

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 14 APRIL 2026 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lees (Chair and Leader of the Council)
Councillors A Coote, J Evans, N Hargreaves and N Reeve

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Brown (Director of Environmental Services), K Chambers (Head of Transformation and Project Management), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), C Forster (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), M Fretwell (Assistant Director of Housing), D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), L Porteous (Director of Finance) and M Watts (Environmental Health Manager - Protection)

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

CAB95 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Sutton.

Apologies were also received from Councillors Asker and Pavitt in their capacity as Opposition Group Leaders.

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB96 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting on 17 February 2026 were approved as a correct record.

CAB97 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

There were no questions for members of the Executive.

CAB98 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, provided a report to Cabinet. He said the previous agenda had been busy and began by thanking the Director of Environmental Services for a detailed presentation on street cleansing, and said the service delivered a great deal with relatively limited resources. He also thanked the Climate Change Lead Project Officer for the quality of the Climate Change Action Plan report and said that the team had

done outstanding work in delivering both value for money and actual carbon reduction, although he said concerns remained regarding the London Road decarbonisation project. Furthermore, he said that the Council could consider revisiting the climate emergency declaration made seven years ago, supported by the evidence included in the climate change report. He also said he had significant concerns about local policing resources and accountability, and questioned whether the Council was receiving value for money from the £10.6 million annual policing precept, particularly in light of the withdrawal of a PCSO from Stansted.

The Leader said she acknowledged these concerns but a briefing had been provided by way of the Community Safety Partnership, which had highlighted the complexities surrounding the resourcing of policing in Essex.

Councillor Reeve said it was not necessary to re-declare a climate emergency at Council, particularly in light of Local Government Reorganisation.

CAB99 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

Cabinet noted the following executive decisions, which had been taken since the previous meeting:

- [Response to Government's Open consultation National Planning Policy Framework](#) published on 27 February 2026.
- [Uttlesford's Biodiversity Duty Report 2026](#) published on 25 March 2026.
- [Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service enabling goods and services](#) published on 1 April 2026.

CAB100 UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE PROGRAMME

The Leader presented the report regarding the Corporate Programme update and thanked the Head of Transformation and Project Management for her work. She said good progress had been made on embedding project management across the organisation, including the workforce plan, housing service transformation and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) preparations.

Members discussed the report and concerns were raised regarding the £6.2 million in remaining savings that needed to be achieved within two years, considering that UDC would cease to exist following the LGR decision to create five unitary councils and that the Council could not bind its successor authority to deliver these savings.

Councillor Hargreaves acknowledged this constraint but said that future budget processes would provide guidance on transition arrangements, although ultimately such decisions would rest with the new unitary authority.

The report was noted.

CAB101 **CCI QUARTER 3 2025/26**

The Leader presented the report regarding CCIs for Quarter 3 2025/26 and thanked the Contract, Performance & Risk Manager for the report.

Councillor Coote said that housing indicators were not as strong as he had hoped, but said he was confident that the new in-house management team would drive improvement in Quarter 4.

In reply to questions regarding responses to FOI requests, the Chief Executive said the increase in requests was a national trend, driven by increased volume and complexity, potentially linked with the widespread use of AI. He said the Council's compliance rate within 20 days was below the required standard and this needed to be improved.

In response, members raised concerns about AI-generated FOI requests increasing workload, as requesters could generate multiple complex questions more easily than before.

The report was noted.

CAB102 **IMPLEMENTATION OF SIMPLER RECYCLING**

Councillor Reeve presented the report regarding the implementation of simpler recycling regulations that would come into force on 1 April 2026. He highlighted a number of aspects of the scheme, including an emphasis on promoting recycling in flats through a pilot rollout, providing trade waste recycling collections to the same standard as domestic waste recycling, and introducing soft plastics recycling collection for all properties on 1 April 2027, which would allow residents to place soft plastics in normal recycling bins instead of taking them to recycling points. He said that the Council would maintain the current collection system without adding additional bins for paper, glass, or cardboard, as residents were satisfied with the existing set-up, where all recycling was collected in one green bin. He proposed the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Evans seconded the proposal.

In response to member questions, the Director of Environmental Services said that Uttlesford's food waste recycling rate was lower than other Essex areas but the Council would implement change campaigns to improve participation.

Members approved the proposal unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- I. That the current service delivery model is adapted by March 2027 to allow collection of recyclable materials required by Simper Recycling from: •

- Flats and communal Properties • Commercial (trade waste) customers and non-domestic premises.
- II. That from April 2026 the range of containers provided by the council for new build properties is extended to include internal food caddies alongside external food caddies, recycling bins and general waste bins.
 - III. That collections of materials remain co-mingled and that officers complete the required written assessment to evidence the reasons for this by April 2026.
 - IV. That Officers are authorised to negotiate with our current recycling contractor to include soft plastics in the list of target materials for the contract.
 - V. That Members note that officers have started the process of installing recycling facilities at flats across the district.
 - VI. That Members note that Trade waste recycling services are now available to commercial customers and officers are working to expand the service.

CAB103 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Councillor Coote introduced the report regarding the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, which sought Cabinet approval to adopt the proposed new Enforcement Policy, to ensure that the Council fulfilled the requirements of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and new associated statutory guidance. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. To end the existing approach as contained within the existing Private Sector Housing enforcement policy for newly identified offences, from 1st May 2026.
- II. To adopt the new Enforcement Policy attached to this report, and mandatory HMO licensing conditions to take effect from 1st May 2026.
- III. To include provision of the Renters Rights Act 2025 within the Councils constitution and to grant delegated authority to the Director of Environmental Services and the Environmental Health Manager (Protection) to appoint, nominate or otherwise authorise officers and inspectors for purposes of discharging the Councils functions under the Renters Rights Act 2025 and all secondary legislation.
- IV. Delegate the executive function of the Council to make amendments to the Enforcement Policy and mandatory HMO licensing conditions to the Director of Environmental Services and the Environmental Health Manager (Protection) in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder responsible Housing.

CAB104 CIVIL PENALTIES

Councillor Coote spoke to the report regarding Civil Penalties, which also sought Cabinet approval to adopt a new Civil Penalties Policy to ensure that the Council met the requirements of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and new associated statutory guidance. The policy was required to ensure consistency in enforcement, reduce the likelihood of legal challenge and to demonstrate compliance with statutory guidance and best practice. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the proposal.

The proposal was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- I. To end the existing approach to issuing Civil Penalties as prescribed within the Councils existing Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy for newly identified offences, from 1st May 2026.
- II. To adopt the new Civil Penalties Policy attached to this report, to take effect from 1st May 2026.
- III. To delegate the executive function of the Council to make amendments to the Civil Penalties Policy to the Director of Environmental Services and the Environmental Health Manager (Protection) in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing Services.

CAB105 MUTUAL EXCHANGE POLICY

Councillor Coote presented the Mutual Exchange Policy report, which sought to put in place a formal policy in order to provide a statement for the Council and guidance for tenants. He said a recommendation from a recent mock inspection of the housing service highlighted that while operational processes for mutual exchanges were in place, the absence of a formal policy presented a compliance risk. He proposed approval of the Mutual Exchange Policy.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

In response to member questions, the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities said approximately ten mutual exchanges reached full completion annually, with more applications being rejected due to ineligibility criteria on either the council's or the applicant's side. He said the Council conducted property inspections to ensure structural safety and checked compliance on gas and electricity before completion. Furthermore, the Council would use discretion within the policy to support vulnerable people, particularly those fleeing domestic violence.

The Policy was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED to review and approve the Mutual Exchange Policy.

CAB106 HENHAM PARISH COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA DESIGNATION APPLICATION

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the Henham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation Application. He said that Henham was classified as a larger village under the adopted Local Plan and the Council would provide £5,000 to support the neighbourhood planning process, consistent with support offered to other larger villages. He said the designation was welcomed as part of the Council's ongoing neighbourhood planning programme, with several parishes at various stages of producing their own plans. He proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

The Leader seconded the proposal.

In response to a question regarding whether Neighbourhood Plan Area designations had expiry dates, the Strategic Director of Planning said that they remained designated until a decision was made otherwise.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- I. To designate the Parish of Henham as a Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.
- II. To formally support and adopt the proposed Neighbourhood Area as submitted in Appendix 2. This area encompasses the entirety of the Henham Parish Council administrative boundary and shall be officially designated as the Henham Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.

CAB107 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Councillor Evans introduced the report regarding the updated Planning Enforcement Policy, to be renamed Planning Enforcement Plan, which outlined how the Council would handle planning breaches following a review and update of the previous policy adopted in 2017. He said that enforcement was not intended to be punitive but proportionate, adding that the sanction of prosecution was the final stage in a complex process. He said that in 2025, the Council had issued ten enforcement notices compared to neighbouring councils' figures ranging from one to twenty, demonstrating the contrast in statistics across Essex. He proposed approval of the Planning Enforcement Plan.

Councillor Hargreaves commended the enforcement team and seconded the proposal.

In response to member questions relating to urgency and escalation, Councillor Evans said the timescales for intervention were dependent on the severity of the breach. The Monitoring Officer added that the escalation procedure was outlined in paragraph 3.8 of the Planning Enforcement Plan.

The Strategic Director of Planning said that about three-quarters of cases were successfully negotiated to resolution without formal action, as the legal process could take years to complete. He said the policy established a priority system for urgent breaches, such as tree preservation order violations and listed building damage.

Members approved the Planning Enforcement Plan unanimously.

RESOLVED to adopt the updated Planning Enforcement Policy, renamed 'Planning Enforcement Plan'.

CAB108 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS CONSULTATION

Councillor Evans introduced the report regarding the supplementary planning document (SPD) consultation regarding the Design Code. He asked members to note the updated [report](#) tabled before them, which included an additional recommendation as follows:

“To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to finalise and adopt the Design Code Supplementary Planning Document, provided that the outcome of consultation does not give rise to any substantive changes requiring further member consideration.”

He said the report included amendments to paragraphs 4 and 6, necessary due to pre-election restrictions affecting consultation timetables. Critically, new supplementary planning documents were required to be adopted by 30 June, after which no new SPDs could be brought forward under new government procedures. He added that with the Local Plan now adopted, the Design Code had acquired legal teeth and was a substantial document that addressed not only aesthetics but also heritage considerations and other planning matters. He proposed that Cabinet approve the revised Design Code to go out to public consultation for 4 weeks, with the aim to adopt the SPD under the new Local Plan in future, and to delegating authority to the Strategic Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to finalise and adopt the Design Code Supplementary Planning Document, providing that the outcome of consultation did not give rise to any substantive changes requiring further member consideration.

Councillor Coote seconded the proposal.

The vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- i. To approve the revised Design Code to go out to public consultation (4 weeks), with the aim to adopt as a new SPD under the new Local Plan in the future.
- ii. To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to finalise and

adopt the Design Code Supplementary Planning Document, provided that the outcome of consultation does not give rise to any substantive changes requiring further member consideration.

CAB109 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Leader said that the final item on the agenda contained restricted information relating to individuals and relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular persons. In order to discuss the content of the report, she formally proposed the exclusion of the public and press due to consideration of reports containing exempt information within the meaning of Section 100I and paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Coote seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED to exclude the public and press due to consideration of reports containing exempt information within the meaning of section 100I and paragraphs 1 and 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

CAB110 HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT DEBT AND COUNCIL TAX DEBT

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Housing Benefit Overpayment Debt and Council Tax Debt, which sought Cabinet approval to write off historic debts valued £10,000 or over, where recovery was no longer considered legally viable or economically proportionate. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

The vote was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve the £10,000 and above quarter 3 write off debts totalling £201,132.53 as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendix A1.
- II. Note the £1,000 to £9,999 quarter 3 write offs as listed in Appendix B.
- III. Note that:
 - a) All reasonable recovery and enforcement action had been undertaken.
 - b) The debts are now legally irrecoverable or unenforceable.
 - c) The proposed write-offs ensure compliance with Financial Regulations and accurate financial reporting.

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm.