

**COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2019 at 7.30 pm**

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

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive); B Ferguson (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and S Pugh (Assistant Director - Governance and Legal).

**C25 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Mr Gildea, Mr Wing, Ms Yellowlees and Miss Gerard made statements regarding the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency motion. Mr Brett, Mr Everett and Mrs Caton made statements regarding the Libraries Service motion. Summaries of their statements are appended to these minutes.

**C26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coote, Gregory, Light, Luck and Reeve.

Councillor Barker declared non-pecuniary interests as an Essex County Council Member, Chair of the Essex Pension Fund and as the ECC Cabinet Member for Library Services.

Councillors Fairhurst (SWTC), Gerard (Newport), Eke (SWTC) and LeCount (Henham) declared non-pecuniary interests as members of their respective parish councils.

Councillor Criscione declared non-pecuniary interests as a member of the National Trust, the British Association of Shooting and Conservation and the Conservative Environment Network.

Councillor Gerard declared non-pecuniary interests as a member of the Hundred Parish Society and as his daughter was a member of Uttlesford Youth Council.

**C27 NOTICE OF MOTION RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLORS CRISCIONE, LIGHT, PEPPER AND TAYLER: CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY**

The Chair moved item 10 forward in proceedings for the benefit of the public present. He invited Councillor Pepper to propose the initial motion as set out in the agenda.

Councillor Pepper provided background context to the climate and ecological emergency motion. She said the signs of a global climate emergency were already evident and there was limited time to take action and avert a manmade climate and ecological crisis. She thanked members of the local community who had campaigned on the issue of climate change and who would be crucial in shaping a net zero carbon future. The motion had been a cross-party endeavor and had been coauthored with Councillors Light, Criscione, Tayler and supported by Councillor Pavitt.

She proposed the motion as follows:

This Council is resolved:

1. *To declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency, acting now to prevent a climate and ecological catastrophe that will greatly impact our children, grandchildren and future generations*
2. *To commit to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030 and protecting and enhancing bio-diversity by:*
  - *requesting the Cabinet Member for Environment and Green Issues to establish an Energy and Climate Change Working Group of Cabinet*
  - *working collaboratively across the Council and engaging with individuals, community groups, businesses and other partners in the district, including young people who should have a voice to help shape our future*
  - *lobbying Central Government to urgently provide funding and implement necessary policy changes*
  - *producing a bold plan of action that is realistic, measurable and deliverable*
  - *ensuring significant progress has been made to deliver the action plan by April 2023*

Councillor Criscione seconded the motion.

Councillor Day said the Council had a moral duty to future generations and the people of the District to protect the natural environment and ensure the highest quality of life for residents. He said pollution from the aviation industry required real scrutiny and central government would need to do something about it as there was little mention of aircraft pollution in current guidance. He said the new administration were committed to a fairer deal with Stansted Airport and Councillor Pepper, in her capacity as the newly established Cabinet member for Green Issues, would be the right person to do this.

Councillor Tayler said he was pleased that the motion had been a collaborative effort with cross-party agreement. He said it would be important that all parties felt like they had a role in managing the process, as measurable targets would

need to be set that were both realistic and challenging. He urged members to support the motion.

Councillor Storah said he was skeptical of manmade climate change and would be abstaining from the vote. Although he would be abstaining, he said the motion would be more purposeful if it contained practical clauses, such as the banning of single-use plastics.

Councillor Gerard thanked the public speakers and Councillor Pepper for expressing their views with passion. He commended the cross party efforts in drafting the motion and said members had an opportunity to do something special for the future of the District.

Councillor Dean commended the cross-party and grass roots nature of the motion but said more was required than just a talking shop. He said a climate emergency was not mentioned in the budget and if this was to have a meaningful impact resources would need to be allocated.

Councillor Eke thanked the public for their attendance. He said there were a number of things the Council could do quickly to prevent a climate crisis but warned that this was a global issue and real change would take time. He highlighted the lack of cycle routes in the district and said the Administration would work hard to ensure developers contributed their fair share to such schemes.

Councillor Asker urged members to back the motion, although she supported the right for alternative views such as Councillor Storah's to be expressed at Council.

Councillor Driscoll said the Council should be leading the way on green issues and suggested investing in electric vehicles as a good starting point.

Councillor Caton said he supported this motion and wanted to embed environmentalism in the local community. He said it was up to everyone to make small changes in their lives to make a difference.

Councillor Hargreaves, in his role as Cabinet Member for the Budget and Finance, listed the financial reserves available to Council; the Strategic Initiative Fund - £1.6 million, the Transformation Reserve - £1.1 million and the Future Development Project fund - £200,000. He said this £3 million could be used to prevent climate change and if necessary to fight the Stansted Airport application if it was taken to appeal.

Councillor Lemon said resources would be an important element of any strategy dealing with climate change. He added that the Council should speak to all local businesses to encourage the adoption of green initiatives.

Councillor Pavitt said this was a very important issue to him personally, and it would take a lot of small actions from individuals to make a difference on a global scale. He said libraries could be used as action centres for those people wishing to come together to discuss and take action on climate change.

Councillor Loughlin said she would support the motion and asked members of the public to be conscientious and not create bonfires with noxious materials.

Councillor Criscione said he was proud to have coauthored the motion and hoped it would create change felt in the county and beyond. The issue of climate change was one that transcended party politics and geographical boundaries.

Councillor Pepper summarised the debate and said the Administration would take great steps to improve air quality, protect biodiversity and reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions.

RESOLVED to:

1. To declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency, acting now to prevent a climate and ecological catastrophe that will greatly impact our children, grandchildren and future generations
2. To commit to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030 and protecting and enhancing bio-diversity by:
  - requesting the Cabinet Member for Environment and Green Issues to establish an Energy and Climate Change Working Group of Cabinet
  - working collaboratively across the Council and engaging with individuals, community groups, businesses and other partners in the district, including young people who should have a voice to help shape our future
  - lobbying Central Government to urgently provide funding and implement necessary policy changes
  - producing a bold plan of action that is realistic, measurable and deliverable
  - ensuring significant progress has been made to deliver the action plan by April 2023

C28

#### **NOTICE OF MOTION RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLORS LIGHT AND SELL: LIBRARY MOTION**

The Chair brought item 11 forward in proceedings for the benefit of the public present.

Councillor Sell proposed the motion as set out in the agenda:

*This Council condemns the actions of Essex County Council with regards to the current strategy of overreliance on volunteers to run our libraries and short term and insufficient funding. Council is concerned that this may lead to their eventual closure.*

Councillor Lavelle seconded the motion.

Councillor Sell said there had been a big response to ECC's consultation on libraries and it had been enough to earn libraries across Essex a reprieve. However, he stressed that libraries were not a luxury of local government; they were an investment in people's futures.

Councillor Caton had given notice of an amendment to the motion and proposed the following:

*This Council condemns the actions of Essex County Council with regards to the proposed strategy of overreliance on volunteers to run our village libraries with short term and insufficient funding. Council is concerned that this may lead to their eventual closure and RESOLVES (1) to demand that ALL libraries in Uttlesford get continued access to Essex Library service computer and management systems, inter-library lending and stock rotation and core paid staff for the foreseeable future and (2) to work with Essex County Council, parish councils and the wider Uttlesford community to achieve this goal.*

Councillor Sell seconded the amendment. He said the amendment had been proposed to give 'teeth' to the motion. He added that volunteer run libraries were not the way forward as they could not offer the professional services of a qualified librarian.

Councillor Barker said this motion was very close to breaching the 6 month rule as a similar motion had been submitted to Council on 21 February 2019. She added that Council should not be "demanding" anything from another council and such rhetoric was against the spirit of cooperation. Issues such as the fall in readership and the rise of online tutorials and e-books meant that libraries could not ignore the changing ways in which people accessed information. She would not be supporting the motion or the amendment.

