

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees
Councillors A Coote, J Evans, R Freeman, N Hargreaves,
L Pepper and M Sutton

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

Also in attendance: Councillors Fairhurst (deputising for the Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Green Group).

CAB82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Armstrong and Reeve as members of Cabinet.

Councillor Caton, Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Green Group, sent his apologies and Councillor Fairhurst deputised in his place.

Councillor Gregory, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, and Councillor Smith, Leader of the Conservative Group, sent their apologies.

CAB83 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

CAB84 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions from non-executive members.

CAB85 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

There were no reports to consider from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

CAB86 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

The following delegated decisions were noted:

- Response to CAA Consultation: Revised Airspace Change Process Guidance (CAP1616) – 8 March 2023.
- Response to DLUHC consultation: Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy – 2 March 2023.
- Designation of Little Hallingbury Neighbourhood Plan Area – 28 February 2023.

CAB87 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 in regards to Assets of Community Value and Local Heritage List.

CAB88 ZERO CARBON COMMUNITIES FUND OUTCOME

Councillor Pepper presented the report regarding the Zero Carbon Communities Fund, which stated that the Climate Change programme had agreed an allocation of £300,000 over the next two years to enable funding of community projects that would support the delivery of priorities within the Council's Climate Change Strategy. Twenty applications had been received by the closing date, with a total of £250,000 funding requested. The evaluation and selection of projects took place in January and applications were independently evaluated, with eleven projects approved to receive grant awards. She said the second round would take place in August 2023. She proposed approval of the recommendation stated in the report.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the proposal.

Councillor Lees said she had received correspondence from a resident which praised the application process as it had brought people together in order to help the local community.

In response to a question regarding publicity of the Fund, Councillor Pepper said the scheme was promoted via the "Let's Talk Uttlesford" programme.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- I. To note the evaluation and selection process that has been undertaken to determine the successful projects in this funding round.
- II. To approve the list of successful projects agreed by the selection panel and listed in Appendix 3.

CAB89 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Councillor Evans presented the Developer Contributions supplementary planning document report, which recommended that the Developer Contributions guidance be adopted as a formal supplementary planning document (SPD) and form part of the development plan for the district. He said the production of the SPD formed part of the s106 agreement implementation pathway, which was part of the Planning Service Implementation Plan. The document set out the procedures that the Council would follow in negotiating s106 agreements and summarised the evidence base for calculating individual contributions. He commended the report and proposed the recommendation.

In response to questions regarding the viability policy, the Director of Planning said viability requirements were set in national policy but the council could make its expectations of developers clear in terms of having an independent audit of viability assessments submitted.

In response to a comment from Councillor Fairhurst regarding misunderstandings surrounding s106 agreements, Councillor Evans said the benefit of this document was that it was written in plain English and councillors should promote the SPD with their parish and town councils. He said it was not a panacea for “rewarding” communities subject to development but it did make the Council’s expectations of developers clear.

In response to a question from Councillor Lees regarding bio-diversity quotas, the Director of Planning said the national target was 10% but Essex councils were considering “clubbing” together in order to go above that. Options were being explored.

Councillor Freeman seconded the proposal.

The recommendation was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve the Developer Contributions SPD for adoption.

CAB90 MEMBERS NEW HOMES BONUS SPEND AND RECIPIENTS 2022/23

Councillor Sutton spoke to the Members’ New Home Bonus Spend and Recipients report, which provided details of the 2022/23 New Homes Bonus Member Ward Initiative grant allocations.

The report was noted.

CAB91 WORKFORCE PLAN 2023-2027

Councillor Lees presented the Workforce Plan 2023-27 report, which demonstrated how the Council intended to create an agile workforce that could help achieve the ambitious goals set out in the Corporate Plan and Blueprint Uttlesford. It was a four year plan which would be reviewed annually to ensure it

remained fit for purpose. Furthermore, an Action Plan would accompany the Workforce Plan, setting out specific actions to achieve the stated aspirations and target dates for each. This was a 'work in progress' and was subject to staff engagement and feedback.

In response to a question from Councillor Coote, the Human Resource Manager said the Plan would be communicated to staff in June. Staff would be given the opportunity to prioritise actions then, such as staff development.

Councillor Coote said there was no agenda and further input was required from staff in creating this future programme.

The Chief Executive said this was a work in progress and would be co-created with staff. A Staff Conference was taking place in June and this Plan would be discussed and built upon.

Cabinet members commended the report and said it was a good starting point.

Councillor Coote said he wanted more involvement from staff and the Trade Unions. Further work was required.

The HR Manager said this was a live document and the Plan would continue to be worked upon and improved. Staff would be engaged and would participate in the process.

The report was noted.

CAB92 BUDGET 2022/23 - QUARTER 3 FORECAST OUTTURN

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Quarter 3 Forecast Outturn report, which detailed the financial performance of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Treasury Management. The report was based upon actual expenditure and income from April to December, and predicted a forecast for the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

He highlighted overspends and underspends, virements required and forecasts for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and the Capital Programme. He said that the revenue generated by the Council's investment portfolio had increased to nearly £17million in the past four years. He proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report.

In response to a question regarding financial assistance to leisure centres, the Director of Corporate and Financial Services said the Government had released £63million to help modernise swimming pools. However, the work required to decarbonise existing swimming pools was very expensive.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

The recommendation was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Note the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme forecast outturn positions; and
- II. Approve the General Fund virements set out at paragraph 19.

CAB93 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2023/24 - UPDATE

Councillor Hargreaves spoke to the report regarding the Housing Revenue Account 2023/24, which referred to the significant work undertaken following the self-referral to the social housing regulator and the housing stock control survey. Interim findings had now allowed officers to begin to project the cost implications to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of dealing with the hazards, such as damp and mould. The pace of all of this work has been such that the full financial implications were not fully developed at the time of setting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2023/24. Cabinet was therefore recommended to approve additional one-off revenue expenditure of up to £1 million during 2023/24, to be funded by a reduction in revenue contributions to capital. He proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Members discussed the issue of mould, damp and ventilation requirements. There was recognition that ventilation was a factor but the age of the housing stock, across the nation as well as in the district, needed to be taken into account and this appeared to be the primary reason for mould in the majority of cases. Work would continue on the Council's housing stock and information on ventilation requirements would be shared with tenants in due course.

Councillor Freeman said the Council was right to self-refer itself to the social housing regulator and commended the Chief Executive for his advice on the subject. He seconded the proposal.

The recommendation was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- i. Approve additional one-off HRA revenue expenditure of up to £1 million in 2023/24, as set out at Appendix A;
- ii. Note that this additional expenditure will be financed by replacing up to £1 million of planned revenue contributions to capital with currently uncommitted capital receipts (under the principle already set out in the Capital Programme 2023/24 that capital receipts be used before revenue contributions where possible); and
- iii. In the event that the capital receipt from the Walden Place redevelopment is not received by 31 March 2024, approve a temporary increase in HRA internal borrowing of up to £1 million until such time as the receipt arrives, at which point the borrowing will be repaid.

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm.