

**ANNUAL COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 18 MAY
2021 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor M Foley (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker,
M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, C Day, G Driscoll, J Emanuel,
J Evans, R Freeman, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, V Isham,
R Jones, A Khan, P Lavelle, P Lees, J Lodge, S Luck,
S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, N Reeve, G Sell, G Smith,
M Sutton and J De Vries

Officers in attendance: B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D French (Chief Executive), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), J Reynolds (Lawyer), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

Also present: N Foley, E Game (Youth Council) and S King (Stroke Association).

C1 REMARKS OF THE OUTGOING CHAIR

The Chair welcomed all Councillors, as well as those people watching the broadcast, to the meeting. He said that he was delighted that the meeting was being held in the Council Chamber again. He particularly thanked Dawn French, Sue Kempster, Melanie Maguire, Ben Ferguson, Dan Barden and all other officers for their help during his year in office. He said that he would be sorry to see the Chief Executive leave later in the year.

The Chair said it had been a fascinating year that had seen the coming together of the community during the pandemic. He announced that there would be a press release to announce the 8 winners and 8 runners-up in the "Making a difference" awards. He also spoke about the Chairman's Charter, that would start in June, which was a commitment to encourage local businesses to reduce their carbon footprints and reduce the use of plastics. He thanked Councillors Fairhurst, Light and Pepper as well as Becky Tomkins for their assistance.

He announced that the Chair's Charity had raised £4,092 for the Stroke Association. He had been supported in the fund-raising exercise by his daughter Nicola who presented a cheque to the charity. Stephen King thanked the Chair and his daughter on behalf of the Stroke Association.

Following the recent District Council by-elections, the Chair welcomed Councillor Judy Emanuel (Newport) and Councillor George Smith (The Sampfords) to the Chamber.

C2 ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

The Leader of the Council nominated Councillor Coote for the position of Chair of Council. Councillor Lees seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Coote as the Chair of Council.

C3 CHAIR'S STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Chair made the declaration of acceptance of office.

The Chair thanked Councillor Foley for his work as Chair of the Council.

C4 ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Caton nominated Councillor Fairhurst to be Vice-Chair of the Council. This was seconded.

The Leader of the Council nominated Councillor Asker to be Vice-Chair of the Council. This was seconded.

A vote was taken through a show of hands.

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Asker to be Vice-Chair of the Council.

C5 VICE-CHAIR'S STATUTORY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Vice-Chair made the declaration of acceptance of office.

C6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dean, Eke, Fairhurst, LeCount, Lemon, Light, Loughlin, Pepper and Tayler.

C7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Driscoll referred to Item C84 and noted that the schedule of meetings for 2021-22 did not include an additional 'budget only' Council meeting. The Chief Executive confirmed that arrangements were in hand for this meeting.

Councillor Barker referred to Item C83 in that she had not received promised information in respect of two items. The Chair confirmed that responses would be made.

The minutes of the meeting on 23 February 2021 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

C8 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair said that the charity he had chosen to support was the East Anglia's Children's Hospices – EACH which looked after very sick children. He said that he would be circulating further information at the next meeting and that he would be looking to raise some funds through sponsored weight loss.

C9 POLITICAL BALANCE 2021-22

Councillor Caton made a personal statement in that he was disappointed to have lost his place on the Planning Committee but said that he had accepted it. He said that moving forward he hoped for a less frenetic and more consensual approach and that he hoped relationships between the parties could be re-set ahead of the final two years of the administration.

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the report and said that there had been many last-minute changes that had to be made in respect of the political balance and thanked the Chief Executive and the Democratic Services Manager for re-calculating figures on a number of occasions. He said he was looking to ensure fairness.

Councillor Criscione seconded approval of the report and said that he considered the proposed allocation of seats to be fair and did create unity.

RESOLVED to achieve political balance by allocating seats on its committees as detailed in the report.

C10 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL 2021-22

The Chief Executive said that in view of the last-minute changes to the political balance the proposal would be that Council approved the nominations to be provided by Group Leaders in accordance with the political proportionality as agreed at Item 9 which would be submitted by close of business on Thursday 20 May.