Councillor Khan said libraries were still places of learning and community and the ECC proposals were fantastical as volunteers could not be expected to run libraries without professional paid staff supporting them. He would be supporting the amendment.

Councillor Gerard said it was a disgrace that ECC were trying to shirk their statutory obligations in providing library services to the people of Uttlesford. He requested that the Chair of Council ask ECC how much the consultation had cost the taxpayer, including the commission of Venture Research to evaluate responses received to the consultation. He said the consultation was disingenuous as there was never any intent to improve services, but rather to justify inevitable cost saving measures. He applauded the efforts of the cross party campaign to push back ECC library proposals. He said the recent proposal to have volunteer run libraries under UDC's remit was a ploy to reduce library services by stealth. He asked members to condemn ECC's behavior and called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

Councillor Lees said there was nothing incorrect in Council disagreeing with ECC and opposing cost cutting measures that they believed were morally wrong. She would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Foley said libraries were important to all demographics and their very existence culturally enriched people's lives. He said the ECC consultation was flawed and there had been grave concerns regarding Thaxted's library being classed in tier 4 and therefore earmarked for closure.

Councillor Fairhurst said the consultation was a fraudulent exercise and condemned the proposal for volunteer run libraries. He would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Caton said Stansted Mountfitchet had invested over a million pounds in their community library building but ECC had not attempted to engage with the parish council over these proposals. He said the language of the amendment was aggressive as ECC had treated the parish of Stansted with a lack of respect.

The Chair called for a recorded vote to make the amendment the substantive motion.

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Cllr Armstrong	Cllr Barker	Cllr Oliver
Cllr Asker	Cllr Criscione	
Cllr Bagnall		
Cllr Caton		
Cllr Day		
Cllr De Vries		
Cllr Dean		
Cllr Driscoll		
Cllr Eke		
Cllr Evans		
Cllr Fairhurst		
Cllr Foley		
Cllr Freeman		
Cllr Gerard		
Cllr Hargreaves		
Cllr Isham		
Cllr Jones		
Cllr Khan		
Cllr Lavelle		
Cllr LeCount		
Cllr Lees		
Cllr Lemon		
Cllr Lodge		
Cllr Loughlin		
Cllr Merifield		
Cllr Pavitt		
Cllr Pepper		

Cllr Sell		
Cllr Storah		
Cllr Sutton		
Cllr Tayler		
<b>Total:</b>		
<b>31</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

The Chair called for Members to vote on the substantive motion.

RESOLVED to:

Condemn the actions of Essex County Council with regards to the proposed strategy of overreliance on volunteers to run our village libraries with short term and insufficient funding. Council is concerned that this may lead to their eventual closure and RESOLVES (1) to demand that ALL libraries in Uttlesford get continued access to Essex Library service computer and management systems, inter-library lending and stock rotation and core paid staff for the foreseeable future and (2) to work with Essex County Council, parish councils and the wider Uttlesford community to achieve this goal.

**C29 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 May and 28 June were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**C30 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair provided an update on his activity since the last meeting.

**C31 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Leader said it had been 89 days since the Administration had taken office and members had worked hard to start delivering on their election promises. He said there would be no quick fix to fundamentally changing the way in which the Council operated, highlighting the need for more transparency, connectivity and public engagement with residents. Collaborative working was also important, as demonstrated by the cross party motions on libraries and climate change. He said the Stansted Airport planning application would be reviewed by the Planning Committee, allowing members to revisit the S106 agreement and deliberate on any new material considerations related to the application.

The Local Plan was also at the forefront of the Administration's mind and he was surprised at the lack of feedback provided by the Inspector, although a strong case had been made to reduce the number of required houses as stated in the

Local Plan. He favored locally led development corporations over commercial developers whose primary aim was to make profit. He said difficult decisions would have to be made, particularly in light of imminent central government cuts, but the Council would take a modern strategic approach to mitigate the impact.

