

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2022 at 7.00 pm

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

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), J Reynolds (Assistant Director - Legal and Governance) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

Also Present: R Woodcock (Public Speaker)

C79 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Mr Woodcock addressed Council. A summary of his statement is appended to these minutes.

C80 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Criscione, Day, Dean, Fairhurst, Lodge and Loughlin.

The Chair offered congratulations to Councillor Criscione and his family on the recent birth of his son and thanked Councillor Criscione for his service to the Council as Leader of the Conservative Group. He welcomed Councillor Smith as the new Conservative Group Leader.

Councillors Lemon and Reeve declared pecuniary interests in item 15 as share holders in Shell and BP and took no part in the debate or vote on that item.

Councillor Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 15 as a minor share holder in an oil exploration company, which did not meet the necessary threshold for a declaration, in the interests of transparency. He also declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 as a member of a Parish Council with items awaiting funding from the Local Highways Panel.

Councillors Merifield and Luck declared a non-pecuniary interest as members of a Parish Council with items awaiting funding from the Local Highways Panel.

C81 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 were approved as a correct record.

C82 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair provided a brief update on events he had attended since the previous meeting including an evening with the Dunmow Flitch team.

C83 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader of the Council said that at the last meeting she had omitted to thank Councillor Day for his contribution to the Cabinet as a hard working and dedicated Member.

She thanked Members for their warm reception of the Leader's diary that had recently been circulated.

Councillor Evans reported on the work of the Local Plan Leadership Group and notified Members of the intention to consult on the draft Local Plan in May 2022.

Councillor Pepper provided a report on community events running over the first quarter of the year, as well as meetings with and work undertaken with the Armed Forces Covenant. She went on to provide an update regarding the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and associated theme group meetings.

C84 CORPORATE PLAN 2022-26

Councillor Reeve presented the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026 and said that it remained unaltered from 2021.

He went on to summarise the four main themes within the Plan as:

- Putting residents first
- Active place-maker for our towns and villages
- Progressive custodian
- Champion for our district

Councillor Reeve said the importance of executing the most important priorities which currently includes the Local Plan, Council finances and the Climate Change Action Plan. He confirmed that as a result of the current financial situation the Council had been able to ring fence £1,000,000 for both the Climate Change Action Plan and the Economic Development Recovery Plan over a three year period, as well as a significant figure for sporting activities. He said that Councillor Sutton had made good progress executing Councillor Day's change

to the Plan in 2021 to strengthen focus on Youth Activities, despite challenges resulting from the pandemic.

Members discussed the Corporate Plan 2022-26. In summary, the following matters were raised:

- The Administration's aspirations still remained although it was acknowledged that the financial situation was challenging.
- Associated actions would be detailed in the new Corporate Plan Delivery Plan.
- Work had been undertaken with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to ensure Addenbrookes remained an NHS hospital for the district and there was also ongoing work with Harlow Princess Alexandra Hospital. The minutes of the meetings with the CCG could be shared.
- Questions were raised regarding the recent planning designation and whether quarterly reports on Planning Department performance had been shared with portfolio holders, the Chair of Planning and senior managers. It was confirmed that the East of England Local Government Association panel experts had been commissioned and reported to portfolio holders, the Planning Department and senior managers.
- In response to questions on the Youth Council, it was confirmed that they were still invited to attend meetings of Council and it was hoped that the low membership would be improved as Covid-19 measures were relaxed and opportunities would arise to canvass new members.
- It was requested that recycling performance statistics were circulated to Members.

Councillor Reeve recommended the approval of the draft Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026.

Councillor LeCount seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Plan for 2022-2026 be adopted.

C85 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23

Councillor Hargreaves was invited to present the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals for 2022-23. He detailed an amendment to the report for £100 to be credited to the Council Tax of those benefitting from Local Council Tax Support from the 31 January 2022. He indicated that he was happy to support the amendment.

Councillor Khan requested that Councillor Hargreaves retract his statement until the amendment had been proposed.

Councillor Hargreaves retracted his statement.

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals 2022 – 2023. He highlighted the following:

- Details of the proposed extra £150 relief for those living in Council Tax bands A – D properties, as recently announced by the Chancellor, would be paid directly to eligible residents whose bank details were already held. Letters would be despatched to obtain the bank details of other eligible residents to enable their payments to be processed.
- Thanks were given to the team of officers who had worked over the Christmas period, with some cancelling holiday to do so, as a result of the Government changing the rules on investments and borrowing in December 2021. The work ensured that Cabinet and officers had the opportunity to compare several investment strategy options and resulted in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) presented to Council.
- Details regarding the mitigating financial work in light of the recent planning designation and the potential loss of major planning application fees. This had been incorporated in the general fund budget for this year and the MTFS.
- Details regarding the proposed Council Tax increase of £5 per year on a band D property, an increase of 3.09%. Of the five preceptors, the District Council had the second lowest increase.
- The Council had a strong financial strategy with diversified income streams and continued to provide high quality services without the majority of the financial burden falling on local council tax payers. The budget proposed was balanced with no financial cuts proposed in 2022 – 2023.
- Despite the Government's imposed requirements, the Council maintained a substantial investment income of £5.7million. The portfolio showed a £42million capital gain by valuation in September 2021, and that was before building was completed in places. The Government now required the Council to set aside the minimum revenue provision to prematurely play down the borrowings and the new Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) rules prevent local authorities from running their portfolios efficiently, preventing selling and reinvesting at the optimum times. This forced the Council to build large reserves for long term costs on buildings that were unnecessary as the intention would be to retain the building only until the optimal sale date.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the budget strategies and reports and requested that the Council noted the Equalities Health Impact Assessment.

This was seconded by Councillor Reeve.

Councillor Khan was invited to table his amendment, published as follows:

The cost-of-living crisis has been growing in scale and impact over the last six months, with inflation reaching historic levels and yet to peak. Those on the lowest incomes are most exposed.

Whilst the crisis is already affecting households across Uttlesford, it is set to deepen further with rising inflation as well as a planned National Insurance hike in April. The increase in energy prices will push more of our households into fuel poverty. The Citizens Advice service in Uttlesford has seen a 35% rise in people accessing fuel debt advice in 2021

The Government has announced some assistance with a £150 payment to households in properties rated A to D. In addition, they have made provision for a £200 bill credit loan for households which will be automatically added to bills in October and then repaid by those households in equal instalments over four years from April 2023.

Data provided by the Section 151 Officer indicates that as of 31st January 2022, there are currently 3,334 claimants in Uttlesford who qualify for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. All claimants are subjected to means testing to determine the percentage they must pay. However, low-income pensioners and vulnerable people are protected, and receive 100% discount. Working age people, which equated to 948 of the claimants only receive partial support as per the Council's Local Council Tax Support Policy and are required to pay a minimum of 12.5% of the Council Tax bill.

We propose to help these people by providing a one-off cash rebate of £100 per household. The qualifying date to be eligible for the rebate was 31 January 2022. The rebate would be allocated to the household's Council Tax account. The total cost would be £94,800 to be funded from the MTFS Reserve.

Even after providing a £100 rebate, each of the 948 households will still have a Council Tax liability. Nobody will end up in the situation whereby the Local Council Tax Support they receive plus the £100 will be more than their Council Tax bill.

Supporting this amendment, Members will send a very strong message to low-income families in our district that we are helping them through targeted action at this time of high inflation, low benefit levels and soaring energy costs.

Councillor Isham seconded the amendment and urged the whole Council to support it.

Members discussed the proposal to provide a one-off £100 rebate per qualifying household.

Details regarding the member donations to Uttlesford Foodbank and The Citizen's Advice Bureau were requested.

Councillor Barker noted that she supported the motion but could not support the whole budget and asked for Council to vote separately on the amendment.

The Leader of the Council welcomed a collaborative budget setting process. She noted her support for the amendment.

Councillor Khan requested a recorded vote on the amendment. The recorded vote was as follows:

Councillor:	For, Against or Abstain
Armstrong	For
Asker	For
Bagnall	For
Barker	For
Caton	For
Coote	Abstain
De Vries	For
Driscoll	For
Emanuel	For
Evans	For
Foley	For
Freeman	For
Gregory	For
Hargreaves	For
Isham	For
Jones	For
Khan	For
Lavelle	For
LeCount	For
Lees	For
Lemon	For
Light	For
Luck	For
Merifield	For
Oliver	For
Pavitt	For
Pepper	For
Reeve	For
Sell	For
Smith	For
Sutton	For
Tayler	For

The resolution was carried with 31 for and 1 abstention. The amendment was incorporated into the substantive budget motion.

Members discussed the MTFS and budget proposals for 2022-23.

In summary:

- The Chief Executive was in discussion with Essex County Council regarding funding for the Local Highways Panel.
- Concerns were raised in regards to the financial impact of the planning designation and the potential loss of £560,000 as forecasted.
- The 4.9% increase in council rents had been taken to the Tenants Forum and Housing Board for consultation; while tenants were not happy about the increase, they understood why it was required.
- The number of council homes built under the administration had been made available and published with the latest Housing board papers.
- Only 160 responses to the budget consultation had been received. This was consistent with previous years and it was suggested that other topics, such as climate change, tended to generate more interest and therefore had a higher response rate.
- Reassurances were sought regarding the ongoing issues with Uttlesford Norse. It was important that tenants received the quality of service they were entitled to. The Council was working closely with Uttlesford Norse Ltd to resolve these problems.

The Chair indicated he would be taking the proposal to a vote.

Councillor Caton protested that he had wished to ask a clarification question on the most important debate the Council held each year. He stated that he would not vote as he had not been permitted to speak.

The Chair said that Councillor Caton's group had raised approximately 80% of the questions asked.

Councillor Foley suggested that the Chair permit Councillor Caton to ask his question and the Chair agreed.

Councillor Caton requested clarification over the Climate Change budget and requested a guarantee that the unspent budget would be spent or carried forward into the next administration.

Councillor Hargreaves confirmed that the £1million was to be spent over three years and any unspent budget would be carried into the following year. He noted that the team had sourced significant further grant funding for the projects.

Councillor Caton requested clarification on the Commercial Strategy which stated that the Council owned the land at Chesterford Research Park, however he believed that the Council owed 50% of the land. Additionally, as the new financial situation would restrict spending, how would subsequent development be funded once the allocated £12million had been spent.

Councillor Hargreaves confirmed that Aspire owned 50% of the land Chesterford Research Park and that the Council were permitted to continue investment in properties they already had acquired.

The Chair indicated he would be taking the substantive motion to a vote. The Council Tax resolution as setout in Appendix I was necessitated by law to be determined by a recorded vote. The Chair requested a recorded vote.

Councillor:	For, Against or Abstain
Armstrong	For
Asker	For
Bagnall	For
Barker	Against
Caton	For
Coote	Abstain
De Vries	For
Driscoll	For
Emanuel	For
Evans	For
Foley	For
Freeman	For
Gregory	For
Hargreaves	For
Isham	Abstain
Jones	For
Khan	For
Lavelle	For
LeCount	For
Lees	For
Lemon	Abstain
Light	Abstain
Luck	For
Merifield	For
Oliver	Abstain
Pavitt	For
Pepper	For
Reeve	For
Sell	For
Smith	Abstain
Sutton	For
Tayler	For

The resolution was carried with 25 for, 1 against and 6 abstentions.

RESOLVED to:

A) Section 25 Report - Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves

- I. Take account of the advice in the report when determining the 2022/23 General Fund budget and Council Tax.
- II. Review the risk assessment relating to the robustness of estimates as detailed in the report.
- III. Set the minimum safe contingency level for 2022/23 at £1.597 million for the General Fund and £0.546 million for the Housing Revenue Account.
- IV. Agree that no transfers to or from the Working Balance should be built into the 2022/23 budget.

B) Commercial Strategy

- V. Approve The Commercial Strategy 2022 – 2027.

C) Medium Term Financial Strategy

- VI. Approves the Medium Term Financial Strategy and note the Budget Consultation report.