This motion was proposed by the Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Criscione.

RESOLVED that Council approves the nominations to be provided by Group Leaders in accordance with the political proportionality agreed at Item 9, to be submitted by close of business on Thursday 20 May.

C11 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO WORKING GROUPS OF COUNCIL 2021-22

Nominations had been submitted for positions on the Council's working groups. These were set out in the report.

The Leader of the Council proposed approval of the proposed appointments and Councillor Caton seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED that members of the Council's working groups be appointed as set out in the report.

C12 APPOINTMENT TO THE ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

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

The Leader of the Council proposed and Councillor Pavitt seconded the nominations.

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

C13 ESTABLISHMENT OF APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

The Leader of the Council outlined his report. He said that the preface to the report was that the Council was very sadly shortly to lose the services of the Chief Executive, whose efforts during the past year of the pandemic were praised. He proposed that an Appointments Committee be established with the composition and nominations as outlined in the report.

Councillor Criscione seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED that an Appointments Committee be established, comprising seven members: four Residents for Uttlesford, one Liberal Democrat, one Conservative and one from the Green Party/Independents' Group. Membership was confirmed as Councillors P Lees, S Merifield, N Hargreaves, R Pavitt, C Criscione, M Caton and J Lodge.

C14 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES: TIME PERMITTED FOR QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Councillor Oliver, as Chair of the GAP Committee outlined the report and proposed that the recommendation be approved.

Councillor Driscoll seconded the motion. He said that he hoped that this would stop the aggravation that had taken place over the past two years.

Councillor Sell said that the current fifteen minutes limit for questions was inadequate, particularly when not all Cabinet members submitted reports. He said that he welcomed the initiative.

Councillor Khan said that the proposal would bring forward a dynamic, professional and accountable approach. He thanked Councillor Barker for her contribution to the Task and Finish Group and the Democratic Services team for their support.

The Chair said that, if approved, he would look to ensure that questions were being asked in Council, rather than just statements being made.

RESOLVED that Council amends Rule 2.4 of the Council Procedure Rules and adopt the protocol as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, subject to a trial period of two Full Council meetings.

C15 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader of the Council said that, heading into the second half of the administration, he was encouraged that since the recent election there was now the possibility of a re-set and much more collegiate atmosphere. He said that the meeting had been handled in a positive way.

C16 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (UP TO 15 MINUTES)

In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Leader of the Council said that there had been no progress in respect of signing off the 2019/20 accounts as the matter was purely in the hands of the police.

Councillor Criscione said that he would like assurance that reports would be received from all members of the Cabinet. The Chair undertook to personally ensure that Cabinet members reported back as much as they possibly could.

Councillor Caton referred to the Council's agreement to purchase the former Banana Factory in Great Canfield for £7.6 million six months ago. He said that Councillor Reeve had previously promised to share information relating to revenue costs. He also asked what the estimated capital costs were in respect of the planned works to the site and if any costs had been approved how had this happened in respect of transparency.

Councillor Reeve undertook to provide a written answer that would be circulated to all Members.

Councillor Barker said that in respect of the previous question she understood that plans had recently been withdrawn from the Planning Committee because of the response from Highways. She offered assistance through the Highways Panel.

Councillor Barker referred to statistics in respect of domestic planning applications. She said that previously two out of three applications had taken longer than the statutory eight weeks and this figure had improved to 80% of applications but what was being done to aim for 100%.

Councillor Evans said that he recognised that figures were below the national average and that changes were intended to be made in the Planning Department. He undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor Lavelle asked how many Electric Vehicle Charging Points were planned for installation in Council car parks. The Leader of the Council undertook to provide an answer.

Councillor Khan congratulated Councillor Pepper on her written report. He said that a successful Listening Event had been proposed last year and asked how many more events were planned for the remainder of the term of office. In the absence of Councillor Pepper, the Chair undertook to ensure that Councillor Pepper provided a written response.

During the meeting many Members congratulated the Chair on his recent appointment.

C17 **MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

There had been no matters referred.

C18 **MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

There had been no matters received.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.