strongly push the climate change agenda forward and it was imperative that the council continued to act.

Councillor Day said these were unprecedented times and the council had to be extremely prudent when it came down to public money; he said an individual would not spend more than they could afford and the same principle should be applied to public resources.

Councillor Eke said the role of a Portfolio Holder would be more about lobbying and driving certain projects forward through influence, rather than spending money to achieve their aims.

Councillor Dean asked why the commitment to a net zero carbon emissions was not mentioned in the Plan although it had been approved by Council.

Councillor Pepper said the Administration were committed to that target as a climate change emergency had been declared. She said all Council activity had to adhere to that target.

Councillors Evans and Freeman praised the Delivery Plan for its inclusion of planning policies, and for bringing such policies in line with council resolutions. This would give such policies “teeth” when dealing with applicants during the planning process. Particular reference was made to a sustainable build policy.

Councillor Lees asked for a minor change to the terminology in regard to social and affordable housing. Cabinet signalled their consent to the amendment.

RESOLVED to approve the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan 2020/21.

CAB9 APPOINTMENTS TO CABINET COMMITTEES

The Leader proposed taking the remaining items on the agenda as one; these were appointments to joint committees, appointments to committees and working groups of Cabinet, working group terms of reference and outside bodies’ appointments.

Councillor Hargreaves made reference to the Voluntary Support Grants Committee and said a significant amount of funding had been allocated to a number of good causes in the District. He said £611,000 would be distributed as grants to various voluntary organisations.

In response to a Member question, the Leader said membership to the Planning Policy Working Group and the Garden Communities’ Member Boards would be ratified at this meeting as they may continue in some form in the future.

Councillor Freeman said he would be happy to fill any vacancies on working groups.

The Leader proposed approval of Items 13 to 17 as stated in the reports, subject to striking out from 'it is acknowledged...' onwards from the last sentence of the Investment Board's terms of reference.

RESOLVED to appoint the membership of Cabinet committees for the upcoming year as set out in the report.

CAB10 CABINET WORKING GROUPS - TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED to approve the terms of reference for Cabinet working groups as set out in the report, with the following amendment to the terms of reference for the Investment Board:

Status section to read: This is a working group of the Cabinet. It may make recommendations but is not a decision-making body. The Investment Board will be constituted by members with a knowledge of commercial investment, supplemented with external training as necessary, and supported by industry expert independent people.

CAB11 CABINET WORKING GROUPS - APPOINTMENTS

RESOLVED to appoint the membership of the Cabinet Working Groups as set out in the report.

CAB12 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED to appoint the Council's representatives on the outside bodies as set out in the report.

CAB13 APPOINTMENTS TO NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP

RESOLVED to appoint as the Council's representative to the North Essex Parking Partnership Councillor Deryk Eke, and Councillor Alexander Armstrong as substitute member.

CAB14 APPOINTMENTS TO WEST ESSEX WELLBEING JOINT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED to appoint as members of the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee Councillors Petrina Lees and Mike Tayler.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm.