

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on MONDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

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

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), A Knight (Assistant Director - Resources) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

Also present: N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee).

CAB53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB54 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October were approved as a true and correct record.

CAB55 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions from non-executive members.

CAB56 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory said he had no matters to report but would speak directly on items at the appropriate point in the meeting.

CAB57 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

Cabinet noted the decision regarding the Appointment to an Outside Body: Uttlesford Youth Strategy Group - 29 October 2021.

CAB58 REPORT ON ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE DETERMINED BY THE ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE AND LOCAL HERITAGE LIST COMMITTEE (STANDING ITEM)

There were no decisions to report.

CAB59 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2022/23

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report, which stated that there was a requirement to annually review the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme and propose changes to the scheme for the following financial year. A consultation has been carried out during the summer on the scheme proposals to retain the contribution rate at 12.5%, which had been in place since 2014/15, and to continue to protect Vulnerable and Disabled residents and Carer's on a low income. He said it had been encouraging to read consultation responses thanking the council for the Scheme. He also highlighted the Exceptional Hardship Fund, which was available to support residents and claimants who were suffering financial hardship. This Fund could be applied for by those who did not meet the criteria for the LCTS Scheme but were still in need of financial support. He proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Gregory said it was an excellent paper but he was disappointed that, in such exceptional circumstances, more was not being done to support residents. He said means tested support mechanisms, such as the Exceptional Hardship Fund, conventionally attracted fewer applicants and he was disappointed that more radical measures had not been implemented.

Councillor Hargreaves said the exceptional Hardship fund was a flexible support mechanism that supplemented the LCTS Scheme, and that it was useful to have an additional instrument to support residents in need. However, he noted the comments and said it could be looked at in future years.

Councillor Reeve seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED to recommend that Council approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 are set on the same basis as 2021/22:

- I. The contribution rate is frozen for the eight consecutive year at 12.5%.
- II. The Council continues to protect Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and Carer's on a low income.

CAB60 APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT DIRECTOR OF UTTLESFORD NORSE SERVICES LIMITED

The Leader presented the report, which outlined the position of Uttlesford District Council and its representation on the Board of Directors of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited. Due to the impending retirement of the Director of Public Services, a replacement was required. The Leader proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Day seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED to endorse the appointment of Angela Knight, Assistant Director Resources as a director of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited.

CAB61 PRUDENTIAL CODE CONSULTATION AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION AND POSSIBLE DEBT CAPS

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services presented the report regarding the Prudential Code consultation and proposed changes to Minimum Revenue Provision and possible debt caps. The report sets out details relating to a consultation launched by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and proposed a draft response for formal approval. The report also provided an update on potential changes to financial rules that were currently being considered by the Government, specifically relating to the ability of Local Authorities to make commercial investments.

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services for their work. He said he was confident in the excellent commercial investment portfolio the Council had acquired, and the strong financial position the Council found itself in.

Councillor Reeve endorsed these comments and added that the cross-party Investment Board had also supported this recommendation.

Councillor Day thanked the Leader for his expertise and background in the field of investments.

Councillor Gregory said it had taken courage to follow through the Investment Strategy and he commended the governance arrangements surrounding investments. He asked what would happen if an acquired investment required further funding before the financial rules had been updated.

In response, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services said the guidance related to no further commercial acquisitions, and short term borrowing would continue as necessary. He said the Council was in dialogue with CIPFA regarding this specific issue.

Councillor Reeve seconded the recommendation set out in the report.

RESOLVED to

- I. Agrees the response to the CIPFA consultation as set out in Appendix One; and
- II. Notes the position in respect of Minimum Revenue Provision and possible debt caps; and
- III. Confirms that there will be no additional investment portfolio acquisitions until the changes to financial rules, MRP and caps have been clarified.

The meeting was closed at 7.32pm.