

CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

held on 9 December 2020 at 7pm

PRESENT:

The Mayor (Councillor J A Deakin)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor L A Mascot)

Councillors

R H Ambor	I S Grundy	I C Roberts
L Ashley	P V Hughes	S J Robinson
H Ayres	R J J Hyland	T E Roper
K Bentley	A John	E J Sampson
M W Bracken	D G Jones	C M Shaw
N Chambers	G B R Knight	R J Shepherd
D J R Clark	J C S Lager	A B Sosin
P H Clark	J S Lardge	J E Sosin
W A Daden	R J Lee	M S Steel
A E Davidson	M J Mackrory	C R Tron
C K Davidson	R Massey	N M Walsh
S M Dobson	L A Millane	M D Watson
N A Dudley	R J Moore	R T Whitehead
J A Frasca	G H J Pooley	T N Willis
I Fuller	J A Potter	I Wright
J Galley	R J Poulter	S Young
M C Goldman	S Rajesh	
S M Goldman	J M Raven	

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of members was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors N Gulliver and M Sismey.

2. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced that she had been notified of the deaths of Tony Gayler, Michael Rose and Tony Hall who, respectively, had been members of the Council from 1973 to 1983, 1976 to 1987 and 1995 to 2003. The Council observed a minute's silence in their memory and Councillor Mackrory paid tribute to Tony Hall, referring both to his expertise in town planning and his service as a member of the Council.

The Council was told that the Mayor's fundraising team continued to try to find new ways to raise funds for her Charities, including through Chelmsford Community Radio's advent calendar initiative. The Mayor thanked staff at the Civic Theatre and Hylands House for helping to raise funds and said that Councillor Willis would be doing a sponsored "muck" run and that donations could be made via his Just Giving page. Members were also told that the Lord Lieutenant for Essex had thanked the staff of the City Council for their work in difficult circumstances over the last nine months and the Mayor echoed those thanks.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded to declare at the appropriate time any personal and prejudicial interests in the business on the meeting's agenda.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 22 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

5. Public Questions

Questions were asked by five members of the public about the proposed solar farm at Longfield, which was currently the subject of non-statutory consultation. Whilst supportive in principle of renewable energy, they were concerned about certain aspects of the proposal, including the loss of agricultural land, harm to biodiversity, the adverse effect of the development on the landscape, possible health risks to local residents, noise and disturbance from the site, and traffic problems caused by the use of inadequate roads in the vicinity of the site.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development said that the City Council had been consulted on the proposal for the Solar Farm as part of the non-statutory consultation. Due to its size and scale, this proposal was classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and therefore would follow a Development Consent Order (DCO) process. This meant that the application would be determined by the Planning Inspectorate of behalf of the relevant Secretary of State and the City Council would be a consultee.

The City Council recognised that solar energy development could help meet targets for reducing carbon emissions, reduce reliance on fossil fuels and provide local energy security. They could also allow farmers and landowners to diversify and support local employment opportunities.

As such, the Council supported the principle of renewable energy production provided there were no significant environmental impacts that could not be appropriately managed through the planning application process. There was limited detailed information regarding the environmental impact at this stage and further information was needed from detailed studies ahead of any judgement being made by the City Council.

The City Council had put forward a response to the non-statutory consultation and, following discussions at Chelmsford Policy Board on 3 December, the City Council's response had set out a number of points for further consideration.

These included the use of agricultural land for such development. The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provided a method for assessing the quality of agricultural land and noted that the Best and Most Versatile Land was defined as Grade 1, 2 and 3a. Within the Chelmsford area, the proposed site included predominately Grade 2 agricultural land (and some Grade 3 land within the site boundary covered by the EIA Scoping Report). The City Council's response recognised that land of such quality was an important area for food production and reducing the agricultural land available increased the reliance on the importation of food, with subsequent environmental impacts such as increased carbon emissions. A balance was to be made between the benefits of renewable energy, the loss of agricultural land and the impact of such development on biodiversity. It had been requested that the proposal should assess the detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) of the site and seek to minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land and ensure there was no long-term impact on the land once the site was decommissioned.

