

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair)
Councillors A Coote, J Evans, N Hargreaves, N Reeve and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), N Brown (Development Manager), J Etherington (Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), N Katevu (Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People) and M Watts (Environmental Health Manager – Protection)

Also present: Councillors N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee), J Moran (deputising as Conservative Group Leader) and G Sell (Liberal Democrat Group Leader).

CAB76 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Barker (Conservative Group Leader) and Pavitt (Uttlesford Independents' Group Leader).

Councillor Moran substituted for Councillor Barker.

CAB77 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 February 2024 were approved as a correct record.

CAB78 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions from non-executive members.

CAB79 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory said there was nothing to report as the Scrutiny Committee had not met since the previous Cabinet meeting held on 20 February. However, he said the Operational Resilience Task and Finish Group had already met twice and he had faith that progress would be made.

CAB80 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS AND

COMMITTEES

The Voluntary Support Grants Committee decision made on 29 February 2024 was noted for information.

In response to a question, the Chair said this would be the final year that grants were awarded on an annual basis. Moving forward, funding would be allocated on a three year cycle, in order to provide voluntary organisations in receipt of the grant a degree of financial certainty.

CAB81 REVOCATION OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA

The Chair moved Item 9 forward in proceedings.

Councillor Reeve presented the report regarding the Revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Saffron Walden. He said the area had been monitored since 2012 in line with National Air Quality Objectives and readings were now below the 40µgm³ Air Quality Objective for Nitrogen Dioxide, and this had been the case since 2017. As per the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Policy Guidance, the Council was now looking to revoke the AQMA as compliance with the relevant objective had been achieved for over five consecutive years. He proposed approval of the recommendation.

Councillor Evans seconded the proposal.

The Environmental Health Manager (Protection) said that work would continue to improve air quality in the area and a Local Air Quality Strategy would be developed over the next twelve months.

Councillor Reeve said lessons would be learnt from this AQMA and applied where relevant across the district.

RESOLVED to agree the Order to revoke the Air Quality Management Area for Nitrogen Dioxide at Saffron Waden as provided within Appendix A.

CAB82 ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Councillor Sutton presented the report regarding Assets of Community Value, which set out decisions relating to the designation of Assets of Community Value made under delegated powers. She asked Cabinet to note the report.

Members discussed the Assets of Community Value and there was agreement that the process was important to local communities across the district.

Councillor Evans welcomed the report and said the delegated process worked well. He said the reason that the Saffron Hotel had not been designated was because hotels were not applicable for listing as an Asset of Community Value.

The report was noted.

CAB83 REMOVAL OF ARTICLE 4 HATFIELD HEATH

The Chair moved both Items 10 and 11 forward in proceedings.

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the removal of an Article 4 Direction in Friars Lane, Hatfield Heath, which had been in place since 2012. He said the Council was legally bound to review Article 4 Directions within the district on a regular basis and the owners of the land in question had approached the Council and requested that this Article 4 Direction be reviewed. Following completion of the review, it had been recommended that it was no longer required. Councillor Evans proposed the removal of the Article 4 Direction.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Reeve.

RESOLVED that the Article 4 Direction be removed from the land defined as Friars Lane (off Chelmsford Road), Hatfield Heath.

CAB84 ARTICLE 4 - HIGH RODING

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the making of an Article 4 Direction for land at Attridges Farm, High Roding. He said that since 2021 the land had been the subject of online advertising and individual plots had been presented for unconditional sale. The land had little, if any, planning potential, and the sales of individual strips and plots has resulted in the introduction of some fences and enclosures, which was detrimental to the surrounding countryside. It was therefore considered prudent to make an Article 4 Direction restricting some of the permitted development activity. He proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

In response to a question, the Development Manager said that there were potentially other sites in the district with a similar issue, but this was a large site and it was affecting the character of the surrounding countryside. He asked that members bring any similar sites to his attention.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED that an Article 4 Direction be defined for Land at Attridges Farm, High Roding.

CAB85 2023/24 Q3 CORPORATE CORE INDICATORS (CCIS) OUTTURN REPORT

The Chair presented the report regarding Corporate Core Indicators for Quarter 3 2023/24. She thanked the Director of Business Performance and People and the Contract, Performance and Risk Manager for producing the report, which outlined performance for quarter 3 of 2023/24 and included a comparison to the

Council's "statistical near neighbours" (SNN). She explained that the authorities selected as SNNs were similar to Uttlesford, in regard to factors such as population size, demographics and rural character. This helped interpret results and analyse how statistical differences between other authorities had arisen during the benchmarking process. She asked members to note the report for information.

In response to a question regarding the damp and mould indicator (CCI 19), Councillor Coote said the target had originally been to resolve the issue of mould within seven days but this had been changed to fourteen days. A return visit would then be carried out three weeks later to ensure the mould had not returned.

In response to a question regarding long term-sickness of staff (CCI 02), the Chief Executive said there was a danger of using percentages for very small numbers and that the 39% figure cited with anxiety or stress issues was in relation to only two or three people. He said that staff were being supported in order to return to work.

In response to a question regarding SNNs, the Director of Business Performance and People said that it was important to compare the Council with similar authorities in order to extract real value from the process. For instance, there was very little point in comparing Uttlesford bin collections with those of an urban authority, as the problems faced by a smaller, more densely populated area would be very different from the issues faced in a large and rural district.

The report was noted.

CAB86 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL FORECAST - 2023/24

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Quarter 3 Financial Forecast 2023/24 report and highlighted the latest forecast financial performance of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, and capital programme, together with a summary of the Council's treasury management position and updated prudential indicators. It was based upon actual income and expenditure from April to December 2023, together with forecasts for the remainder of the financial year. He proposed to note the report and to approve the General Fund virements as set out in paragraph 19.

Councillor Coote seconded the proposal.

Members discussed the report and raised issues relating to the signing off of accounts and the local authority demand faced by auditors across the country. There was also praise for the Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits and his team for their outstanding work.

The Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits said he had pushed for accurate financial forecasts, including underspends, in order to feed the correct information into the budget setting process. He said the relative accuracy of quarters 2 and 3 demonstrated that the process was working.

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 paragraph 19.

CAB87 QUARTER 3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2023/24

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Quarter 3 Treasury Management 2023/24, which stated that during the quarter, all treasury management activity has been undertaken in line with the approved Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24, with the exception of two minor breaches of the counterparty investment limit in respect of overnight balances with Barclays Bank.

The report was noted.

The meeting was closed at 8.35pm.