

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors J Evans, N Hargreaves (Vice-Chair) and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: J Etherington (Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits), P Holt (Chief Executive), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

Also present: Councillors S Barker (Conservative Group Leader), R Gooding (Conservative Group), N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee), J Moran (Conservative Group) and G Sell (Liberal Democrat Group Leader)

CAB58 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

The Leader announced that Agenda Item 14 (Car Park Tariff and Changes to the Management and Use of Car Parks) would be moved forward and taken after the standing items.

The following speakers addressed the Cabinet. Copies of their statements have been appended to the minutes:

- Julie Redfern
- Matt Gurnett
- Toni Gabell
- Matt Grady
- Shara Vickers

Councillor Hargreaves made the following comments, in response to points raised by the speakers:

- Catons Lane in Saffron Walden would become a chargeable car park, with an available season ticket option.
- The parameters for dealing with petitions was outlined within the petition scheme in the Council's constitution. Saffron BID's petition was accepted as a valid petition, and the number of signatures triggered a discussion at the Scrutiny Committee.
- The Council had many statutory duties, and the funding for this was restricted both by government and Council Tax rises. Discretionary revenue from car parking was one way to help balance the budgetary need.

CAB59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received by Councillors Coote, Reeve and Pavitt.

Councillor Gregory declared that he was a user of the district's car parks. The Chief Executive clarified that all members were potentially users of the public car parks, and it did not need to be declared.

For transparency, Councillor Sell also declared that he was a member of Stansted Parish Council who owned the Crafton Green Car Park.

CAB60 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 2023 and 9th January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

CAB61 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were none.

CAB62 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

The Chair of Scrutiny Committee provided an update on matters considered at its previous meeting.

He said that the Committee had noted the amendments made to the Corporate Plan, in particular the inclusion of the Council's strategies within the Performance Indicators. When members discussed the upcoming budget, it was felt that the General Fund was robust, but there were concerns around the long-term maintenance of the Housing Revenue Account.

In respect of the Car Park Tariff Review, the Committee noted the range and extent of price rises as well as the alterations to the original proposed. He said that he was surprised that the petition was withdrawn at the last moment.

Finally, he confirmed that a Task and Finish group had been set-up on Operational Resilience with the Terms of Reference and a schedule of both public and private meetings to be shortly agreed.

CAB63 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

The following delegated decisions were taken by Cabinet Members since the previous Cabinet meeting:

- Decision - Establishment of Local Plan Panel on 31 January 2024.
- Decision - Designation of Lindsell Neighbourhood Parish Area and Lindsell Parish Neighbourhood Forum on 11 January 2024.

CAB64 REPORT ON ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE DETERMINED BY THE ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE AND LOCAL HERITAGE LIST COMMITTEE (STANDING ITEM)

There were none.

CAB65 CAR PARK TARIFF AND CHANGES TO THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF CAR PARKS

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Car Park Review and Consultation Responses. He confirmed that there had been alternations to the proposals, including a reduction to the season ticket rates, which were available within the supplementary agenda pack. He addressed a number of comments raised within the consultation, such as the free parking scheme in Ely and the unviability of a Park and Ride scheme.

He requested members made a decision as to the whether to bring the seasons tickets for Stansted in line with those for Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow; it was noted that this, however, would be a significant percentage increase in comparison to the other areas.

The following points were raised:

- It was part of the Great Dunmow Co-op's retail offering to refund customers for their parking at the Chequers Lane Car Park. This was not a formal arrangement with the Council.
- Free season tickets had previously been issued to parents dropping off and picking up their children from St Marys Primary School to address the limited parking issues in the area. As these season tickets had no time restrictions, and thus parents could use the car park freely outside of these hours, it was proposed that an alternative option be set up to assist in traffic congestion during the school hours.
- The newly introduced hybrid season ticket would be purchased and administered through MiPermit. An Enforcement Officer would be able to use this app to check the registration plates of a vehicle and see how many days had been used.
- The North Essex Parking Partnership currently managed both the on and off-street parking provisions for the Council. This contract would be extended for the new arrangements.
- Waitrose plc, the joint owner of Fairycroft Road Car Park, had formally objected to the tariff increases. There was a dispute as to whether the branch had received payments for their share of the income generated and officers confirmed that the last payment was made in October 2023.
- The proposed price rises were not disproportioned to the charges of neighbouring authorities.

- The petitioner's suggestion to offer free parking on a Sunday by raising the Saturday tariff had not been considered, however there was scope to examine this as part of the biannual review.
- There were concerns that the proposals for Stansted would have a detrimental impact to those who were employed locally as well as push more parking into residential side roads already affected by the issue of airport fly-parking.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the recommendations set out in both the committee and supplementary reports, however requested that the Stansted season tickets be set at the same level as Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

A copy of the agreed tariffs have been appended to the minutes.

RESOLVED: that following consideration of the consultation responses and the petition submitted by Saffron Walden BID.

- Approve the parking tariffs and changes to the management of the car parks as set out in paragraph 10, and as amended in paragraph 11 of the supplementary report.
- Agree the season ticket option for Stansted to be as set out in table 4.
- Officers be authorised to implement the approved tariff and management changes as set out in the timetable at paragraph 50 of the committee report.

