

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 21 MAY 2019 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker, M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, C Day, A Dean, G Driscoll, D Eke, J Evans, P Fairhurst, M Foley, R Freeman, A Gerard, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, V Isham, R Jones, A Khan, G LeCount, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin, S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve, A Storah, M Sutton and J De Vries

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), D French (Chief Executive), R Harborough (Director - Public Services), S Pugh (Assistant Director - Governance and Legal) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

C1 REMARKS OF THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the outgoing Chairman and Vice Chairman, Councillor Sell took the Chair for the opening of the meeting. He thanked Councillor Wells and Councillor G Barker for their conscientious work as Chairman and Vice Chairman, as well as the Executive Team for their support to the Chairman.

He was sad to advise Council that ex-Councillor Geoffrey Powers, ward member for Great Dunmow North, passed away after a long illness on the 19 May. Councillor Powers was an elected member from 1991 – 2003, during which time he was a deputy leader and Chair of the Amenities Sub Committee.

A minute silence was held.

Councillor Sell presented cheques of £1950 to representatives of the outgoing Chairman's charities: Clair Mitchell from Essex and Herts Air Ambulance Trust and Jodie Rowlandson from Addenbrookes Charitable Trust.

C2 ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

Councillor Freeman was nominated for the position of Chair of the Council.

There being no contest for the position, Councillor Freeman was duly appointed Chair of the Council.

C3 CHAIR'S STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Chair read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office before those present.

C4 ELECTION OF THE VICE CHAIR

Councillor Foley was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Council.

There being no contest for the position, Councillor Foley was duly appointed Vice Chair of the Council.

C5 VICE CHAIR'S STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Foley read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office before those present.

C6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lavelle, Luck and Tayler, as well as Councillor Rolfe as outgoing Leader of the Council.

C7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings on 9 and 25 April were approved subject to an amendment proposed by Councillor Gerard to C91 of the minutes of the 9 April meeting.

Original text:

In response to a question from Councillor Gerard, the Chief Executive said she would respond by email to all Members regarding whether publishing the planning decision on Stansted Airport would be a breach of purdah. Councillor Rolfe said a delay in publishing the decision would amount to politicising a planning decision.

Text to be added to the end of the previous paragraph:

He added that UDC would not submit to bullying tactics by pressure groups and would meet any threat of judicial review. The Planning Committee had determined the application and had delegated authorisation of the agreement to officers. The Planning Committee report set out fully what a section 106 agreement would need to address. The content of the report had been subject to extensive consultation with statutory consultees, external experts and Counsel (Q.C.). He emphasised that this was not a political decision and that the Council was under a legal obligation to determine the planning application.

C8 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair said many new Members had been elected to Council, and new was often a good thing. It was an honour to be elected Chair of the Council. While some things would inevitably stay the same over the next four years, there was a need for change in some areas. He was in favour of an efficient and effective system of governance, and it was important to work as a team and respect each other.

There were currently three significant issues the Council needed to address:

- The Local Plan
- Investment and Chesterford Research Park
- Stansted Airport

He said nothing worth doing was ever easy, and he was looking forward to working with all Members.

He would make announcements about the Chair's charities at a later date.

C9 RETURNING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Chair introduced the Returning Officer's report which listed the councillors who had been elected in each ward.

C10 ELECTION OF A LEADER

Councillor Lodge was nominated for the position of Leader of the Council.

There being no contest for the position, Councillor Lodge was duly appointed Leader of the Council.

C11 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader said it was a privilege to be appointed Leader of the Council. He knew there were tremendous expectations for his administration. He thanked supporters for attending the meeting that night.

The administration was filled with talented people who were well-prepared for the challenges ahead. The new administration would focus on issues which were important to the residents of Uttlesford. Its approach was to decentralise power, with nine Cabinet members instead of six, and each member of the Residents for Uttlesford group leading on a particular topic. These topic leads would be announced in due course. The party wanted to end the old party-based model of local government and would be looking into alternative models in due course. Other parties had been invited to take up important positions in the current system, with Councillors Oliver and Gregory being nominated to chair committees, and Councillor Lemon being nominated to be a Vice Chair.

