

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Hargreaves (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Councillors A Coote, J Evans, N Reeve and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), C Claydon (Communities Manager), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), N Katevu (Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People), K Miah (Client Services Manager), V Reed (Climate Change Lead Project Office), G Robinson (Interim Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

Also in attendance: Councillor Neil Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee)

CAB26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lees, Leader of the Council. The Deputy Leader, Councillor Hargreaves, took the Chair in her absence.

Apologies were also received from Councillors Moran (Leader of the Conservative Group) and Sell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group).

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB27 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

CAB28 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions or statements from non-executive members.

CAB29 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, provided an update on the Scrutiny Committee's activity since the previous Cabinet meeting. He said the Committee had met once and had considered two substantive items regarding the Local Plan Regulation 19, which was currently under consultation, and the Decarbonisation of the Housing Stock. In regard to the Decarbonisation item, he

said the Committee were satisfied with the answers provided to their rigorous questions but they had made two requests. Firstly, that a clear statement of benefit to tenants be produced in respect of these works; secondly, that every effort should be made through the contracting process to enhance the skills of young people in the area.

CAB30 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

There were no delegated decisions to report.

CAB31 ZERO CARBON COMMUNITIES GRANT SCHEME

The Chair said the agenda would be re-ordered for the benefit of those present. He invited Councillor Reeve to present Item 12.

Councillor Reeve spoke to the report regarding the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme, which stated that the application and award process implemented previously would also be used for Round 3 of grant funding. The grant awards would be managed in a fair and transparent way with applications evaluated against clear grant criteria, concluding with a moderation panel. Decisions on the successful grant awards would be considered for Cabinet approval in February. He proposed approval of the recommendation outlined in the report.

Councillor Coote seconded the proposal.

In response to a question regarding historic and ongoing works funded by this Scheme, Councillor Reeve said a link had been included in the report which directed interested parties to Zero Carbon community projects that had benefited from grant funding.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve the plan to launch round 3 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant fund in September.
- II. Note the timeline and milestones outlined for the application and selection of the successful projects.

CAB32 CONTRACT AWARD TO CARRY OUT DECARBONISATION WORKS - PHASE 1

The Chair invited Councillor Coote to present Item 16 on the agenda.

Councillor Coote spoke to the report regarding the Contract Award for Decarbonisation works, which provided the background detail for the contract award for the delivery of Phase 1 of the Council's Social Housing

Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.2 project. He said the Council had secured SHDF funding to implement a comprehensive programme of retrofitted measures across selected residential properties within its housing stock. The primary objective was to increase energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and ensure 184 properties achieved a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C. The team had moved quickly due to the timeline imposed by SHDF but he believed best value had been achieved, and he highlighted the expert advice provided by Savills during the procurement process. He proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

Councillor Evans commended the report and said the contract was an industry standard document which was right and proper. He said the advice received from Savills was invaluable.

Councillor Gregory said the Scrutiny Committee had robustly reviewed the proposals at their previous meeting and had been impressed by the degree of rigour and knowledge from the contracting team.

RESOLVED:

- I. To delegate authority to the Director of Property Services (interim), the Interim Strategic Director, Housing, Health and Communities and the Strategic Director of Finance Commercialisation and Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for housing to award a contract for Phase 1 of the SHDF decarbonisation contract
- II. Cabinet review and approve the award of the Phase 1 SHDF decarbonisation contract to Equans, recognising their expertise in delivering large-scale retrofit projects.
- III. Cabinet note that Phase 2 will be integrated into the scope of work for the new R&M contractor, ensuring continuity and efficiency in our overall housing improvement strategy.
- IV. Cabinet acknowledge the strategic use of the Fusion 21 Decarbonisation Framework as the most appropriate procurement route given the SHDF timelines and project requirements.
- V. Cabinet note that Equans, ranked second on the framework, was selected after Vinci (ranked first) voluntarily withdrew from consideration.
- VI. Cabinet note the use of the ACA Standard Form of Contract for Project Partnering (PPC 2000, amended 2013) as the contractual basis for this project.

