

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on MONDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2023 at 7.00 pm

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

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People), C Tancell (Principal Ecologist) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

Also present: Councillors N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee), J Moran (substituting for Councillor S Barker, Leader of the Conservative Group), R Pavitt (Leader of the Uttlesford Independents) and G Sell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group).

CAB41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Barker, Leader of the Conservative Group. Councillor Moran substituted in her place.

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB42 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

CAB43 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no statements from non-executive members.

CAB44 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

The Chair of Scrutiny Committee provided an update on matters considered by the committee at its previous meeting, which he thanked Councillor Bagnall for chairing. He welcomed the focus provided by the updated Corporate Core Indicators in the development of the Blueprint Uttlesford project and other matters. He highlighted the Waste Services presentation provided to members and, whilst there were a number of concerns which would be followed up on, the Committee were pleased with the presentation from the Director of

Environmental Services. He said there had been problems with three ageing vehicles which would need to be replaced to prevent further problems.

In respect of the upcoming Car Park Tariff Review, he said Scrutiny had commented on the car park tariffs in the past and he believed the committee would be supportive of the proposed top end options available.

CAB45 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

There were no decisions to report.

CAB46 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.

CAB47 CAR PARK TARIFF REVIEW

Councillor Hargreaves spoke to the report regarding Car Park Tariffs, which outlined recommendations following the commission of an external review into the Council's car parks. The review had identified that it would be reasonable to increase the charges across all the district's car parks, and it was noted that there had been no changes to tariffs since 2015. He said the Council was required to consult on any proposed changes and publish a notice of variation on any proposed tariff changes. The consultation would be open for a minimum period of 21 days. He referenced the associated appendices which stated the three options available in regard to car park tariffs, season tickets and coach tariffs. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report, including Option 2 for Car Park Tariffs, and Option 3 for both season tickets and coach tariffs.

Members discussed the options before them and there was a consensus that an increase to each tariff was overdue. There was also agreement that if the Council wished to continue financially assisting the voluntary sector, its own income streams and finances had to be robust in order to cover costs.

In response to the concerns of Councillor Sell regarding parking issues in Stansted Mountfitchet, the Leader said such concerns should be put forward during the proposed consultation. She stressed that members were not making a final decision tonight.

In response to a question from Councillor Evans regarding the time of the next review, Councillor Hargreaves said it would be sensible to conduct a post-implementation review next year.

In response to a question from Councillor Moran relating to the termination of the 30 minute tariff in Saffron Walden, the Director of Business Performance and People said data provided by the car park machines suggested that this option was not frequently utilised.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve the commencement of a formal period of consultation on the following proposals:

- i. The daily charging period is extended from 5pm to 6pm
- ii. To remove all 30 minute tariffs in Saffron Walden only
- iii. Flat rate tariffs are introduced for parking in all council car parks on Sundays and Bank Holidays
- iv. Catons Lane car park in Saffron Walden becomes chargeable as a long stay car park
- v. London Road car park in Saffron Walden is chargeable at weekends as a long stay car park
- vi. The removal of season tickets at Crafton Green in Stansted Mountfitchet and Chequers Lane in Great Dunmow
- vii. Crafton Green to offer short stay only parking, max 3 hour stay
- viii. Hybrid season tickets are introduced to accommodate new working patterns
- ix. The MiPermit convenience fee is included in the fee charged when parking using the mobile app.
- x. Car Park Tariffs – Option 2
- xi. Coach Tariffs – Option 3
- xii. Season Tickets – Option 3

CAB48 **BIO-DIVERSITY DUTY**

The Leader brought Item 12 forward in proceedings for the benefit of the Strategic Director of Planning and Biodiversity Officer

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the Council's Bio-Diversity duty. He proposed approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

Members discussed the report and the Council's recently appointed Principal Ecologist was warmly introduced to Cabinet.

Councillor Reeve said it was excellent that the Council had an ecologist and he was excited to see that an ambitious biodiversity net gain target had been included in Local Plan proposals.

Councillor Pavitt said better relationships with the farming community would be the most effective measure in supporting and encouraging biodiversity in the district.

The Strategic Director of Planning said engagement with the farming community would be added to the list of possible activities to be pursued under the Biodiversity Duty set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The proposals were approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Publish to the council website UDC's commitment to, and first consideration of, how we will conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- II. Delegate to the Strategic Director of Planning to pursue the table of current work which contributes towards the bio-diversity duty.