The new Cabinet would comprise the following:

- Councillor Lodge, Leader and Lead on Planning and the Local Plan
- Councillor Lees, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing; Health and Wellbeing
- Councillor Fairhurst, Portfolio Holder for Business, Economy, Jobs, Investment and Strategy
- Councillor Asker, Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services
- Councillor Light, Portfolio Holder for Education and Libraries; Culture, Heritage and Tourism
- Councillor Pepper, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green Issues; Equalities
- Councillor Hargreaves, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget
- Councillor Eke, Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Transport and Stansted Airport
- Councillor Gerard, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Community Partnerships; Police and Emergency Services
- Councillor Armstrong, Portfolio Holder for Sports and Leisure

C12 DELEGATION OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Leader said there were no changes to the delegation of executive functions to announce.

C13 SCHEME OF DELEGATION (TO FOLLOW)

The Chair introduced the Council Scheme of Delegation which set out how authority was currently delegated to the Council's committees and officers.

RESOLVED to approve the Council Scheme of Delegation.

C14 POLITICAL BALANCE (TO FOLLOW)

The Chair introduced the report, which considered the political composition of the Council and recommended how seats on the five main committees be allocated between the four political groups.

RESOLVED to adopt the political balance on its committees as detailed in the report.

C15 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES 2019-20 (TO FOLLOW)

Nominations had been submitted for positions on the five committees of the Council in accordance with the approved political balance.

Two nominations had been submitted for the position of Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. These were Councillor Gregory and Councillor Sell. The Chair called for a vote to find a preferred nominee for the position.

RESOLVED that Councillor Gregory would be the nominee for the position of Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair called for a vote en bloc for the nominees for Council committees as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that all committees be appointed as proposed in the report, including Councillor Gregory as nominated Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

C16 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS 2019-20 (TO FOLLOW)

Councillors Barker, Coote and Khan had been nominated to sit on the Local Joint Panel.

RESOLVED that Councillors Barker, Coote and Khan be appointed to the Local Joint Panel.

C17 APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER TO THE ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

Councillors LeCount and Gerard had been nominated to be the substantive and substitute representatives respectively of the Council on the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillors LeCount to be the substantive representative of the Council on the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, and to appoint Councillor Gerard to be the substitute representative on the panel.

C18 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN (UP TO 15 MINUTES)

Councillor Dean asked why the Leader seemed to be pulling authority into the centre by expanding the number of seats on the Cabinet.

In response to the question from Councillor Dean, the Leader said decision-making was being greatly spread, with a greater number of cabinet members and topic leads increasing democracy throughout the structure of the Council.

Councillor Dean asked how the policy to give local people more of a say on the local plan fitted with the fact that it was to go before the Inspectors in due course.

In response to the question from Councillor Dean, the Leader said the administration wanted to make sure the Council had made the right decisions on the plan, and wanted to explore various ways to get answers right.

Councillor Loughlin said she appreciated the Residents for Uttlesford had offered the Liberal Democrats an opportunity to take up a position in the Cabinet, but the Liberal Democrats would not have been able to function as an effective opposition if they had accepted the position. She asked when the wheels would be set in motion for a move towards a committee system.

In response to the question from Councillor Loughlin, the Leader said moves towards looking into a committee system would begin straight away.

Councillor Sell said Scarborough Council had adopted a new streamlined Cabinet system, leaving many decisions to be made by committees. With all the Cabinet members and topic leads, many Residents for Uttlesford would also be members of the administration. This was less democratic than the committee system.

In response to the question from Councillor Sell, the Leader said the administration would look at any options for arranging the governance of the Council, and would not restrict itself to looking at the Committee system. A Cabinet comprising nine members seemed more democratic than one of six members.

Councillor Criscione asked if the Leader would work with members of his party and the Chief Executive to investigate the source of the leak of confidential information regarding the extraordinary Council meeting to be held on 3 June.

In response to the question from Councillor Criscione, the Leader said that he would do so.

The meeting closed at 8.30.