CAB33 **CORPORATE CORE INDICATORS - QUARTER 1 2024/25**

The Chair presented the Corporate Core Indicators (CCIs) 2024/25 Q1 Performance Update report, which set out performance data outturns and analysis for the suite of Corporate Core Indicators (CCIs). He highlighted the upcoming resident satisfaction survey, which would be carried out by an external

provider, that would look at county as well as district council functions. In regards to the near neighbour statistical comparison, he said UDC's performance was comparable to these similar Local Authorities. He also pointed to the Safeguarding training and urged members to complete the training, which was mandatory for staff.

The Chief Executive said this training had been made mandatory and mop-up sessions had been organised to ensure officers and members could attend if previous sessions had been missed.

Councillor Evans said member training attendance statistics should be published and professional development should be encouraged with officers and members alike.

In response to a question regarding a fire safety indicator, the Chief Executive said this was related to fire safety risk assessments for communal areas in sheltered housing sites, and whilst 6 out of 8 had been completed and actioned, the indicator was in the red due to the two outstanding assessments with actions attached. He said the Council had rigorously checked a range of fire safety issues and this had resulted in inspections of communal areas, which, in turn, had led to tenants being asked to declutter these areas.

Councillor Evans highlighted CCI 26, which related to the number of planning applications overturned on appeal, which was moving in a positive direction as the Council was now under the 10% threshold that had led to designation.

Councillor Coote commended the Strategic Director of Planning and his team for the turnaround in the planning department.

The report was noted.

CAB34 PROCUREMENT UPDATE 2022/23 AND 2023/24

The Chair spoke to the Annual Procurement Report, which provided members with an update on procurement activity for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. He said the service was outsourced to Chelmsford City Council (CCC) and the arrangement had been working well, and a review of the Procurement Strategy would be reviewed later this year. He commended the report.

In response to a question relating to Local Government procurement and the issues that had led to the Grenfell disaster, the Director of Business Performance and People said she could not speak on Grenfell specifically but contract frameworks could be put in place to ensure suppliers were in full compliance with the law and the Council's strategy.

The report was noted.

CAB35 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25 UPDATE

The Chair presented the report regarding the Internal Audit Update, which presented Cabinet with a summary of Internal Audit's work in the financial year to date. He said the external audit had not progressed and the Council was "stuck" with an auditor that was not performing.

The Chief Executive said the audit market was broken and many Local Authorities were in the same position. This was a national problem and the Government were looking to draw a line in order for accounts to be signed off in future.

The report was noted.

CAB36 **ACHIEVING OUTCOMES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR - CORPORATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

Councillor Sutton introduced the report regarding Corporate financial support to the voluntary sector, which outlined options for commissioning services and made recommendations to move some grant funded services into an outcome-focused commissioning process. She said the starting point for the exercise in policy terms was the authority's Corporate Plan, specifically the principle of 'Building strong communities'. Furthermore, workshops were undertaken to receive member feedback and design principles were established to guide the Communities team's work. She proposed approval of the recommendation.

Councillor Reeve commended the report and said he was comfortable with the suggested process. He seconded the proposal.

Councillor Evans said the workshops had been informative and looked at the issue in a constructive way as well as trying to achieve value for money.

Councillor Hargreaves said the new procedure would move away from a competitive application process and the one year only settlement. He hoped the Council would spend less money but achieve better outcomes in the community.

RESOLVED to approve:

- I. The move to a three-year commissioning cycle (and from 2028/29 moving to a four-year cycle to match Uttlesford's electoral cycle) for:
 - a. Providing information, advice and guidance services including homelessness prevention (£140,000 pa)
 - b. Connecting rural communities to prevent rural isolation including rural transport (£62,000 pa)
 - c. Healthy, resilient and active communities (inc. mental health, sports and leisure) (£70,000 pa)
 - d. Support for older people and those with learning difficulties (£110,000 pa)

- e. Youth (£50,000 pa)
- f. Arts and culture (£35,000 pa)

II. An annual grant cycle for:

- a. Any other contribution towards Corporate Plan Outcomes. Two one-off funding streams – small grants (up to £500) or larger (£500-£3,000), including direct member submitted or supported proposals.
- b. Establishing strengthened governance to oversee grant funded services through a cross-party forum.
- c. Cease ward member initiatives and include the previous budget as part of a wider grant fund in a new funding regime to be determined over coming weeks prior to launch for the 2025/26 funding year.

