

**CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2022 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)  
Councillors M Sutton, A Armstrong, J Evans, R Freeman,  
N Hargreaves, L Pepper and N Reeve

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), T Coleman (Interim Director of Planning) B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), A Knight (Assistant Director - Resources), J Reynolds (Assistant Director - Legal and Governance), J Walsh (Planning Transformation Lead) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

**CAB82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

**CAB83 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

**CAB84 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)**

No questions were raised by non-executive members.

**CAB85 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)**

Councillor Gregory provided a report on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee. He updated Cabinet on the work of the Stansted Airport Task and Finish Group and said an interim report was forthcoming. He hoped the investigation would conclude by the end of April. He said he had received a number of communications on the Council's planning department being placed in special designation asking whether the Scrutiny Committee had been "asleep" to the issue; he said prior assurances had been sought but the Committee should have requested statistics, not just assurances. In regards to the ongoing Planning Review, he thanked the Interim Director of Planning and the Planning Transformation Lead for the improvements they had already made to the planning process. A further review would be considered in July.

The Scrutiny Committee had also considered the budget and the finance team, led by the Director - Finance and Corporate Services and the Assistant Director – Resources, were praised for their outstanding work. He did ask Cabinet to note

the 4.9% rise to council tenancies and said this was a non-trivial increase and the Council needed to ensure that best value was being achieved for Uttlesford's tenants.

**CAB86 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)**

Cabinet noted the Executive decisions regarding the Designation of Broxton and Cherry Green Neighbourhood Plan Area and the Designation of Flitch Green Neighbourhood Plan Area.

**CAB87 REPORT ON ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE DETERMINED BY THE ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE AND LOCAL HERITAGE LIST COMMITTEE (STANDING ITEM)**

Cabinet noted the decision to list the Stag, Little Easton, on the Council's Register of Assets of Community Value.

**CAB88 PLANNING REVIEW PROGRESS REPORT**

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the progress of the Planning Review, which provided an update on the implementation of recommendations contained in the PEER Review report from the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA). He noted the progress made on the 85 separate actions listed in the appendices and said the intention was to complete the review by the end of March, when a further progress report would be provided.

The report was noted.

**CAB89 CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PLAN 2021/22 Q3 PROGRESS UPDATE**

Councillor Reeve spoke to the CPDP 2021/22 Quarter 3 report. He thanked the officers for their thorough work in quantifying the progress on each item.

In response to a question from Councillor Freeman, the Leader said she and the Housing team were aware of the issues relating to Norse and were working to improve contracted services.

The report was noted.

**CAB90 CORPORATE PLAN 2022-2026**

Councillor Reeve presented the Corporate Plan for 2022-26 to Cabinet. He highlighted the fact that the Plan remained largely unaltered since its conception for the purpose of consistency. He said there was one exception; a vision slide

had been produced and placed at the beginning of the document to set out the overall ambitions of the Council. He proposed that the Corporate Plan be recommended for approval to Council.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Plan for 2022-2026 is recommended to Council for adoption.

*The Leader adjourned the meeting at 7.30pm. The meeting would be reconvened on 14 February at 3.00pm to consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals 2022/23.*

## CAB91 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23**

*The meeting was reconvened at 3.00pm on Monday, 14 February. Councillor Hargreaves gave his apologies as he could not attend the Council Chamber in-person but he did participate remotely.*

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget Proposals 2022/23 via Zoom. He highlighted a number of changes from the papers considered by Scrutiny, including an additional risk relating to the possibility of a Government set borrowing cap and the publication of an Equalities and Health Impact Assessment (EQHIA) regarding the increase in council rents. He said the recent announcement regarding the Council's planning department being placed in special designation could result in the loss of major planning applications and therefore a reduction in revenue. This had led to a deficit of £214,000 which would be taken from MTFS reserves in order to balance the budget.

He highlighted the following areas in the report and appendices:

- Council Tax would be increased – for Band D tax payers, this would result in an increase of £5.00 per year.
- The 5 year MTFS forecast showed a deficit position from 2023-24. He said the Government had not announced what the outcome would be of the Government's Fair Funding Review for Local Authorities, which put the Council in a difficult medium term position.
- There had not been a high response rate to the Budget Consultation, which followed the trend of previous years. Positive feedback had been received on corporate priorities and the emphasis on achieving best value for residents.
- Housing Revenue Account – there would be an increase to council rents of 4.9%, in line with Government guidance. This was less than the rate of inflation, and the proposal had been endorsed by the Tenants Forum and Housing Board. For those residents in financial difficulty, he highlighted the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the availability of a hardship fund.

In response to a question from Councillor Freeman regarding the Day Centres budget, Councillor Hargreaves said £95,000 per year had been retained in the MTFS.

In response to a question from Councillor Armstrong, Councillor Hargreaves confirmed that a robust estimate of Local Plan costs were fully funded. If additional costs arose, they would need to be factored in.

Councillor Reeve said the Commercial Strategy had been endorsed by the Investment Board although there had been one abstention. He asked how had the estimated reduction in income from major planning applications been calculated.

In response, the Director - Finance and Corporate Services said it had been estimated that 50% of applications would still be determined by Uttlesford but this would need to be closely monitored as the year progressed. The shortfall in income would be drawn down from MTFS reserves.

In response to a question relating to the Council's ability to reduce Council Tax, Councillor Hargreaves said this would have resulted in a further deficit and it was the Administration's intention to reduce the said deficit. He said there was little choice if the Council wished to continue to fund services.

Councillor Pepper said grants for energy efficient home works would be advertised to residents to shortly.

The Leader and Councillor Hargreaves thanked the Assistant Director – Resources and her team for producing the budget reports.

The Leader proposed approval of the recommendation setout in the report; this was duly seconded by Councillor Armstrong.

RESOLVED to recommend the budget strategies and reports for 2022/23 as set out in Appendices A to H of this report and the associated Annexes for approval by Council.

*The meeting was closed at 3.45pm.*