

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 24 OCTOBER 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), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), N Katevu (Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People) and S Russell (Strategic Director of Housing)

Also in attendance: Councillors J Moran (Leader of the Conservative Group) and G Sell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group); B Bowers (Public Speaker)

CAB43 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Cabinet received an address from Mr B Bowers regarding the Blight Notice item and the relevant properties at the Manor Road development in Stansted Mountfitchet.

CAB44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Gregory, the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, and Pavitt, the Leader of the Uttlesford Independents Group.

CAB45 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2024 were approved as a correct record.

CAB46 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions from non-executive members.

CAB47 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

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

CAB48 **REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)**

The decision regarding the [Response to Government's Open Consultation: Reforms to NPPF](#) on 17 September 2024 was noted.

CAB49 **BLIGHT NOTICE**

The Chair took item 10 next in proceedings for the benefit of the public speaker present.

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding a Blight Notice, which concerned the receipt of a Blight Notice under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) with respect to 1-40 Manor Road, Stansted Mountfichet. The report stated that the property in question did not fall within the legal definition to trigger the blight notice procedure and it was recommended that the council objected to the notice and did not undertake to purchase the properties. He proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Coote seconded the proposal.

In response to a question regarding the definition of 'blight', the Strategic Director of Planning said these properties were not blighted as defined in the planning law, as the land had not been identified for public infrastructure works, such as the HS2 project.

In response to a question from Councillor Reeve regarding how the Council could help, the Strategic Director of Housing said the council were looking to bring the properties up to standard in order to resolve the damp and mould issues.

RESOLVED to object to the Blight Notice and delegate to the Strategic Director of Planning to serve a counter notice (on or before 14 November) for the following reasons:

- i. No part of the land to which the notice relates is comprised of blighted land.
- ii. The claimant's interest is not a qualifying interest.
- iii. There is no evidence the claimant has made reasonable endeavours to sell and has not been able to sell.

CAB50 **FUNDING FOR NEW COUNCIL HOMES UNDER THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND (LAHF3)**

The Chair moved Item 12 forward in proceedings for the benefit of officers present.

The Strategic Director of Housing presented the report regarding funding for new Council homes under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF3), which asked

Cabinet whether to proceed with round 3 of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF3) in order to acquire two properties as additions to the council's housing stock.

Councillor Coote thanked officers and proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Moran, the Leader said the decision was to authorise a purchase of a property up to £550,000. Furthermore, any properties considered would need to be suitably located and of the required standard.

In response to a question regarding timings, the Strategic Director of Housing said the Council needed to commit to spending the funding by March 2025.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED to accept the offer of £454,633 LAHF3 grant funding from MHCLG towards the acquisition costs of two additional properties to be acquired by the council in the 2024/25 financial year.

CAB51 RISK POLICY AND RISK REGISTER

The Leader presented the report regarding the Risk Policy and Risk Register which set out the Council's policy and procedures in relation to risk management. As well as the new Risk Policy, a full review of the Corporate Risk Register had been carried out and the register updated to better reflect the current risks, threats and opportunities facing the Council. She proposed approval of the recommendation in the report.

Members discussed the Policy and it was commended for its ease of reading and clarity.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED to approve the Risk Policy attached as Appendix 1 and review and note the risks set out in the Corporate Risk Register attached as Appendix 2.

CAB52 COUNTER FRAUD UPDATE

The Leader presented the Counter Fraud Update report, which provided an update on the Council's counter-fraud activity in line with the 2022 Counter Fraud Strategy and corresponding action plan. She said these updates demonstrated that the Counter Fraud Strategy was working.

The report was noted.

CAB53 BLUEPRINT UTTLESFORD UPDATE

The Leader presented the report regarding Blueprint Uttlesford, which provided an update on progress with the Council's four-year change programme. This programme had been designed to deliver the four-year savings required to balance the authority's budget during an ongoing period of austerity, as well as modernising operations, and addressing organisational culture and staff development.

Members discussed the new process for voluntary sector grants; Councillor Hargreaves said outcomes would be factored into the commissioning process more centrally in future.

The report was noted.

CAB54 WENDENS AMBO NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the Wendens Ambo Neighbourhood Plan Area, following the receipt of an application from Wendens Ambo Council for the designation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan Area on 21 August 2024. He said this was the fifteenth application the Council had received and he thanked the Senior Planning Officer for preparing the papers. He proposed approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

Members commended the neighbourhood development plan area processes as it provided local communities the tools, knowledge and experience to engage with the planning process, and support or object to applications in a formal and effective way.

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting was closed at 8.20pm.