

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors A Coote, J Evans, N Hargreaves, L Pepper and N Reeve

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and D Hermitage (Director of Planning)

Also in attendance: N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) and G Smith (Conservative Party Group Leader).

CAB17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Freeman and Sutton. Councillor Caton gave his apologies as the Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Green Alliance Group.

CAB18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting on 9 June 2022 were approved as a correct record.

CAB19 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions or statements from Non-Executive Members of the Council.

CAB20 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory provided a report on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, including details on both the Committee and the Stansted Airport Task and Finish Group, which had both met twice since the previous Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Gregory said the Committee had considered Blueprint Uttlesford, a presentation regarding the Council moving forward from the Chief Executive, and they had been impressed with the vision for the district. Whilst discussing the Cabinet Forward Plan, Members had also proposed repeating the previous discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme in view of the current pressure on individual and household budgets.

The Monitoring Officer and Councillor LeCount were thanked for their work on the Stansted Airport Review and noted that the report was available on the public website and would be considered at Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2022.

On planning policy matters, he said the Local Plan was proceeding well and that he was impressed with the progress that had been made. However, there was a need for an extensive public relations plan to explain the Local Plan to residents, and he questioned whether this task was suited to professional planners. He added that the use of the word “delay” should be limited to where appropriate as the word “paused” was more accurate to describe the current status whilst the further site that had been identified was properly considered. He concluded that a letter had been sent to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities reporting the detailed progress to date. He said that the Local Plan and New Communities Manager had had telephone conversations with relevant officials to keep them apprised of the situation.

Councillor Gregory said that there had been a robust conversation with Councillor Evans regarding the performance of the Planning Department. Members were struggling to understand why residents’ emails and calls to the Planning Department were not receiving responses in good time and that customer service should be improved in this area. Furthermore, he said he did not understand why performance indicators regarding minor planning applications were not included in performance reports. He concluded by thanking Councillor Evans who had engaged with a number of aggrieved residents and who had promised to report back with detailed statistics.

In response to a question from Councillor Reeve, the Chair said that Council would engage appropriately with residents in relation to the Local Plan.

Councillor Evans said that he was keen to communicate to residents the merits and demerits of the Plan, and how they would be overcome, in plain English. He acknowledged that Planning was a complicated area, particularly in relation to policy and that further work would be undertaken with the Director of Planning to produce digestible guidance. In addition, he said that he and the Director of Planning had already received an interesting presentation from a third party provider who had described more modern ways of communicating information to encourage engagement with the younger generations and those that favour the use of smart phones. He said that this would complement the formal requirements of consultation.

The Director of Planning said that they were considering contemporary methods of engagement alongside statutory requirements.

CAB21 **REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS
(STANDING ITEM)**

There were no decisions to report.

CAB22 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.

CAB23 CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PLAN 2021/22 QUARTER 4 PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Reeve presented the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan 2021/22 Quarter 4 report.

He thanked the Assistant Director – Corporate Services and his team for their work preparing the report and for their programme of works.

He congratulated the Housing team for the delivery of the new Housing Strategy and the associated action plans, and Councillor Pepper for her progress against the Climate Change action plan.

He noted good progress on:

- The Planning Review recently undertaken and utilised for the EELGA report.
- The development of the Local Plan.
- The Covid Recovery grant work.
- The new Discover Uttlesford website and app which raised the profile of the district and would aid tourism businesses in the area.
- The reactivation of the Parish Forum.
- As a result of the successful investment portfolio, and despite changes to Government policy, the council continued to deliver a balanced budget.

He said that it would be wrong to not mention the “lowlight” of the quarter, which was the Designation of the Planning Department, however the EELGA report and its recommendations would result in better working practices in future.

Councillor Reeve proposed that Members noted progress against the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.

Councillor Hargreaves said that he commended the new style of presentation which highlighted achievement and progress. He reported that the Highways Panel had allocated all of their funds to projects in the district for this financial year, which would be to the benefit of local residents.

Councillor Pepper thanked the Assistant Director – Corporate Services and his team for the much improved report style which was much easier to digest. She said that she had recently visited the Little Canfield offices and was happy to report that further green agendas that had been implemented that were yet to be included in the report.

Councillor Evans said that in the south east area of the district an on demand mini-bus service had been established by the County Council, mainly for the benefit of Chelmsford and Braintree residents, but which covered the edge of

Great Dunmow. He said that he had asked Councillor Driscoll to look further into this to see if a similar provision could be achieved in Uttlesford.

Councillor Smith thanked the administration for submitting the funding to the Local Highways Panel.

RESOLVED to note progress against the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.

CAB24 SAFFRON WALDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Evans presented the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan report.

He recommended that Members approve the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Coote commended the report and noted how much work had gone into the preparation of the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Accepts the Independent Examiner's recommended modifications to the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan in full as set out in the Schedule at Appendix 2 and note the recommendation that the amended Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a Referendum of voters within the Parish of Saffron Walden to establish whether the plan should form part of the Development Plan for Uttlesford District Council.
- II. Approves the holding of a referendum relating to the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan and, that it will include all the registered electors in Saffron Walden Parish.

CAB25 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Councillor Evans presented the Local Development Scheme (LDS) report and proposed adoption of the Scheme.

Councillor Hargreaves said that any new opportunities should be assessed to the same standards as other sites, to ensure the best Plan possible and to prevent challenge. He said he was happy to support the recommendation.

Councillor Reeve said that he was also happy with the proposal, despite wishing to deliver the Local Plan in a timely manner.

Councillor Coote said that he was delighted that the opportunity had arisen.

RESOLVED to adopt the Local Development Scheme of the Local Plan.

The meeting was closed at 7.40pm.