CAB66 **LORD BUTLER LEISURE CENTRE - RAAC**

The Leader announced Agenda Item 10 (Lord Butler Leisure Centre – RAAC) would be moved forward.

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding RAAC and Lord Butler Leisure Centre in Saffron Walden. He confirmed that the required work was now complete, and the Council had no legal obligation to contribute to the costs. The contribution would be made in the spirit of partnership working and would be paid for by an underspend from within the PFI budget which had been budgeted to support the significant increases in the cost of utilities.

Members welcomed the corrective works which had been undertaken, and the reopening of the squash court.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the recommendation as set out in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Lees.

RESOLVED: to approve funding a 25% share of the cost of the RAAC in the sum of £41,147.

CAB67 **ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING (SPORTS PROVISION MAJOR PROJECTS)**

The Leader announced Agenda Item 12 (Allocation of Grant Funding – Sports Provision Major Projects) would be moved forward.

Councillor Sutton presented the report on the allocation of Grant Funding for Sports Provision Major Projects. She gave thanks to officers and proposed the approval of the two grants, as recommended by the grants panel.

In response to questions from Councillor Sell, officers clarified that previous allocations of the grant funding had gone to a range of projects across the district, however there would be no further allocations due to changes around the rules for generating income from assets. The Council were working with the voluntary sector to find alternative funding streams, including building a pipeline of future need to prepare organisations for government funding.

It was also confirmed that the criteria for applying for the grants was circulated and organisations were chased on several occasions where it was found that documentation was missing in their application.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendations outlined within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Hargreaves.

RESOLVED: that

- i. A grant of £37,000 is awarded to Takeley Parish Council for major improvements to the recreation ground.
- ii. A grant of £17,000 is awarded to Dunmow United Football Club towards rebuilding their clubhouse, which was removed due to asbestos.

CAB68 **QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL FORECAST - 2023/24**

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Quarter 2 Financial Forecast for 2023/24. He said that there was a forecast net underspend on the General Fund of £1.286m meaning that the actual deficit to be funded from the MTFs reserve in 2023/24 was now predicted to be £1.654m. Members were asked to approve two revenue virements, one from Planning and another in Information Governance, as well as three reserve movements and the repurposing of the HRA revenue projects reserve.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker, officers confirmed that the new external audit framework had commenced in April 2023, and the PSAA had raised the scale fees by 150%.

In addition, officers clarified that Uttlesford Norse Limited was not a trading company, and therefore the profit share from the partnership was recycled Council money.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the recommendations outlined within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED: to

- i. Note the contents of this report, in particular the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital programme forecast outturn positions, and updated prudential indicators.
- ii. Approve the General Fund revenue virements set out at paragraphs 20-21.
- iii. Approve the General Fund reserve movements set out at paragraphs 29-34, namely:
 - i. to separately identify £1 million of the £6.903 million Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve balance as at 1 April 2023 as a transformation reserve;
 - ii. to transfer £1 million from the business rates reserve to the transformation reserve; and
 - iii. to transfer £4 million from the business rates reserve to the MTFS reserve.
- iv. Approve the repurposing of the £160,000 HRA revenue projects reserve as a transformation reserve, and the transfer of £420,000 of the forecast HRA surplus into this reserve in 2023/24, as set out at paragraph 41.

Councillor Gregory left the meeting at 20:30.

CAB69 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER REPORT - 2023/24

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Treasury Management Quarter 2 Report for 2023/24.

The report was noted.

CAB70 ENDING INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES

Councillor Lees presented the report on ending Introductory Tenancies. She said that the removal of Introductory Tenancies would provide more stability for Council Housing tenants and enable them to settle into their home. Furthermore, it would be a better use of Housing Officers' time in order to focus on a new programme of tenancy audits for all tenants.

She confirmed that a further paper would be brought considering the succession rights of tenancies, following further discussion at the Housing Board.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendations set out within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Sutton.

RESOLVED: to

- i. approve the ending of introductory tenancies and the granting of secure tenancies to all new tenants.
- ii. approve and adopt the revised Tenancy Policy, pending further review.
- iii. approve the issue of new secure tenancies to all tenants currently on introductory tenancies unless there is current enforcement action being taken to end the tenancy.

CAB71 ZERO CARBON COMMUNITIES GRANTS

Councillor Sutton presented the report for Zero Carbon Communities Grant report. She confirmed that there were 15 projects recommended, as detailed in Appendix 2.

Members commended the successful applications. It was confirmed that the funding would not be repeated, due to amendments to the governments rules around generating income from investments.

Councillor Sutton recommended approval of the recommendations set out within the report. This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED: to

- i. Note the evaluation and selection process that has been undertaken to determine the successful projects in this funding round.
- ii. Approve the list of successful projects agreed by the selection panel as listed in Appendix 2.
- iii. Note that five of the successful applications (Appendix 2, nos. 1, 2, 10, 12, 15) meet the Rural England Prosperity Fund criteria for capital funding, for community net zero infrastructure projects. These projects are to receive full funding.