D) Treasury Management Strategy

- VII. Approves The Treasury Management Strategy.

E) Capital Strategy

- VIII. Approve the Capital Strategy.
- IX. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.

F) Capital Programme

- X. Approve the 5 year Capital Programme.

G) Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- XI. Approve the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2022/23.
- XII. Approve the increase of 4.9% for Housing and Supported Accommodation rents, Garage Rents and Lifeline Service.
- XIII. Approve increases in line with actual costs for Housing Related Support charges, Intensive Housing Management charges and Heating, Service and Sewerage charges.
- XIV. Approve the updated use of reserves.

H) General Fund Revenue and Council Tax

- XV. Approve the General Fund Budget for 2022/23
- XVI. Approve the General Fund Council Tax requirement of £6,403,772.
- XVII. Approve the transfer of reserves including the deficit for 2022/23 to be drawn from the MTFS reserve in the Core Reserves.
- XVIII. Approve the schedule of fees and charges as set out in Annexe H6.
- XIX. Approve that delegated authority is given to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to amend the trade waste fees.

I) Council Tax Resolution

- XX. Approve the Council Tax Resolution for 2022/23.

J) Equalities Health Impact Assessment

- XXI. To note the information provided in the EqHIA's

K) One-off £100 rebate to working age claimants of LCTS

- XXII. To provide a £100 rebate to the qualifying 948 households as stipulated in the amendment as accepted.

C86

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - CHIEF OFFICER APPOINTMENTS

The Chair indicated that he intended to move to agenda item 12 in proceedings.

The Leader of the Council presented the report regarding the permanent arrangements of the Appointments Committee. She recommended that that the Appointments Committee be established on a permanent basis and its remit extended to Chief Officer Appointments.

Councillor Driscoll seconded the proposal.

The Chair moved to a vote. The resolution was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Appointments Committee be established on a permanent basis and its remit extended to:

- I. All new Chief Officer appointments, whether or not statutory, save for those not reserved exclusively for candidates drawn from the Council's existing staff (see Art 2 Part 4 of the Council's Constitution) as part of but not limited to the case of adjustments to the overall departmental structure of the Council pursuant to Art 12.4.2 of Part 2 of the Council's Constitution.

- II. That membership of the said Committee be composed of 3 Residents for Uttlesford, 1 Liberal Democrat, 1 Conservative, 1 Green and 1 Independent member, including at least one member of the Executive, on the nomination of Group Leaders

C87

PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Pay Policy Statement. He explained that at the time of publishing the Pay Policy Statement, there had been no agreement regarding the 2021/2022 and 2022/23 annual cost of living increases, which were negotiated on behalf of councils between the Local Government Association and Trade Unions. He recommended approval of the Pay Policy Statement and delegation of responsibility to the Assistant Director – Corporate Services to update the published Pay Policy Statement with this year's Pay Multiple and average salary figures as at 31 March 2022 once agreement had been reached between the Local Government Association and Trade Unions.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

Councillor Barker asked whether there was a standard benchmark to compare with other authorities. She requested further information to benchmark against other local authorities.

Councillor Hargreaves agreed it would be useful to compare with similar authorities and once the figures were available a benchmarking exercise would be undertaken.

The Chair moved to a vote. The resolution was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve the Pay Policy Statement
- II. Grant delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Corporate Services to update the Pay Policy Statement and associated documents with pay multiple and average salary figures as at 31 March 2022 and with revised salary information once the 2021/22 & 2022/23 national pay awards are agreed.

C88

BUSINESS RATES RELIEFS AND GRANTS

Councillor Hargreaves presented the updated Business Rates Relief Policy, which recommended that Members approved the updated policy using their discretionary powers under S47 of the Local Government Act 1988 as amended to include:

- Extension of Retail Relief Scheme for 2022-2023 only
- Extension to the Transitional & Supporting Small Businesses scheme 2022/2023 only

He also requested that Members note the report for the additional Covid 19 grants and funding, set out in the report and Appendices B and C determined by an urgent Officer Decision:

- The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant
- Covid 19 Additional Relief Funding (CARF)

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposals.

Councillor Lavelle provided positive feedback from his Great Dunmow ward, which had been particularly complimentary about the distribution of grant funding by the District Council. He commended Officers for their important work on this matter.

The Chair moved to a vote. The resolution was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Adopt the updated policy using their discretionary powers under S47 of the Local Government Act 1988 as amended to include:
 - a) Extension of Retail Relief Scheme for 2022-2023 only
 - b) Extension to the Transitional & Supporting Small Businesses scheme 2022/2023 only.
- II. To note the report for the additional Covid 19 grants and funding, set out in the report and Appendices B and C determined by an urgent Officer Decision:
 - c) The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant
 - d) Covid 19 Additional Relief Funding (CARF)

Councillor Foley withdrew a previous remark to Councillor Sell and apologised. The apology was accepted.

C89 **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS - 2022-23**

The Calendar of Meetings for 2022 – 2023 was noted.

Councillor Driscoll requested that a budget only meeting be scheduled for the following year.

The Chair agreed and asked that the Chief Executive provide feedback at the next meeting.

The Director of Corporate and Financial Services said that the Pay Policy and Corporate Plan items were important elements of the budget setting meeting, with the latter providing steer as to what the budget sought to deliver.

C90 APPOINTMENTS TO LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Members considered the appointment of Councillors Driscoll and Lodge to the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee in place of Councillors Day and Lees.

Councillor Smith notified Members that the risk register had been updated to include the risk of not enough Members on the Planning Committee having received training in the result of an election and asked whether the same risk could be added for the Licensing Committee.

Councillor Lees proposed the motion. This was seconded by Councillor Lavelle.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Driscoll and Lodge to the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee in place of Councillors Day and Lees.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9.00pm. The meeting would be reconvened on Monday 28th February 2022 at 7.00pm to resolve the remaining items of business.

C91 MEETING RECONVENED - APOLOGIES FOR 28 FEBRUARY 2022

The meeting was reconvened at 7.00pm on Monday 28th February 2022.

The Chair reconvened the meeting and asked for a minute's silence on the terrible loss of life in the war in Ukraine.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barker, Criscione, Day, Dean, De Vries, Eke, Foley, Fairhurst, Khan, Loughlin, Oliver and Reeve.

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor LeCount was invited to clarify his statement made at Council on 22 February 2022, regarding the historic consideration of the Planning Advisory Service's recommendations for the Planning Department at Scrutiny Committee in 2018, under the chairmanship of Councillor Dean. Councillor LeCount apologised to Councillor Dean and the meeting for his mistake as it had been considered by the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee, not the Scrutiny Committee.

C92 MEMBER MOTION: DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

FOR THE UTTLESFORD SUSTAINABLE LOCAL PLAN & SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Councillor Isham presented his motion regarding the proposed development of an evaluation framework for the Uttlesford Sustainable Local Plan and supplementary planning document to ensure that Council's core values were adhered to and that the Council's highest environmental standards were adopted and implemented now and in the future. He proposed the motion set out on the agenda.

Councillor Light seconded the proposal and asked Council to support this motion to help mitigate Climate Change and shape the future of Uttlesford. She noted that the interim Climate Change Policy approved a year ago included a statement that developers were expected to adhere to this policy, and acknowledged that unfortunately this policy had not yet been implemented. She went on to explain that the Local Plan was not just about policies for developers, it was about people, opportunities for everyone, employment, education, health and well-being, land management and environment, renewable energy and infrastructure.

