

**CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2022 at 7.00 pm**

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

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

Also in attendance: Councillors M Caton (Liberal Democrat and Green Alliance Group Leader), N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) and G Smith (Conservative Party Group Leader).

**CAB1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong and Reeve.

Councillor Pavitt gave his apologies as a guest of Cabinet (Leader of the Uttlesford Independents).

**CAB2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting on 29 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

**CAB3 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)**

Councillor Smith asked whether the Leader anticipated remaining within the four week extension to the Local Plan.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that this was still under review and that she would update Members when she knew more.

**CAB4 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)**

Councillor Gregory provided a report on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee.

He informed Cabinet that the Scrutiny Committee had met twice since the previous Cabinet meeting. The Local Plan Scrutiny Meeting had reminded the Executive of the need to follow the agreed process in terms of the monitoring

and oversight of the Local Plan process as agreed by Full Council and this Cabinet in 2020.

They had noted that many aspects of the process were on time and that appropriate reports were being submitted to Local Plan Leadership Group.

They were subsequently informed of the second delay to the process and there was a lengthy discussion two weeks ago at the most recent Scrutiny Meeting attended by the Leader of the Council, who answered seventeen questions.

That discussion had identified a sharp distinction between negative delays to the Local Plan where things had gone wrong or not been properly anticipated, and positive delays where material changes in circumstances required consideration for the benefit of residents, the District and the Council. The Committee were mindful of that approach and would be keeping it under review.

He said that they would like more attention to the details of process and the formal reporting mechanisms but understood and sympathised with the reasons for the delays which appear to be sound and well based.

He thanked the Executive for their openness and clarity for the way the delays had been addressed and requested that Scrutiny Committee were kept updated regarding any future changes at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Gregory said that the Climate Change Action Plan was also discussed at the most recent Scrutiny meeting. The presentation had demonstrated that significant progress had been made with the Action Plan and this had been welcomed.

He noted that Members had hoped for further detail on specific expenditure both internal and in terms of grants received by the Council. They had asked for further clarity in identifying actions that have been achieved which were the responsibility of this administration and those that had been in process for a considerable period of time. He went on to detail examples of good and on occasion best practice demonstrated by South Cambridgeshire District Council in the implementation of their Action Plan. This had been referred to relevant Officers and the Portfolio Holder. He suggested that a series of meetings should be established with the Council.

Councillor Caton echoed Councillor Gregory's comments and noted his concern that consultations on some of the evidence base being reviewed, such as the car parking review that offer a short consultation period, would be restrictive for Parish Councils to return comments. He also noted his disappointment that at the last Energy and Climate Change Working Group (ECCWG) meeting the carbon footprint report was only circulated after the meeting had taken place. He noted that this substantive document should have been interrogated by the ECCWG and they had not had the opportunity to do so.

The Leader of the Council noted the general predisposition of individuals to respond to consultations in the last week of the consultation, irrespective of the period of consultation, although she noted Councillor Caton's comments.

The Leader said that this was the first time Uttlesford had established a portfolio concentrating on green issues. She noted that there were currently no designated staff in place, although they were being sought, and she agreed to continue to strive for improvements.

Councillor Pepper confirmed that she had submitted a further detailed report in the last few days which answered all the queries raised at Scrutiny.

Councillor Gregory said that all the queries raised at Scrutiny had not been addressed.

Councillor Pepper confirmed that she had provided:

- A detailed breakdown of expenditure
- An update regarding on street LED lighting, which is the responsibility of Essex County Council and was the last phase scheduled for upgrade in 2024
- The Green House Gas report was delayed while it was completed by Officers

Councillor Caton said that street lighting was not only a County Council responsibility, with Stansted Parish Council being responsible for 80% of their street lighting. He said that there was a need to be more flexible with the approach towards their involvement with LED lighting as there was substantial carbon emission tonnage available to the Council. He confirmed that 20 of the 290 street lights in Stansted had been upgraded and a further 20 were considered prohibitively complex as they were vintage style lighting.

Councillor Hargreaves drew Members attention to the recent press release which detailed the significant achievement of this Council in reducing CO2 emissions by more than 50%.

Councillor Gregory confirmed that Scrutiny Committee fully appreciated how difficult a portfolio Climate Change is and how hard it is to get and retain staff. He said that Councillor Pepper's latest report circulated to Members was an excellent campaigning document but still lacked specific detail as repeatedly requested by the Scrutiny Committee. He raised concern about the publicised remarks made relating to the reduction in carbon emissions. He said that the report detailed offsetting within the purchase of utilities and that there was a lack of evidence to support the execution of due diligence. He said that this came at considerable extra cost and that press releases should not be confused with the factual basis of reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny.

Councillor Hargreaves explained that the cost of the green tariff would in the future be part of the general running costs of the Council. He confirmed that it probably would cost more to be greener, but that this was a necessary increase.

Councillor Pepper acknowledged that offsetting was not the best solution but was better than paying for fossil fuels; equally, it was better to pay for a green tariff rather than a black tariff.

**CAB5 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)**

Cabinet noted the following Executive Decisions taken by the Leader:

- Additional S106 funding for the Foresthall Play Ground Improvement Project
- Freezing the Section 44a Relief
- Energy Rebate Scheme
- Carver Barracks Running Track – Longstop Extension.

**CAB6 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.

**CAB7 SECTION 106 AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDS**

Councillor Coote presented the report on the Section 106 Housing Funds.

Councillor Freeman said that the challenge was the lack of Council owned land that houses could be built on. He recommended the purchase of land through compulsory purchase where necessary and recommended that Members sought out sites as they travel round the district.