With regard to impacts on the landscape, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment had been requested through the consultation response which should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). Further details which would come forward as part of the application process should give consideration to the landscape and visual impacts of ancillary development such as power cables, fencing, access tracks and construction compound. As well as the solar arrays and associated infrastructure it was expected that the proposal would include landscape buffer areas and the City Council had requested use of natural features such as hedges and/or trees to screen the development. Landscape and Visual Impact would also be covered by the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA).

More information about the impact on the flora and fauna and consequently the visual and ecological mitigation had also been requested. There were a number of local environmental features that would need careful consideration and any proposals should take into account the impact upon the natural environment and connecting wildlife habitats. The City Council recognised that retaining existing site features such as existing hedgerows and ecological features was crucial to maintain landscape character and support biodiversity which should include a significant net gain.

This was the first non-statutory consultation and limited information was provided. The City Council had also been consulted on the EIA scoping report and a separate response provided. The City Council and stakeholders would have further opportunities to review detailed information during the planning process.

The consultation response also commented on the traffic impacts and requested that information needed to demonstrate the impact on the local highway network and that site access was able to accommodate the type and number of vehicle movements during the construction and operation of the site.

Any noise and vibration impacts would also be addressed through the assessment process of the Environment impact Assessment. Human health would also be covered within technical aspects of the EIA.

It was noted that the proposal was still at the early design stages and as such some elements such as location of battery storage facilities and their design had not been finalised. Any design consideration such as security and safety, technology to be used, fencing and scale of associated supporting infrastructure would be detailed, and more information provided following completion of further survey work, including the EIA.

There would be no Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liability for a solar farm as CIL was only chargeable on new building floorspace, which did not include plant buildings: the solar farm would not create new floorspace. In Chelmsford the charge was only levied on residential and retail development.

Policies included within the adopted Chelmsford Local Plan encouraged sustainable development and included measures to promote renewable and low carbon energy developments, water and energy efficiency such as insulation, living walls/roofs, passive solar design, tree planting, Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) and providing resilient ecological networks. Policy DM25 Sustainable Buildings expected all new dwellings and non-residential buildings to incorporate sustainable design features to reduce carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions, and the use of natural resources.

6. Questions to Cabinet Members

The following questions were put to members of the Cabinet:

Question from Councillor M S Steel to the Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford

At the Chelmsford City Council Meeting on 16 July 2019, the Council unanimously passed a motion that declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

Among other things, this motion included:

- Declare a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency' that requires urgent action to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030;
 - Support and work with all other relevant agencies towards making the City of Chelmsford and surrounding area net-zero carbon within the same timescale;
 - Ensure that any recommendations are fully costed and that the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny bodies regularly review Council activities, taking account of production and consumption emissions, and produce an action plan within 12 months together with budget actions and a measured baseline;
 - Establish a baseline for Chelmsford's ecological status and monitor progress year on year.
1. The main declaration was to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030. This issue is of great importance and it transcends party politics. Since the declaration was

stated in numbers - zero by 2030 - it is logical that progress will be measured in the same way, with a starting point and an action plan to reduce to zero. I will be disappointed if it is not possible to underwrite the plan with starting and current carbon emission numbers. However, Council has not been advised of the original starting points and the following questions seek to clarify the situation.

- a. What was the starting point? i.e., what were the carbon emissions of City Council "activities" in July 2019?
 - b. What is the scope of Council "activities"? What does it include, what does it exclude – e.g., are trees planted by City Council counted towards carbon collection? What if they are not on City Council land?
 - c. Are Housing Association activities included – what about the devolved stock of rented accommodation??
 - d. Does the supply line count if they serve any Council services?
 - e. The scope boundary must not be a fuzzy line so that favourable items can be included and no-favourable ones excluded . Will the Cabinet Member confirm that the scope has been clearly defined up front and advise Council of the details?
 - f. As of December 2020, what are the current carbon emissions of council activities?
2. In terms of working with other agencies toward making the City of Chelmsford carbon neutral by 2030, similar questions apply, so could the Cabinet Member advise us:-
- a. What was the starting point? i.e., what were the carbon emissions of Chelmsford City in July 2019?
 - b. What are they now?
3. Back in July 2019, this was termed an emergency – quite an emotive word. Part of the Declaration was that Overview and scrutiny Committee would be presented with any progress reports. In spite of my requests to the Council no reports have been presented. Could the Cabinet member advise us when the initial report will come to the Committee?

The Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford responded to each of the questions in turn:

Q1 What was the starting point? i.e., what were the carbon emissions of City Council 'activities' in July 2019?

The baseline period for when the Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared was the financial year 2019/20. Carbon emissions from the Council's operations during that year were 5,370 tonnes CO₂e.

Q2 What is the scope of Council 'activities'? What does it include, what does it exclude – e.g., are trees planted by City Council counted towards carbon collection? What if they are not on City Council land?

The baseline report was drawn up in line with best practice and conversion figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. It included emissions which were generated from the Council's operations which included:

- Gas used to heat space and water in Council owned and operated properties
- Liquid fuels used to power plant, machinery and vehicles owned and operated by the Council
- Liquid fuels used to heat space and water in properties owned and operated by the Council
- Electricity used to provide power, heat and services in Council owned properties
- Business travel recorded by the Council's staff

The baseline calculation did not include the impact of any carbon offsetting measures or carbon emissions from goods or services procured by the Council. But tree planting was essential to address climate change and biodiversity issues.

Q3 Are Housing Association activities included – what about the devolved stock of rented accommodation?

Housing association emissions were not contained within the Council's report but the Council worked with housing associations to ensure best practice in reducing carbon emissions.

Q4 Does the supply line count if they serve any Council services?

Supply chains were covered within the definition of scope 3 emissions, which were discretionary and not currently included in the calculation of the carbon baseline for the Council's operation.

Q5 The scope boundary must not be a fuzzy line so that favourable items can be included, and non-favourable ones excluded. Will the Cabinet Member confirm that the scope has been clearly defined up front and advise Council of the details?

The Council's Carbon emissions baseline calculation followed the methodologies and conversion factors published by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Environment Agency for carbon reporting.

The emissions fell into different types, known as scope 1, 2 or 3. The 'scope' of emissions indicated how far removed from the Council's control the emissions were. Scope 1 was

directly burnt / emitted by the Council's assets; Scope 2 was indirectly emitted (i.e. fuels used to produce electricity used) and Scope 3 could be any emissions caused by the business but emitted by other parties or upstream / supply chain emissions.

Scope 1 and 2 emissions were tightly prescribed by guidance and included in the calculation.

There was more discretion in what was included in the calculation from Scope 3. For consistency the only Scope 3 emissions included in the baseline report were emissions from employee business mileage as they were readily attributed to the operations of the Council.

The carbon baseline report would be separately audited before being considered for 'publication'.

Q6 As of December 2020, what are the current carbon emissions of council activities?

Emissions for the first six months (April- September) of the 2020/21 reporting year were 2,436 tonnes Co₂e. Caution should be taken with this figure as there were large seasonal variations in data sources. For example, a number of sites would not have heating oil deliveries during this data collection period.

Q7 In terms of working with other agencies toward making the City of Chelmsford carbon neutral by 2030, similar questions apply, so could the Cabinet Member advise What was the starting point? i.e. what were the carbon emissions of Chelmsford City in July 2019?

The City of Chelmsford's (the area) emissions were produced by BEIS, aggregated from centralised data and then published at a local authority level. The data for emissions in 2019 would not be published until 2021. The statistics were published each year in June. The 2018 estimates which were published in June 2020 indicated Chelmsford City Council's area-wide emissions to be 4.8 tonnes of carbon per capita.

Q7b What are they now?

This was covered by the response to Question 7.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive much of the information requested by Councillor Steel at its meeting on 1 February 2021. This would be one year after the adoption of the Action Plan to support the Declaration and represented the first of the agreed annual reviews of progress.

The Cabinet Member went on to emphasise that all of the Council's activities continued to centre on the need to protect the environment and lead by example in reducing carbon emissions. The Council remained fully committed to the principles set out in the Declaration of a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency.

Question from Councillor S Dobson to the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development

In the Local Plan there is an allocation of around 1000 homes north of South Woodham Ferrers yet in discussions it appears that this number could increase by 50%. Since the Local Plan has been found sound and adopted by this administration, would the Cabinet Member please explain why it intends to ignore the agreed housing numbers and increase them in this location?

Secondly, if the housing numbers are to be increased here, could the allocation of 100 homes in Danbury, a severely constrained village location, be incorporated within this number?

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development replied that the site to the north of South Woodham Ferrers was allocated in the adopted Local Plan for around 1,000 new homes. As required by the Local Plan policy, a masterplan was currently being prepared by the promoters of the site to demonstrate how this level of growth could be accommodated. Due to the nature of planning for strategic sites, it was not possible at the Local Plan stage to provide an exact housing capacity. The use of 'around' allowed for a level of flexibility. This approach was endorsed by the Local Plan Inspector.

As part of this masterplanning process, the promoter had tested different options which unfortunately had led to some confusion about the site's overall housing capacity, with numbers discussed which were clearly outside of the parameters of around 1,000 new homes. Officers had made it clear to the promoters of the site that the final masterplan must be in conformity with the Local Plan's requirement of around 1,000 new homes before it could be considered by the Chelmsford Policy Board and Cabinet. As such the Cabinet Member assured Councillor Dobson that the agreed housing numbers in the Local Plan were not being ignored. The final masterplan would be considered in the normal way through the Chelmsford Policy Board and Cabinet currently programmed for meetings in January.

The allocation of around 100 homes for Danbury was separate from the South Woodham Ferrers in the Local Plan. The evidence that supported the Danbury allocation was found sound by the Inspector who examined the Local Plan. It was the role of the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan to assess and allocate the actual sites in Danbury.

7. Reports from the Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford

7.1 Section 106 Spending Plan

The Cabinet on 8 September 2020 had considered a proposed spending plan for S106 planning contributions held by the City Council. Subject to Council approving the Plan, the Cabinet had agreed a number of delegations to enable the proposals within it to proceed.

RESOLVED that the Section 106 Spending Plan in the report to the meeting be approved.
(7.56pm to 8.01pm)

7.2 Special Expenses

The Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group had carried out a review of the mechanism by which charges for services provided by both Parish/Town Councils and the City Council were made. The aim of the special expenses mechanism was to ensure that taxpayers in the areas where the Parish Council provided the services and charged for them through their Parish precepts were not taxed twice for the same type of expenditure.

The review of special expenses had involved obtaining initial information from Parishes, looking at changes to methodology and consultation with Parishes. Given its complexity, the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group had concluded that it should look further into the potential for future abolition of the existing special expenses regime and to consider alternative delivery models to deal with double-taxation issues. However, it was necessary to have a reasonable method in place for the 2021/22 budget and the Working Group had recommended retention of the existing special expenses regime, updated for current information from Parishes and with amended methodologies as set out in the report to the meeting and at Appendix B. Based on responses received to date, Appendix A outlined the potential changes to each Parish and Unparished area as a result of the recommendations.

The Chelmsford Policy Board on 15 October 2020 and the Cabinet on 17 November 2020 had endorsed that approach and recommended it to the Council.

RESOLVED that:

1. The findings of the review of special expenses by the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group be approved;
2. The retention of the current special expenses mechanism for the preparation of the budget for 2021/22, updated by the information and amended methodologies described in the report to the meeting, be approved; and
3. The Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group explore other options for the future of special expenses such as abolition or replacement with another mechanism.

(8.01pm to 8.04pm)

7.3 Treasury Management Mid-Year Review

The Cabinet on 17 November 2020 had considered a report on the Treasury Management activities undertaken in the first part of 2020/21 and the extent of compliance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy. Members were asked whether any changes to the Strategy were required ahead of the full, annual review later in the financial year.

Councillors P Clark and R Hyland asked that their opposition to the adoption of the Strategy be recorded. It was noted that Councillor K Bentley and W Daden would have abstained had a formal vote been taken.

RESOLVED that the report on the Treasury Management activities in 2020/21 be approved without change.