*As the meeting had passed the two-hour mark, the Chair asked members to indicate whether they were willing to continue. They agreed to do so.*

C32

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

In response to a Member question, Councillor Fairhurst said an Investment Board and Investment protocol would be established to ensure the governance arrangements surrounding the Council's investments were sound. He said he hoped progress would have been made by the next meeting.

In response to a Member question, the Leader said it was a time consuming process to draft and establish a new Corporate Plan, as he wanted to do it properly and was consulting with his party to capture their priorities. He hoped the Liberal Democrat Group would assist in producing a new Corporate Plan.

Councillor Dean said officers needed certainty from the Administration, particularly regarding the drafting of next year's budget which would be approved in November. He said uncertainty also sprang from the large number of topic leads and Cabinet Members, resulting in a situation whereby staff were unsure whom to contact on a number of matters.

The Leader said he was working with the Chief Executive to map portfolio holders with relevant officers.

In response to a Member question, the Leader said he would endeavor to bring a report outlining planning applications that had been refused against officer recommendations, but then overturned on appeal.

In response to a Member question, the Leader said he would deliver his reports to Full Council verbally and he would produce job descriptions for the Portfolio Holders.

Councillor Sell said two council employees had been injured in a recent accident in Stansted and asked Council to send their best wishes to those concerned.

In response to a Member question relating to the Administration's stance towards affordable housing, the Leader said he did not direct Planning Committee members in their decision making in anyway. He said he would be disappointed if affordable homes were not being approved by the Planning Committee.

C33

### **GOVERNANCE REVIEW: PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A COUNCIL WORKING GROUP**

The Leader presented the report outlining proposals to establish a Governance Review Working Group to evaluate the various governance options open to the Council, and to make recommendations as to which system would best suit the council's needs. He said the crux of the issue was the way in which the Council made decisions, with the Cabinet system placing too much power in too few hands. He said his Administration had already dispersed power by appointing more Cabinet Members and Topic Leads.

In response to a question from Councillor Loughlin, the Leader said the review would take time but a new system could be implemented at the Annual Council meeting in May 2020.

Councillor Fairhurst said the purpose of the review was to understand how the Administration could make the structure more democratic by engaging with as many members as possible throughout the decision making process.

RESOLVED that the Council appoints Councillors Coote (Chair), Criscione, Evans, Freeman, Gregory, Isham, Khan, Lees and Sell to a Governance Working Group to review the current governance model for Uttlesford District Council and to make recommendations to Full Council.

**C34 APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER TO THE ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL**

Members considered the appointment of Councillor Day as UDC's substantive member to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Day as Uttlesford District Council's substantive member to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

**C35 NOTICE OF MOTION RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR FAIRHURST: YOUTH COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT WITH FULL COUNCIL**

Councillor Fairhurst presented the motion regarding the Youth Council's integration with Full Council. He said the most important matters discussed during this meeting had all been about the future, and yet not one young person was present to give the youth a voice. He read the proposed motion as set out in the agenda pack:

*This Council resolves that it will engage with and integrate the Youth Council more closely with the Council and agrees the following principles:*

1. *That the Youth Council has a permanent non-voting representative at Full Council meetings in order to participate in debates.*
2. *That the Youth Council Members are supported by District Council Members at Youth Council meetings.*
3. *That District Council Members are identified to support Youth Council Members in their engagement with local schools.*
4. *That sufficient officer time is allocated to the Youth Council to enable it to meet its objectives.*

*The Council requests officers to report back to the next Council meeting on implementing these principles.*

Councillor Lemon urged members to support this motion as it was important to consider the views of young people.

Councillor Loughlin said she had an issue with the Youth Council having a seat at Full Council as they had not been elected. She said she would be abstaining.

Councillor Criscione urged members to support the Youth Council; he said they would have no voting rights so it did not bring in to question the democratic mandate of Council.

Councillor Sell commended the work of councillors who had brought the Youth Council to fruition, but questioned the selective nature of Youth Councils and asked whether the Youth Council was truly representative of young people as a whole.

Councillor Foley urged members to support the motion. He said it was a youth council that had inspired him to take an interest and get involved in politics.