Councillor Evans confirmed that a report on Essex County Council owned land is anticipated and may identify suitable land for development.

Councillor Caton noted that the call for sites had identified sites that the County Council had put forward, alongside some redundant depot land which could be considered for internal land transfer.

Councillor Lees that there were three parties interested in the land in question and that these would be democratically considered and voted upon.

Councillor Coote agreed with Councillor Freeman and confirmed that a white paper would be coming forward imminently about the compulsory purchase of land. He confirmed that it would be helpful if Members could identify sites of any size with potential.

Councillor Coote proposed approval of the report. This was seconded by Councillor Hargreaves.

**RESOLVED:** That the Section 106 Affordable Housing contributions are utilised within the HRA development programme.

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report on the Local Council Tax Support Proposal Scheme 2023-24.

Councillor Gregory commended the administration for providing the most generous tax support scheme in Essex and one of the most generous in the country. He asked whether Councillor Khan's amendment to the scheme for 2022-23 could be extended for 2023-24 in response to the cost of living crisis. He acknowledged that the overall financial situation must be considered but noted that the amendment was welcomed by the administration and had met with universal assent from Members.

Councillor Hargreaves said that this could be considered, but noted that additional proposals relating to one aspect of this support scheme would come forward to the July Full Council meeting.

Councillor Caton asked whether the Chancellor had provided additional funds for residents in greatest need.

The Assistant Director of Resources confirmed that the Chancellor had recently given additional funding to County Councils which was being cascaded down. She confirmed that £325,304 was received from the government to provide additional emergency support during the pandemic for claimants of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS). Of that £19,870 remained and was eligible to be carried forward into the Funding for Exceptional Hardship Scheme with a budget of £17,000. She noted that the scheme was heavily promoted in 2021 but there had not been as much claim on the fund as was anticipated. She said that this small fund did not have the capability to provide much support to the 1800 LCTS claimants alongside any other resident that found themselves in exceptional hardship.

Councillor Coote said that he didn't disagree with Councillor Gregory, but noted that as a small Council with relatively few funds he believed that political parties should be pushed to help residents with these particular issues. He said that the party in power have the ability to really help and that the proposed tax support scheme was the best that could be achieved by this Council.

Councillor Evans asked whether the statistics were sufficiently detailed to enable Officers to compare the percentage of claimants in Saffron Walden with more rural claimants to identify where additional support would be best targeted. The Assistant Director of Resources confirmed that the data could be supplied broken down by town and parish.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the scheme. This was seconded by Councillor Coote.

**RESOLVED:** To approve that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24 is consulted on the same basis as 2022/23:

- I. The contribution rate is frozen for the ninth consecutive year at 12.5%.

- II. The Council continues to protect vulnerable and disabled residents and carers on a low income.

**CAB9 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES OF CABINET 2022-23**

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the list of Appointments of Committees to Cabinet 2023-24. This was seconded by Councillor Pepper.

RESOLVED: To approve the appointments of Committees to Cabinet 2023-24.

**CAB10 CABINET WORKING GROUPS - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Cabinet considered Cabinet Working Groups' terms of reference.

Councillor Smith requested that a member of his party be added to the Community Services Review Working Group.

Members agreed to add a Member of the Conservative party to the Community Services Review Working Group. Councillor Smith confirmed that he would join the working group.

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the Cabinet Working Group Terms of Reference. This was seconded by Councillor Pepper.

RESOLVED: To approve the Cabinet Working Group Terms of Reference, subject to increasing the number of members to seven on the Community Services Review Working Group.

**CAB11 APPOINTMENTS TO CABINET WORKING GROUPS**

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the Appointments to Cabinet Working Groups. This was seconded by Councillor Freeman.

RESOLVED: To approve the appointments to Cabinet Working Groups, subject to Councillor Smith being appointed to the Community Services Review Working Group.

**CAB12 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Councillor Evans recommended that the representatives of the outside bodies were asked to provide an annual report.

Members agreed that this was appropriate.

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the Appointments to Outside Bodies. This was seconded by Councillor Freeman.

RESOLVED: To approve the Appointments to Outside Bodies

**CAB13 APPOINTMENTS TO THE NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP AND THE WEST ESSEX WELLBEING JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the Appointments to the North Essex Parking Partnership and the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Freeman.

RESOLVED: To approve the Appointments to the North Essex Parking Partnership and the West Essex Wellbeing Joint Committee.

**CAB14 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The Chief Executive confirmed that there was no need to exclude the press and public to discuss the next agenda item, as long as the commercially sensitive purchase price was not revealed.

**CAB15 ACQUISITION OF SECTION 106 PROPERTIES BY THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

Councillor Coote presented the report and welcomed the proposed purchase of nineteen additional properties by the Housing Revenue Account. He commended the Housing team for their hard work in bringing the proposal to Cabinet.

Councillor Gregory asked why the properties would be set at affordable rental rates, rather than social rents.

Councillor Coote said he would rather have offered social, not affordable, rent but that cost considerations made it necessary for this proposal.

Councillor Gregory asked whether the rent could be reviewed if the financial situation improved in the future.

Councillor Coote agreed that the rent could be reviewed at a later date.

Councillor Coote recommended that Members recommend to Full Council to approve the acquisition of Section 106 properties by the Housing Revenue Account. Councillor Evans seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve the purchase by the HRA of 18 x 1 bed flats and 1 x 2 bed flat from Barratts Homes as per the details outlined in the restricted report.

- II. Request that Full Council endorses the acquisition and to authorise the required borrowing.

*The meeting ended at 19:55.*