(8.04pm to 8.06pm)

7.4 Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The Council received an update on its projected financial position over the medium term and progress against the actions outlined in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved at its last meeting. The Cabinet had recommended two changes to the Strategy at its meeting on 17 November 2020: to increase the level of reserves to £9 million and to make it clear that reserves may be used to cover temporary reductions in income as well as temporary increases in costs.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford said that the Council had distributed £32.9 million in Business Support Grants to 2,748 businesses in Chelmsford since the summer and £1.9 million of discretionary grants to 309 businesses. These had largely been funded by the government and did not affect the proposed financial strategy. Applications for Business Adaptation Grants administered by the County Council could be submitted soon.

The Council accepted that the proposed Strategy represented the best course of action to protect the Council's financial position in the present circumstances.

RESOLVED that:

1. The approach to reserves set out in section 3 of the report to the meeting be approved.
2. The amendments to the Financial Strategy set out at paragraphs 3.4 and 7.5 of the report and reflected in Appendix 1 be approved.

(8.06pm to 8.16pm)

8. Amendments to the Constitution

The Constitution Working Group and the Governance Committee had recommended several changes to the Constitution following its latest review. They had been endorsed by the Cabinet on 17 November 2020.

RESOLVED that the following amendments to the Constitution be approved:

1. Rule 3.4.11(c) be amended to read:

“applications for a private hire licence where the circumstances of the applicant have changed since the grant of a previously held licence.”

2. The Cabinet and Committee Procedure Rules in Part 4.2 be amended by the addition of the following:

4.2.8A Working Groups

4.2.8A.1 A non-Executive body may create such Working Groups of such size and membership as it may decide. Working Groups need not be politically balanced but should, where possible, comprise members of all political groups on the Council. All groups will be permitted to appoint substitute member(s) to any seat(s) allocated to their particular group.

4.2.8A.2 The Cabinet Member whose portfolio is most closely associated with the general work of a Working Group shall be entitled to attend its meetings and speak at them. Other Cabinet Members may, with the permission of the Chair of the Working Group, attend and speak at its meetings if it is considering a matter related to their portfolios.

4.2.8A.3 Other members of the Council may attend meetings of a Working Group but will not be entitled to speak.

3. Rule 4.1.13.9 of the Council Rules be amended to read:

“An amendment should not negate the motion. All amendments should be submitted in writing to the Legal and Democratic Services Manager no later than 24 hours before the meeting. If valid, they will be published with the agenda for the meeting on the Council’s website no later than six hours before the meeting. If the Legal and Democratic Services Officer considers that the amendment is not valid, the councillor who submitted it will be given the opportunity to alter it to make it a valid amendment, provided they do so and send the revised amendment to the Legal and Democratic Services Manager no later than eight hours before the meeting.

Nothing in the foregoing paragraph would rule out a short amendment to a Motion being presented on the night provided it is compliant with paragraph 4.1.13.8. ”

4. Amend Rule 4.1.12.1 (h) to read: “a short amendment to a Motion as set out in rule 4.1.13.9 and to amend an amendment to a motion”

(8.16pm to 8.18pm)

9. Review of the Statement of Licensing Policy

The Licensing Committee had reviewed the Council’s Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003 and, subject to a minor amendment to include reference the need to adhere strictly to COVID-19 regulations and guidelines in and around venues, had recommended that it be approved without change. The Cabinet on 17 November 2020, however, had recommended that the amendment not be accepted as it did not relate directly to the licensing objectives and the need to observe Covid-19 restrictions and regulations was covered by other regulatory regimes.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Licensing Policy as submitted to the meeting be approved without amendment.

(8.18pm to 8.20pm)

10. Community Governance Review

At its meeting on 3 December 2020 the Chelmsford Policy Board had recommended that the Council approve the Terms of Reference for a proposed Community Governance Review. The report to the meeting included the results of informal consultation carried out in advance of the review, from which it had been concluded that a broad review of the whole of the Chelmsford area would be preferable. The Terms of Reference reflected that and indicated that there was likely to be a focus on the potential creation of new parishes and/or changing existing parish boundaries in the unparished areas, as well as changes resulting from housing development. This approach would also allow sufficient flexibility to address any community governance issues that emerged should that be necessary.

RESOLVED that the outcome of the informal consultation be noted and that the Council be recommended to approve the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review.

(8.20pm to 8.21pm)

11. Temporary Amendments to the Constitution and Approval of Members' Absences

The Council was recommended to extend the temporary changes to the Constitution and the general approval of members' absence agreed by the Council on 13 May 2020. It was also asked to approve amendments to the Rules relating to meetings to provide for the possible use of electronic voting at meetings.