CAB37 SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Councillor Sutton presented the report regarding the Safeguarding Policy, which informed Members about the new Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Policy and Reporting Procedure that sets out how Uttlesford District Council (UDC) would identify and respond to Safeguarding concerns. She said the policy had been updated to reflect changes in UDC procedures; there had been no relevant changes in legislation. A booklet has been produced to inform and support staff in recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns. She proposed approval of the recommendation.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Coote.

RESOLVED to approve the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Policy and Reporting Procedure.

CAB38 CCTV POLICY

Councillor Sutton presented the report regarding the CCTV policy, which set out the approach to be taken by the Council when deploying and managing the use of CCTV. This included the handling of footage and giving approvals for the use of surveillance equipment within properties and public areas under the Council's management. The Council was required to comply with a range of legislation covering data protection, human rights, investigatory powers, criminal justice and criminal investigations, as well as compliance with the Home Office Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. She said approval of the policy and its appropriate implementation would help ensure that UDC complies with these statutory obligations. She proposed approval of the recommendation.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Evans.

Councillor Reeve said he supported the proposals and that the policy related to the Council's housing stock.

RESOLVED to approve the CCTV Policy.

CAB39 CLAVERING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the Clavering Neighbourhood Plan. He said the application was in accordance with The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (Amended 2015 and 2016) and the was required to designate the specified area as a neighbourhood area. He said he was delighted that parishes were producing neighbourhood plans across the district and that these held weight during the planning process. He proposed approval of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Coote.

RESOLVED:

- I. To designate the Parish of Clavering as a Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.
- II. The Development Plan Area as submitted by Clavering Parish Council should be approved and adopted as the Clavering Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.

CAB40 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN REPORT 2023/24

Councillor Coote presented the Local Government Ombudsman report, which summarised the complaints relating to the Council's services dealt with by the Ombudsman's office for the year ended 31 March 2024. He said the Council would always strive to improve and reduce the number of complaints received.

The Chief Executive said that no complaints had been upheld by the Ombudsman for the year in question.

The report was noted.

CAB41 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITOR

Councillor Gregory left the meeting at 8.25pm.

The Chair presented the Quarter 1 Finance Monitoring report, which outlined the latest forecast financial performance of the Council including General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Capital and Treasury. Forecasts had been based on actual income and expenditure from April to June 2024, together with predictions for the remainder of the financial year. He said there was a £38k underspend in the General Fund but there had been an overspend of £590k driven largely by Waste Management's need for repairs and vehicle hire.

However, corporate costs had come in lower than expected by £762k primarily due to an early repayment of a major loan at a discount. He said there was also a need to update the process for internal support recharges. He commended the report author and proposed approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Evans highlighted a successful push in the planning department to reduce the reliance on agency staff and recruit permanently.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Note the contents of this report.
- II. Delegate the authority to re-align budgets within the departments to the Section 151 Officer.
- III. Approve the additions to the Capital Budgets as noted within the Capital Programme and delegate to the Section 151 Officer to finalise the slippage for 2023/24 and adjust the 2024/25 budgets for Quarter 2 monitoring.
- IV. Request a paper that approves an approach to simplifying the internal recharges to an approach that meets statutory requirements and also supports strong and effective budget management.
- V. Delegate the authority to the Section 151 Officer to increase and adjust the capital HRA budgets to account for the successful Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund bid.

CAB42 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME PROPOSALS 2025/26

The Chair presented the Local Council Tax Support Scheme proposal report. He said there was a requirement to annually review the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme and propose changes to the scheme for the following financial year. The decisions made, even if no change is proposed, would then be consulted upon before a decision is taken at Full Council in December on the final scheme for the following financial year. He said there were no changes from the previous year's scheme and he believed it was the most generous LCTS scheme in the county. He proposed approval of the recommendation.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 is consulted on the following basis:

- I. The contribution rate is frozen at 12.5% for 2025/26.
- II. The Council continues to protect Pensioners, Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and their Carer's on a low income.

The meeting was closed at 8.35pm.