

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2025 at 7.00 pm

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

Officers in attendance: A Knight (Chief Operating Officer), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), N Katevu (Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer), L Porteous (Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

Also in attendance: Councillors N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee) and G Sell (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group)

CAB40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Leader opened the meeting and began by thanking the departing Monitoring Officer for her excellent work at the Council and for providing robust legal advice. She wished her all the best in her new role as Monitoring Officer at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Coote.

Apologies were also received from Councillors Gooding (Leader of the Conservative Group) and Pavitt (Leader of the Uttlesford Independent Group).

Councillor Gregory declared that he was ward member for Littlebury in respect of Item 7.

CAB41 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 and 23 September 2025 were approved as correct records.

CAB42 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

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

CAB43 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented his report regarding Scrutiny activity since the previous ordinary Cabinet meeting. He

began by thanking the departing Monitoring Officer for her exemplary legal support and wished her well in her new role. In regards to previous business, he said Scrutiny had considered the Local Government Reorganisation proposals in September and praised the Administration for the democratic oversight afforded to the process. He also thanked officers for the quality of analysis included in the report. He also praised Councillor Evans for his neighbourhood planning work and in respect of the impressive progress on the Local Plan. He further commended the Climate Change Action Plan and thanked officers and Councillor Reeve for their work, although he would prefer if output measures were included with the report in future.

In regards to Housing matters, he said there were issues which were being looked at with the maintenance contract and an update would be provided in due course.

He said he had been impressed by Chief Inspector Richards' during the Community Safety Partnership presentation but felt there had been a lack of communication in regards to the constraints facing Essex Police. He hoped communication would improve before the next review of the partnership in June 2026.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell in regards to circulating the presentation in advance of the meeting, the Leader said this information was available on the website.

Councillors Sell and Gregory both said they wanted an improvement in communications from the Community Safety Partnership before the matter returned to committee in eight months' time.

CAB44 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

There were no delegated decisions to report.

CAB45 LITTLEBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA DESIGNATION APPLICATION

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the Littlebury Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation Application. He said Neighbourhood Plans had been adopted across the district and the Council would continue to support the process despite no longer receiving funding from the Government. He said he was pleased to propose approval of the designation of Littlebury Parish as a Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the proposal and said he was delighted to see another neighbourhood plan in progress.

Councillor Gregory said Littlebury was surrounded by land owned by Audley End estate and this plan could be strategically important in future Local Plans and development proposals.

RESOLVED:

- i. To designate the Parish of Littlebury as a Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.
- ii. The proposed neighbourhood area as submitted (Appendix 2) includes all Littlebury Parish Council's administrative area and should be supported and adopted as the Littlebury Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.

CAB46 ZERO CARBON COMMUNITIES GRANT SCHEME (ROUND 4)

Councillor Reeve presented the report regarding Zero-Carbon Communities Grants Fund, which stated that £80,000 had been identified from the Climate Reserve Budget to deliver round 4 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund in 2025/26. He said that round 4 applicants would be able to apply for grants of up to a maximum of £10k, with applicants needing to demonstrate a percentage of match funding available, depending on the value requested. He noted the timeline and milestones outlined for the application selection and proposed approval of the plan.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED:

- i. To approve the plan to launch round 4 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund in October.
- ii. To note the timeline and milestones outlined for the application and selection of the successful projects.

CAB47 QUARTER 1 FINANCE MONITORING 2025/26

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring report, which set out the latest forecast financial performance of the Council including General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Capital and Treasury Management. Overall, there was a £52k underspend in the General Fund. Service expenditure was underspending by £825k driven largely by staff vacancies, as well as additional commercial and planning income. These were offset by budget pressures against Investment Properties and Blueprint Uttlesford, including "hidden" costs relating to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). He also referenced the development of the HRA 30-year business plan which would be considered by Cabinet in due course.

In response to questions from Councillor Sell regarding vacancies, the Chief Operating Officer said the number of vacancies would be circulated outside of the meeting. She said LGR would have an impact on some vacancies in the future, as shared services with partner councils would be explored.

In response to a question regarding homelessness and local authority housing funding, the Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits said annual grants

funded the scheme and monies not spent were ringfenced and carried forward each year.

In response to a question regarding an underspend in Customer Services, the Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits said this was due to staff vacancies.

In response to a question regarding the decrease in income from the Licensing department, it was confirmed that this was due to fewer taxi driver licences being applied for or renewed.

The report was noted.

CAB48 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME PROPOSALS 2026/27

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27. He said a consultation would be carried out during the Autumn of 2025 on the scheme which proposed to set a contribution rate and continue to protect Vulnerable and Disabled residents and Carer's on a low income. He noted that the Council had administered the scheme with the lowest percentage contribution requirement of any authority in Essex for twelve years, which demonstrated the Council's commitment to protecting those that needed support. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal and said he was proud to support the Scheme.

In response to a question regarding the definition of "vulnerable", the Leader said the criteria for applicants could be found on the website. She asked members and staff to promote the Scheme to anyone who was financially struggling.

RESOLVED: to recommend that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27 is consulted on the following basis:

- i. The contribution rate is frozen at 12.5% for 2026/27.
- ii. The Council continues with current policy to protect Pensioners, Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and their Carer's on a low income. i.e. their contribution would remain at 0%.

CAB49 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN MID-YEAR UPDATE

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which provided an update on the General Fund part of the MTFP that was approved at Council in February 2025. He said the forecast had been produced under challenging circumstances, and that the MTFP would be forecasting for future years when Uttlesford District Council no longer existed. He highlighted the paragraphs relating to LGR and said that the £2.75million earmarked for the process would likely increase. He also referred to the uncertainty surrounding the Government's Fair Funding Review and said that the Council would be one of 41 councils negatively affected if the proposals consulted on were implemented. He asked Cabinet to note the updated MTFP

position as set out in paragraph 25, the Reserves position as set out in paragraph 27 and the revised Blueprint 2.0 savings requirement as set out in paragraph 30.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell regarding what would constitute a “significant increase” in respect of budgeting for LGR, Councillor Hargreaves said this was uncertain but the Chief Executive had been through such a process before and had advised that it was likely there would be additional costs. Furthermore, he said there was uncertainty surrounding the Blueprint savings required as outlined in paragraph 32.

The report was noted.

CAB50 UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE PROGRAMME

The Leader presented the report regarding the Corporate Programme, which provided Cabinet with an update on the introduction of new transformation and project capacity and approaches, as well as setting out the next steps for Autumn 2025.

The report was noted.

The meeting was closed at 8.20pm.