

**COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor M Foley (Chair)  
Councillors M Ahmed, A Armstrong, H Asker, S Barker, N Church, A Coote, C Criscione (Vice-Chairman), J Davey, A Dean, B Donald, G Driscoll, J Emanuel, J Evans, C Fiddy, R Freeman, R Gooding, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, R Haynes, M Lemon, J Loughlin, T Loveday, D McBirnie, J Moran, E Oliver, G Sell, R Silcock, M Sutton and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and N Katevu (Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer)

Also present: A Ketteridge (Public Speaker)

**C30 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Mr. A Ketteridge addressed Council regarding matters relating to the investment portfolio. His statement has been appended to these minutes.

**C31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lees, Pavitt, Luck Coletta, Neil Reeve and Bagnall.

There were no declarations of interest.

**C32 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2024 were approved as a correct record, subject to the correction of Councillor Dean's vote on the Local Plan Regulation 19 amendment proposal; Councillor Dean voted for the amendment.

**C33 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair updated members on his activity since the previous meeting. He said he had raised flags at the Uttlesford District Council offices in recognition of the merchant navy and emergency services and had also attended several community youth clubs and senior meetings, including one for Vicarage Mead residents in Thaxted. He praised the great work done by Essex scouts.

He also had attended the justice service at Chelmsford cathedral with the High Sheriff and Essex mayors, council chairs and senior persons of the legal profession.

He commended Titan Airways, a business in the district who had just won the King's award for enterprise in international trade for 2024 and congratulated all involved.

C34

## **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

As the Leader had sent her apologies, Councillor Hargreaves, the Deputy Leader, provided a report to Council. He said the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) had met recently and the Board had discussed the funding available to it. The point was also raised regarding housing allocations and the fact that each local authority was working on allocations in isolation; there was no overarching strategy between councils. The Board had felt this was sub-optimal. Finally, the Board had discussed 'Freeports' and the processing of sewage at the Harwich freeport into aviation fuel.

Five written reports had been submitted by Cabinet members. The Chair took questions on these written reports.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell regarding setting up a meeting in relation to Manor Road, Stansted with ward members, Councillor Coote said he would be very happy to meet with the relevant councillors. In regard to cost, he said the Council were looking at options and costs would be reported once they had been ascertained.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker regarding the airport car parking review, Councillor Hargreaves said a report was being progressed on the review and he would be happy to attend a Takeley Parish Meeting to discuss the issue.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean regarding a meeting with tenants from the Manor Road development, Councillor Coote said he would be happy to meet with the affected residents.

In response to a question from Councillor Fiddy regarding the external auditor fee, Councillor Hargreaves said the Council had not paid a fee for the past two years as the audits had not been completed. He said the contract was governed by a public body, but he could see no evidence that the terms of the contract had been enforced. He said Government guidance stated that the Council should only pay for audits completed and an update would be provided at the Audit and Standards committee later this year. He said raising a complaint would occupy officer resources but would not achieve a completed audit.

In response to a question from Councillor Gooding regarding an airport car parking summit, Councillor Hargreaves said a report would be produced first, in

order to ensure the correct funding stream was available, but he was happy in principle to hold a car parking summit in future.

**C35 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (UP TO 30 MINUTES)**

The Chair said that answers to written questions had been published the day before the meeting. He asked whether there were any questions of clarification.

In regard to his second question, Councillor Moran asked whether the cargo bikes scheme had been considered a success or not. If they had not been a success, would they be withdrawn. As Councillor Reeve was absent, an answer would be provided in writing.

In response to Councillor Barker's question of clarification, Councillor Hargreaves said he would look at the numbers relating to the Stansted Lower Street Car Park as he thought the budget was "under done". Overall, the picture was good and the figures were on track.

**C36 MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

No matters had been received.

**C37 MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

The Chair said three reports had been recommended for approval by the Council's Committees: two from the Audit and Standards Committee (Items 8 and 9) and one from the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee (Item 10).

**C38 APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - PROVISION FOR ADDITIONAL SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor Oliver, Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, was invited to present the report regarding substitute provision at the Audit and Standards Committee. He said the crux of the issue was around the interview stage in the statutory and Chief Officer appointment process, where it was possible that a Cabinet member with a corresponding portfolio would not be able to sit on a relevant interview panel as they were neither a member nor substitute of the Appointments Committee. In order to solve the issue, it was proposed to lift the two-member cap on substitutes for the Appointments Committee only and this provision would apply to the majority group as well as opposition groups. He proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean regarding the Panel Selection Protocol, the Chief Executive said that a member qualified for a panel when they were formally appointed to the relevant committee and had received the appropriate training, if necessary.

RESOLVED to approve the amended procedure rule in regard to the appointment of substitutes for the Appointments Committee only (Appendix A).

**C39 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT ("RIPA") ANNUAL REVIEW**

Councillor Oliver was invited to present the report regarding the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act ("RIPA") Annual Review. He said the RIPA policies were legally compliant and there would be no infringement on the Human Rights Act. He said the updates were due to a change in personnel. He proposed approval of the recommendation.

Councillor Fiddy seconded the proposal.

The Chair moved to a vote.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Note the report
- II. Adopt the updated RIPA Policy in Appendix B.

**C40 REVISED STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005**

Councillor Armstrong, Chair of the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, presented the report regarding the revised statement of principles under the Gambling Act 2005. He thanked the Licensing team for producing the report and said the revised statement had been subject to a 6-week consultation. He proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Driscoll seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED that the draft Statement of Principles be approved (Appendix C).