Councillor Khan said a Youth Council would not appeal to every young person so it was important to ensure inclusivity and that all were fairly represented. He would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Gerard said he had seen the benefits a young voice could bring to the table, as demonstrated by Felsted Parish Council's policy to have a young person sit in and contribute to parish meetings. He said Newport were looking at a similar proposal.

In response to a question from Councillor Driscoll, Councillor Fairhurst confirmed that YC members were from across the district.

Councillor Day said this was an investment in Uttlesford's future and members would be arrogant to ignore the views of young people.

Councillor Isham said it was important to include young people in decision making and urged members to support the motion.

RESOLVED to engage with and integrate the Youth Council more closely with the Council and agrees the following principles:

1. That the Youth Council has a permanent non-voting representative at Full Council meetings in order to participate in debates.
2. That the Youth Council Members are supported by District Council Members at Youth Council meetings.
3. That District Council Members are identified to support Youth Council Members in their engagement with local schools.
4. That sufficient officer time is allocated to the Youth Council to enable it to meet its objectives.

The Council requests officers to report back to the next Council meeting on implementing these principles.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm.

## **PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

### Mr Gildea

Mr Gildea said he welcomed the motion on the climate change crisis and urged members to be courageous and address the emergency. There could be no business as usual under the threat of such disaster and governments across the globe had only a matter of months to take action and prevent the extinction of the human race.

### Mr Brett

Mr Brett said ECC's proposals on the future of library services in the county were 'privatisation by stealth' and there was no vision on how the library service would be run going forward. He said Stansted Mountfitchet had voted against the volunteer run libraries but the County Council had ignored them and gone over their heads. He said ECC were robbing the District of their libraries and warned that Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow would be next.

### Mr Wing

Mr Wing applauded the motion and said it had come at an apt moment; the International Climate Change report released the previous week had stated that there were only 18 months to divert a climate change catastrophe. He added that a United Nations biological report had identified an ecological crisis with many species under threat of extinction, leading to risks of a food shortage. Radical action was required. He said measurable and realistic targets needed to be established and monitored by the community, akin to Citizens' Assembly established in France.

### Ms Yellowlees

Ms Yellowlees said she had setup the Saffron Walden Action on Climate Change group which had 650 members to spread awareness of the current climate crisis.

She listed the numerous activities the group had carried out to spread awareness and teach best practice, including speaking to over 4000 schoolchildren about the subject, but it was still not enough to create largescale change. Positive action needed to come from government to encourage individuals to make environmentally friendly and cost effective choices by default; everybody would be making environmentally friendly choices because it would be the most convenient option. She said the community needed to come together to make a difference.

#### Miss Gerard

Miss Gerard declared that she was a member of the youth council but was speaking in an individual capacity. She said time was running out to tackle the climate change crisis and action needed to be taken now. She said this crisis would primarily affect her generation and yet they had no voice at the table or a role in decision making. She said investment was needed in green technology such as electric buses. She asked members to support the motion and to act with a sense of urgency due to the ICC warning that we may only have 18 months before it was too late.

#### Mrs Caton

Mrs Caton said she was Chair of Stansted Mountfitchet parish council and had come to support the motion on libraries. She said Stansted PC were currently constructing a new library building for the village, an arrangement that had been discussed with ECC prior to their proposal to close down Stansted's library. She took issue with the data used to justify the proposed closure of Stansted's library as it had been taken when the library building had been closed and only a mobile unit was in operation. She had concerns regarding the ECC proposals as it allowed them to opt out of their statutory duty to provide library access to their residents, and would leave libraries staffed by volunteers and without resource. She urged members to support the motion.

#### Mr Everett

Mr Everett said ECC had a statutory obligation to provide a library service to the people of Essex. Massive cuts to the service had hollowed out the library sector with reductions in staff, books and opening hours. The strategy proposed by the County would only accelerate the sector's decline. He said the suggestion that E-libraries would improve the service did not conform to the experience of digital only libraries and he asked members to support the motion to halt the decline in the district's libraries.