RESOLVED that:

1. The temporary changes to the Constitution, as amended to allow for the possible use of electronic voting, detailed in the appendix to the report to the meeting be extended until 19 May 2021.
2. Until 19 May 2021 the absence of any member for whatever reason be approved under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. (Councillors K Bentley, P Clark and R Hyland asked that their opposition to this decision be recorded.)

(8.21pm to 8.26pm)

12. Membership of Committees

The Council was requested to approve changes to the membership of several Committees.

RESOLVED that the following changes to the membership of Committees be approved:

1. The replacement of Councillor R J Shepherd with Councillor L A Millane as a full member of the Planning Committee and appoint Councillor R J Shepherd as the nominated substitute.
2. The replacement of Councillor M D Watson on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Councillor G B R Knight and on the Audit and Risk Committee with Councillor J Galley.

(8.26pm to 8.27pm)

13. Notice of Motion – Local Electricity Bill

In accordance with notice duly given, it was moved by Councillor R Moore, seconded by Councillor S J Robinson:

1. This Council believes that
 - a. local authorities can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity

- b. very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers can result in it being unachievable
 - c. making such costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for councils to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations
 - d. revenues received by councils that become local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund measures to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions and improve local services and facilities
2. This Council notes
- a. that when the UK emerges from the Coronavirus pandemic, there will be a need to rebuild local communities and economies for the benefit of local people and businesses, and that energy being used close to the point of generation is more efficient
 - b. the efforts that Chelmsford City Council has already made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy, following the declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency in summer 2019, and that ambitious new policy and regulation is needed if we are to meet the target of net-zero emissions by 2030 and encourage others to do the same.
3. This Council therefore agrees to
- a. support the Local Electricity Bill which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply
 - b. inform the media of this decision
 - c. write to local MPs requesting their support for the Bill
 - d. write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, *Power For People*, to express its support

Those who spoke expressed support for the motion which was adopted without dissent.

RESOLVED that the motion on the Local Electricity Bill be agreed.

(8.27pm to 8.40pm)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Item 14 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding that information)

14. Chelmer Waterside Delivery Options

Public interest statement: It is not in the public interest to release details of this report at present, on the grounds that the report contains information that is commercially sensitive and to place the information in the public realm would be detrimental to the negotiations to be undertaken by the Council

The Council was informed of the progress made on the following issues with the aim of bringing forward the Chelmer Waterside Development:

- completion of land assembly under compulsory purchase powers
- provision of new infrastructure including a new road and bridge
- removal of site constraints imposed by the gas utility structures on site
- delivery and development of the project.

The Cabinet on 8 September 2020 had recommended to the Council that the capital budget for the scheme be increased to fund the additional costs associated with the works. This would be partially funded by additional contributions identified from S106 contributions and an additional Housing Infrastructure Fund grant.

A supplementary paper circulated before the meeting informed the Council that it was proposed to enter into a contract to enable the detailed design for the relocation of the Gas Pressure Reduction System from the former gas works site within Chelmer Waterside to proceed. This would necessitate making an advance payment to the company concerned.

Asked about the risks associated with the project and the fear that there may be a repeat of the problems encountered with the Riverside development, the Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford said that lessons learned from the Riverside project were being applied to this one and he was confident that the risks associated with Chelmer Waterside could be managed. There were risks with not proceeding along the lines recommended and on balance he felt that they were outweighed by the benefits from the redevelopment of the site.

In response to a question as to whether the eventual development would be connected to the gas grid, the Cabinet Member said that details of this nature were usually considered at the masterplan stage, but in principle the Council would be looking for it to be as close as possible to being carbon neutral.

RESOLVED that:

1. The capital budget for the scheme to deliver the redevelopment of Chelmer Waterside, partially funded by additional contributions identified from S106 contributions and additional HIF grant be increased to the amount referred to in the report and be used to fund the additional costs associated with the works estimated to be an additional.

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2. The intention to enter into a contract and make an advance payment for the detailed design for the relocation of the Gas Pressure Reduction System be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm

Mayor