**C41 MEMBER MOTION: THE WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE**

*Councillor Gregory left the meeting at 7.55pm.*

Councillor Sell was invited to speak to his motion regarding the Winter Fuel Allowance. He said he was surprised that the new Government had decided to withdraw this allowance, which would affect the most vulnerable in society, and that there would be people who had included this in their budget plans, particularly those depending on the state pension. He said politics was about choices and he asked why there had been no consultation on this matter. Furthermore, the support structures that used to be available to people, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, had fewer resources and less availability meaning people did not know where to turn. He proposed approval of the motion set out in the agenda.

Councillor Dean seconded the proposal.

Councillor Evans said he had obtained a number of statistics on the district which he felt were relevant, such as the number of households on bottled oil or gas, and that over 18,500 citizens were aged 65 or older. He supported the motion and said such information should be brought to the attention of the district's MPs.

Councillor Moran said he supported the motion and the Labour Government had been clumsy in handling the issue. The allowance could have been withdrawn from those who pay a certain amount of income tax, for instance, and left in place who needed it.

Councillor Gooding said he supported the motion and thanked Councillor Evans for the statistics. He said the rural nature of the district and the number of listed buildings would make some homes difficult to heat.

Councillor Hargreaves said he and the Leader supported the proposal; he said the Government had made a mistake by not ascertaining who depended on the allowance before deciding to withdraw the provision.

Councillor Sell thanked members for their support; he asked that the availability of pension credits be publicised widely.

RESOLVED to:

1. Note the recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.
2. Note with concern that many pensioners on lower incomes will now not receive vital support with winter fuel costs. Across England and Wales, the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).
3. Note that in Uttlesford, the number of pensioners shows that 18052 people in Uttlesford received the payment last year.
4. Believe that the Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those

receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for Pension Credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.

5. Note with concern the low take up of Pension Credit, with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.

6. Recognise the importance of raising awareness of benefits, such as Pension Credit, to ensure people receive the support they are entitled to. Council welcomes the work being undertaken by the Council with Citizens Advice and Age UK, to promote the Pension Credit scheme to those who may be eligible, and also welcomes Government awareness campaigns, such as the Pension Credit Week of Action.

7. Further note that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October which, combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments, risks pushing thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty

Council is therefore RESOLVED to:

8. Ask the Leader of Council to write to the Government, calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be immediately suspended and for a new threshold determining eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments to be adopted.

9. Ask the Leader of Council to write to all MPs covering the Uttlesford District Council area, asking them to give their formal support to halting the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility

*The meeting was closed at 8.05pm.*

## Public Statements: Full Council, 8 October

### Written Statement – Mr A Ketteridge

On 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024 I sent an email to Cllr Neil Reeve, chairman of the Investment Board, asking **“Why has no Investment Board meeting been publicly scheduled, meaning no reports on the valuations [of the commercial property assets] at 30.6.2024 are publicly available?”**

In previous quarters, on average, Investment Board meetings have been scheduled around six or seven weeks after the quarter end date.

**Cllr Reeve did not reply to my email.**

So four days later, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, I wrote to Cllr Lees, **“On 5th August Mr Webb told me *“Likely to be a couple of weeks”* until a meeting of the Investment Board and release of the quarterly report from CBRE. That corresponded with the timeframe of previous quarters and particularly that of August 2023 for the 30th June quarter end.”**

**Cllr Lees didn't reply to me either.**

Going back a few months ...

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024, the Walden Local ran an article on the back page under the heading “District Council's £700,000 boost for funding”

The article stated that UDC is £700,000 a year better off and has reduced its total borrowing by £10M. Unfortunately, time this evening doesn't allow me to go into the detail of that and challenge

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it as I'd like to, but I emailed both councillors Reeve and Hargreaves on 5<sup>th</sup> June to challenge both the PR from the council and the truth of the financial calculation in the medium to long term.

**Of course, neither Cllr Reeve nor Cllr Hargreaves replied to me.**

Going further back ...

On 7<sup>th</sup> March this year, shortly after full council agreed formally to put Chesterford Research Park up for sale on 26<sup>th</sup> February, Cllr Hargreaves was quoted in the Saffron Walden Reporter under a headline "*Plans approved for sale of authority's £63M share in Chesterford Research Park*", saying "***The commercial portfolio continues to be very successful and is worth substantially more now than the total sum paid***". That statement, using the word 'continues' was, at that time, false and misleading, something that ultimately wasn't denied by the Monitoring Officer when she nevertheless threw out my complaint some two months later, judging it to have been "**politically motivated**" (which of course I contest).

This council has never been publicly informed of progress with the sale of CRP, and it is now more than twelve months since the council issued a £1M tender to the agent charged with finding a buyer. Why is that, and what has happened since February?

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Coming back to more recent times, on 18<sup>th</sup> September, despite having never taken the time to correspond with me, Cllr Hargreaves penned a letter to the Walden Local where he attacked me personally by name with a **politically motivated** opening line.

Contrary to Cllr Hargreaves assertions, this former Conservative councillor for Ashdon ward wasn't removed from this council in 2015, I didn't stand as a candidate in the 2015 election. This is important, as it is evidence of Cllr Hargreaves publicly misrepresenting the truth. Councillor Hargreaves claimed in that letter that the 2024/25 financial performance is on budget. That is a meaningless statement without any context, and I note that once again he makes no financial report on the current year to this council tonight. We, the public, do not know what impact the state of the council's finances is having on the on 'Blueprint Uttlesford', because we aren't told.

Finally, I note that in response to the written question from Cllr Moran this evening, an Investment Board meeting has now been scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> October.