Councillor Evans said that it was not appropriate for the Council to debate the principles of social justice, economic justice and environment justice as part of Local Plan development and would be more appropriate in a central Government political manifesto. He reiterated the importance of focusing on delivering the Local Plan in a timely manner and in a form that stood the best chance of passing examination by the Planning Inspectors. He noted that the Plan was required to meet the test of legality and soundness as set against national policy and the introduction of an additional framework, overseen by an unidentified body would undermine and possibly delay the task. He explained that the first test proposed by Councillor Isham, titled "Real Local Housing Need" called for UDC's housing assessment to be based on accurate forecast local need, whereas the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) demanded use of standard methodology to determine housing numbers unless exceptional circumstances prescribed otherwise. He confirmed that the Local Plan Leadership Group (LPLG) had already reviewed that topic and no exceptional circumstances were identified. Furthermore, he confirmed that Councillors Light and Isham had been advised by Planning Policy Officers that the motion went well beyond matters that could be justified in pure planning terms. He noted that a number of the aspirations were excellent and he would like to see them incorporated in due course but some of the suggested policies would not pass the lawfulness test. He reiterated that the policies advanced within the draft Local Plan must be supportable by national policy terms to prevent another failed plan. Furthermore, the Council were statutorily required to include Climate Change, and all other applicable ecological policies, as supplementary planning documents that would be examined alongside the draft Local Plan. Such documents were powerful and had the advantage of being capable of change as needs and evolving policies dictated. He noted that some of Councillor Isham's objectives were already being obtained by the application of the interim Climate Change policy document. In summary, he said that this motion would not be helpful to the efficient, timely delivery and adoption of the Local Plan and requested that the motion was rejected.

Councillor Bagnall said he disagreed with the motion but fully supported the sentiments behind it. He proposed to raise the issue via the LPLG and suggested that the items could be addressed as a discussion paper to inform policies and supplementary documents.

Councillor Isham confirmed that the motion had been through several iterations and suggested that the framework did not need to be restrictive and could provide suitable flexibility and develop together alongside the Local Plan. He highlighted the need to nail down any ambiguity that was open to interpretation.

Councillor Pavitt said he believed that approval of the motion could potentially compromise the delivery and adoption of the Local Plan.

The Chief Executive said that the Rules of Procedure (Rule 11.5) permitted Members to refer this matter to an appropriate body or individual if Council were minded to.

The Leader of the Council said this could have been addressed through the LPLG. She noted that the advice from Planning Officers was that the expectations set out in the motion were beyond planning requirements and would possibly not be approved by the Planning Inspector.

The Chair took the motion to a vote.

The motion was rejected.

C93 MEMBER MOTION: ROBIN HOOD TAX

Councillor Caton presented his motion regarding the introduction of a “Robin Hood” tax on oil and gas firms.

He proposed the motion set out on the agenda. This was seconded by Councillor Light.

Councillor Bagnall said the District Council were unable to take action on this national political issue and urged Members to reject the motion.

Councillor Isham noted that the motion called on the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which was within the Council's gift.

Councillor Sell said that the motion was an opportunity for the Council to acknowledge that some residents would really struggle with energy cost increases. He asked members to support the motion.

Councillor Caton confirmed that the motion was an attempt to influence Government and urged Councillors to support the motion.

The Chair moved to the vote.

The motion was rejected.

C94

MEMBER MOTION: YOUTH COUNCIL SUPPORT

Councillor Light presented her motion regarding support of the Youth Council. She proposed the motion set out on the agenda.

Councillor Lemon seconded the proposal.

Councillor Lemon confirmed how difficult it had been for the Youth Council during lockdown and how this had influenced the reduction in membership. He questioned whether adequate support was in place during this period. He urged Members to support the motion.

Councillor Sutton said she was disappointed with this motion and noted that she could have been approached for a Youth Council update. She went on to confirm that the Youth Council continued to be adequately resourced and supported. She provided the following information:

- Schools had been under increased pressure during the pandemic, resulting in smaller groups representing the Youth Council at Local Plan consultation meetings.
- Two Youth Council members continued to form part of the Climate Change Working Group.
- Before the pandemic the Youth Council was busy working with the Mental Health Working Group.
- Zoom meetings were undertaken occasionally but momentum was lost when working group meeting activities ceased.

Now restrictions had lifted the Council and community team would work with schools and other agencies in support of young people and to reinvigorate the Youth Council.

Councillor Smith welcomed Councillor Sutton's update and asked if the reason for the reduction in members of the Youth Council was available.

Councillor Sutton said that the membership numbers had reduced because previous members had "grown up".

Councillor Light said that she was pleased that efforts were being made to re-engage and revive the Youth Council. She asked that more resources were injected into the Youth Council.