CAB49 2023/24 Q2 CORPORATE CORE INDICATORS (CCIS) OUTTURN REPORT

The Leader presented the report regarding the Corporate Core Indicators for Quarter 2 2023/24, which outlined performance data and analysis for the suite of Corporate Core Indicators (CCIs) from July to September 2023. She said benchmarking comparisons to other similar Local Authorities has been conducted and performance trends had been highlighted to identify where improvement may be needed, particularly when comparing against other 'statistical nearest neighbour' authorities.

Members discussed the performance indicators (PIs) listed in the report and welcomed the benchmarking analysis with 'statistical nearest neighbour' authorities.

The following points were raised:

- The number of Planning Appeals upheld for Major Applications (min) – in response to a question from Councillor Sell, Councillor Evans said it was the Government's decision as to when the Council came out of designation. The publishing of UDC's five-year housing supply would assist the Council going forward, as would the eventual adoption of a new Local Plan.
- Health and Safety in relation to council housing – in response to a question from Councillor Moran, Councillor Coote said he would never be complacent but the situation relating to tenant safety, such as gas safety certificates and damp and mould issues, had improved greatly in the past twelve to eighteen months. He said there had been issues gaining access to some properties and, where that was the case, legal proceedings had to be conducted before the gas safety inspection could take place.

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive for introducing specific PIs on Housing matters and praised the Director of Business Performance and People for her work on benchmarking data with 'statistical nearest neighbour' authorities.

The report was noted.

CAB50 RENT SETTING PROCESS UPDATE

Councillor Coote presented the report relating to the Rent Setting Process Update, which outlined the actions taken since the Council's self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing in December 2022. The key piece of work carried out to mitigate risk going forward was the production of a Rent Setting Sign-off Procedure. He proposed approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

The recommendations were approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Note the updates provided;
- II. Approve the adoption of the Rent Setting Sign-Off Procedure.
- III. Note that UDC will be updating the Regulator of Social Housing once the Rent-Setting Sign-Off Procedure has been adopted.

CAB51 SELF-ASSESSMENT HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE COMPLAINTS CODE

Councillor Coote presented the Self-Assessment Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Code report, which asked members to approve the self-assessment in relation to the handling of complaints, as stipulated as best practice in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

In response to a question from Councillor Moran, Councillor Coote said access to the Code would not solely be online as he recognised the difficulties faced by those who did not use a computer. He said members and officers would be knocking on doors to ensure tenants were aware of the process.

The Leader added that information would also be shared via the Tenants' Letter and Tenants' Forum.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- i. To approve the self-assessment of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code so it can be published on the UDC website and made available to tenants.
- ii. To note that the Complaints Policy will undergo further review in line with the joint code which is expected to be published prior to April 2024.

CAB52 MUSEUM INTERIM FORWARD PLAN 2024/25

Councillor Sutton presented the report regarding the Interim Forward Plan for Saffron Walden Museum. She said the plan has been prepared as part of the Museum's accreditation submission to Arts Council England and required formal Cabinet approval. She proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Sell, a member of the Museum Management Working Group, said approval of this Forward Plan was essential for the Museum's ongoing work. He supported the proposal.

In response to a question relating to National Lottery funding, Councillor Sutton said the application process would be revisited in future.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve the Museum Interim Forward Plan 2024/25.

CAB53 DATA BREACHES AND DIRECT DEBITS

The Leader presented the report regarding Data Breaches and Direct Debits and said that it was the first time that such a report had been brought to members in the interests of transparency. The report highlighted three recent data breaches that had been referred to the Information Commissioner (ICO) and the direct debit error that had arisen on 1 November that resulted in payments being requested from customer's accounts two days early. In relation to the data breaches, she confirmed that no response had yet been received from the ICO but outlined the corrective measures put in place since the breaches had taken place.

Members discussed the issues outlined in the report and there was general agreement that the Council had acted swiftly to rectify the direct debit issue as soon as the error had come to light.

The Leader said the recent cyber attack on the Council's IT systems was a separate issue but Members praised the efforts of IT Officers who had worked through the night to ensure the Council was operational the following day.

The report was noted.

CAB54 CABINET WORKING GROUP - MEMBERSHIP CHANGE

Councillor Sutton proposed Councillor Lemon's appointment to the Museum Management Working Group in place of Councillor Davey.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Lemon to the Museum Management Working Group.

The meeting was closed at 8.40pm.

