

**CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2025 at 7.00 pm**

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

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), P Honeybone (Internal Audit Manager), N Katevu (Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer) and S Lewin (Economic Development Manager)

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

**CAB82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Coote.

There were no declarations of interest.

**CAB83 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 December and 18 December 2024 were approved, subject to the word "Forest" being inserted to the following sentence in CAB69 (5 December meeting):

"Councillor Evans said the Hatfield **Forest** governance report would be considered at Cabinet."

**CAB84 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)**

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

**CAB85 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)**

Councillor Gregory, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, reported that the Scrutiny Committee had not met since the previous Cabinet meeting, so there were no formal reports to present. However, he mentioned that arrangements were being developed to ensure appropriate scrutiny of devolution and local government restructuring proposals, without adding to the burden of officers while respecting the democratic process. He thanked Councillor Evans for his recent presentation on Neighbourhood Plans to parish councils.

**CAB86 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)**

The Leader said two delegated decisions had been taken since the previous ordinary meeting on 5 December, “The New Towns Task Force Open Call for Evidence” and “The Response to Transport East Enabling Powers Consultation.” The decisions were noted.

**CAB87 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25 UPDATE**

The Leader introduced the Internal Audit Plan 2024/25 Update report and said she was satisfied that the Council was compliant with internal audit standards. She said excellent progress had been made with the recommendations outlined in the report and thanked the Internal Audit Manager and his team. She asked for the update to be noted.

The Internal Audit Manager said the Council historically had a problem with recommendations not being implemented on a timely basis but the report outlined that the bulk of the historic items had been dealt with and good progress had been made. He said there were no critical priority issues identified in the report.

The report was noted.

**CAB88 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Councillor Hargreaves introduced the Economic Development Plan and commended the Economic Development Manager and Director of Performance and People for their excellent work. He highlighted several key points from the report, including the higher average earnings in Uttlesford compared to the rest of the United Kingdom, while noting the higher cost of living and the use of foodbanks in the area. He noted the predominance of small businesses in the district, with 90% of businesses employing between 1 to 9 people, and only 75 businesses having over 50 employees, and the need to provide opportunities for ‘upskilling’ for residents. He also spoke to the ambitious set of objectives outlined in the plan, including rural support initiatives, and the continued membership and contributions to various economic bodies such as North Essex Enterprise Board (NEEB) and the UK Innovation Corridor. He said that the Economic Development Plan aligned with the Local Plan and provided a comprehensive framework for the district's economic growth. He proposed the recommendation as outlined in the report.

Councillor Evans seconded the proposal.

Members discussed the Economic Development Plan and commended the work of officers. The importance of tourism and supporting small and medium businesses in the area was highlighted, as was the impact of post-Covid hybrid/home working on broadband needs.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Leader said Councillor Hargreaves provided updates on the activity of NEEB in his full Council reports.

In response to a question from Councillor Gregory regarding local government restructuring, the Leader said work on projects would continue where feasible as the future was currently uncertain and the administration wanted to leave the district and residents in excellent shape in the event the Council was merged with another authority.

The proposal to approve the Economic Development Plan was taken to a vote and passed unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve and adopt the Economic Development Plan as set out in Appendix 1.

The meeting was closed at 7.45pm.