The Chair moved to a vote.

The motion was rejected.

Councillor Luck left the meeting 7.50pm.

MEMBER MOTION: COMMITTEE SYSTEM WORKING GROUP

Councillor Light presented her motion regarding the proposed establishment of a Committee System Working Group.

She requested that a democratic committee system be established through a working group chaired by Councillor Coote to enable Full Council to make decisions and fully represent residents.

She proposed the motion set out on the agenda.

Councillor Sell seconded the proposal.

Councillor Coote confirmed that he would not chair the proposed working group.

Councillor Sell said that he felt more involved with the work of the Council when it was a committee system. Members were told in 2011 that they were one of very few Councils operating a committee system and that they had to move to a cabinet system. The majority of Councillors were not happy as they were concerned that they would lose influence and power in decision making. He said that a number of authorities and reinstated a committee system, and, by way of example, that Sheffield City Council had a referendum last year and would move to a committee system in May 2022. He believed such a system would bring better governance, more transparency and would allow residents to have more of a say. He noted that Full Council was often time restricted and was not a policy making forum, and the move to a committee system would benefit all councillors. He urged Members to support the motion.

Councillor Jones said that he would not support the motion as he saw little evidence signifying that a committee system would be better than a cabinet system. He said R4U had pledged to review the current system and this review had been undertaken by the Governance Review Working Group. He said that the cabinet system was democratic and transparency had been increased under the current Administration.

Councillor Pavitt said that if moving to a committee system ensured an end to the party grandstanding he would be supportive, but he acknowledged that he would require guidance on this and the intricacies of moving to a committee system.

Councillor Lavelle confirmed that the motion gave him concerns on the following issues and that he would not support the motion:

- The motion instructed the Council to change the system, not evaluate the system.
- The motion stated that the cabinet system was undemocratic; he did not accept this statement.

- He noted that of the 27 Liberal Democratic controlled district, borough and city councils 16 operated a cabinet system and 5 operated an executive system.

Councillor Caton said there was not enough engagement of non-executive members in policy making under the current system.

Councillor Bagnall noted that the motion lacked thought and evidence and should have captured the resource, financial and process implications. He said that he would not support the motion.

Councillor Isham said that the administration had changed its position on the Committee system; originally they had committed to changing the system, now it was only a commitment to reviewing the system.

Councillor Foley confirmed that the flawed wording of the motion was unfortunate and noted that he had served under cabinet and committee systems and could identify problems with both systems.

Councillor Gregory raised a point of order; he noted his disappointment that Councillor Caton was interrupted by the Chair whilst giving his statement and noted that Councillors should be listened to with respect and allowed to make his points.

Councillor Light confirmed that research had already been conducted and that was why the changes had been suggested. She confirmed the need to be more democratic in the decision making process and asked Councillor Coote to remind Members of his statement at the conclusion of the Governance Review Working Group.

In response, the Chair recalled that he had said there was no common ground between members for him to recommend a way forward.

Councillor Light proposed that members review the options in view of the anticipated changes over the next few years.

The Chair moved to the vote.

The motion was rejected.

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm.

Summary of Public Statement(s)

Mr Woodcock, a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet spoke on an urgently needed NHS support service issue previously communicated to the Council in July 2020 and more recently to UDC officers and Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council (SMPC). He informed the meeting of his intention to request further help from MP K Badenoch.

He asked whether the community had been made aware of a pharmaceutical needs survey and noted that to dispense NHS prescriptions a license must be granted by NHS England, which relied on Essex County Council's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) for guidance.

He stated that in 2018 neither Uttlesford District Council (UDC) or SMPC received notification of surveys and therefore could not participate. The 2018 PNA was currently being reviewed. The 2018 PNA stated that nearly all of the Essex population could reach a pharmacy within twenty minutes, but he said this failed to consider climate change and rested on the assumption that all residents had a car. His petition, started in January 2022 and signed by 664 residents, supported the need for a licensed pharmacy to be located next door to Stansted Mountfitchet doctor's surgery. Mr Woodcock also highlighted access issues to the Boots pharmacy on the High Street for residents requiring wheelchairs.