CAB72 CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27

Councillor Lees presented the revised Corporate Plan for 2023-27. She highlighted that, following consideration at two meetings of the Scrutiny Committee, a number of recommendations had been implemented such as the inclusion of every Council strategy within the Performance Indicators.

Councillor Barker requested that a report be brought forward around broadband coverage in the district as AI was not possible when there were still areas without coverage.

Councillor Lees proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Hargreaves.

RESOLVED: that the updated Corporate Plan 2023-2027 is recommended to Council for approval.

Councillor Barker left the meeting at 20:58

CAB73 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-2029 AND ANNUAL BUDGET 2024/25**

Councillor Hargreave presented the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-29 and Annual Budget 2024/25. He thanked officers for their work and drew members attention to a number of points including the freeze of Green Waste charges, the increase in both Council Tax and Social Housing rent and the capital fund spends on additional provision for bin collections.

He concluded to say that this was a cautious budget. The Council needed to find £6.9m in net savings that year, of which £2.1m had already been found from Blueprint Uttlesford. Providing that Blueprint Uttlesford continued to deliver, the Council were on track to balance the deficit within five years.

Councillor Lees noted that there had only been 147 responses to the Budget Consultation and requested that more be done to get further responses in future.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed that the recommendations outlined in paragraph 6 of the report go to Full Council. This was seconded by Councillor Sutton.

RESOLVED: to

- i. note and have regard to the section 25 report when considering the budgets for 2024/25;
- ii. note the risk assessment relating to the robustness of estimates as set out at paragraph 9 of the section 25 report;
- iii. recommend to Council that the working balances for 2024/25 be set at £1.909million for the General Fund and £654,000 for the Housing Revenue Account;
- iv. recommend to Council the approval of the Commercial Strategy 2024-29;
- v. note the key risks and assumptions set out at paragraph 30 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029;
- vi. recommend to Council the approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- vii. recommend to Council the approval of an increase in the sector limit for other investments from £2million to £3million, as detailed at paragraph 50 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25;

- viii. recommend to Council the setting of the treasury management prudential indicators as set out at paragraphs 63-71 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- ix. recommend to Council the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- x. recommend to Council the approval of an increase in both the authorised limit and operational boundary for other long term liabilities from £5million to £10 million, as set out in paragraphs 25-26 of the Capital Strategy 2024/25;
- xi. recommend to Council the approval of the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 as set out at Annexe E1;
- xii. recommend to Council the setting of the capital prudential indicators as summarised at Annexe E2 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- xiii. recommend to Council the approval of the Capital Strategy 2024/25 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);
- xiv. recommend to Council the approval of the Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2028/29, including the planned application of capital financing set out at Annexe F4;
- xv. recommend to Council the approval of increases in HRA rents as follows:
 - General needs, supported accommodation and temporary accommodation – a 7.7% increase in accordance with the cap set by government for social rents;
 - Garage rents – to be increased in line with September 2023 CPI (6.7%)
- xvi. recommend to Council the approval of the changes in HRA support and service charges set out at paragraphs 21-27 of the Housing Revenue Account budget report;
- xvii. recommend to Council the approval of the proposed HRA reserve movements for 2024/25 set out at paragraphs 47-50;
- xviii. recommend to Council the approval of the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024/25;
- xix. recommend to Council the approval of the Council Tax Requirement for 2024/25 of £7,055,774, equivalent to £176.74 for a band D property, representing a £5.13 increase on the 2023/24 amount;
- xx. recommend to Council the approval of the proposed General Fund reserve movements for 2024/25 as set out at paragraphs 63-66 of the General Fund budget report (as amended by the Addendum to this report), including the use of £1.176million from the Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve to balance the General Fund budget;
- xxi. recommend to Council the approval of the schedule of fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out at Annexe H5 (as amended by the Addendum to this report);

- xxii. recommend to Council the delegation of authority to the Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to set and/or amend fees and charges in relation to services which are operating in competition with commercial providers, for example trade waste;
- xxiii. recommend to Council the approval of the General Fund budget for 2023/24 (as amended by the Addendum to this report); and
- xxiv. note the contents of the Budget Consultation Report 2024/25

CAB74 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: to exclude the public and press for the following item on the grounds that they contained exempt information within the meaning of section 100I and paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information) part 1 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

CAB75 SALE OF A COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO ASSET(S)

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Sale of a Commercial Portfolio Asset(s). He outlined the feedback received from the recent Investment Board meeting, held on 15th February 2024.

Members discussed the report.

Councillor Hargreaves proposed approval of the report recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Lees.

RESOLVED: to

- i. Endorse the view of the Investment Board that the Directors of Aspire (CRP) Limited should commence marketing and complete the sale of the 50% share of Chesterford Research Park, subject to Full Council approval.
- ii. Recommend to Council that, in accordance with CIPFA guidelines, the receipt is used to reduce short term borrowing.

Meeting ended at 21:25

APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC SPEAKER STATEMENTS

APPENDIX 2: APPROVED CAR PARKING TARIFFS