

MINUTES OF CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL CABINET

on 19 November 2019 at 6.00pm

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor S J Robinson, Leader of the Council (Chair)
Councillor M C Goldman, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford
Councillor C K Davidson, Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford
Councillor J Deakin, Cabinet Member for Safer Chelmsford
Councillor M J Mackrory, Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford

Cabinet Deputies

Councillor M Bracken, Economy and Small Business
Councillor R J Moore, Recycling and Ecology
Councillor C R Tron, Affordable Housing

Councillors

P Clark, A Davidson, I Grundy, R Hyland, J A Potter, R J Poulter, S Rajesh,
I C Roberts, T E Roper, M Sismey, M S Steel, R T Whitehead and S Young

The Cabinet and those present were advised that the pre-election publicity restrictions currently in force as a result of the Parliamentary General Election to be held on 12 December 2019 would need to be observed at this meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Bentley and J Galley, Opposition Spokespersons.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

Members of the Cabinet were reminded to declare at the appropriate time any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any of the items of business on the meeting's agenda.

3. **Minutes and Decisions Called-in**

The minutes of the meeting on 15 October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. No decisions at that meeting had been called in.

4. **Public Questions**

Two residents of Great Baddow who asked questions on the Council's actions on the environment and community representation were told that they raised matters that were caught by the restrictions on pre-election publicity and could not be answered at this meeting without contravening those restrictions. The questioners were invited to put their questions in writing to the appropriate Cabinet Member, who would respond.

5. **Members' Questions**

Councillors not members of the Cabinet asked questions or made statements on the following matters:

Councillor R J Poulter on whether a report could be submitted to the next Cabinet on the implications for the Council of its declaration of a climate change emergency.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Chelmsford said that the standard template for Cabinet reports would be amended to add, as part of the Corporate Implications section, the potential impact of a report's proposals on climate change and the environment and their contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030. She would also report regularly on the progress in meeting the actions in the declaration agreed by the Council on 16 July 2019.

Councillor R J Hyland on the budgetary implications of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and what the gross cost to the Council would be.

The Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford said that he would address this as part of item 6.1 on the agenda.

Councillor R J Hyland, on behalf of Councillor W Daden, on whether the Council would look again at its decision to permit 14 and 15 year olds to use the Riverside gym after 5.30pm on weekdays only if accompanied by an adult, Councillor Daden's argument being that this was contrary to the aims of the Health and Wellbeing Plan and was an unwarranted restriction on the majority of well-behaved youngsters.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Communities said that the petition referred to in the question had not been received by the Council, and the limitation on the hours of use of the gym by that group could not be regarded as a ban. She said that the weekday times during which 14 and 15 year olds could use the gym were longer than those that had operated at the old facility; the arrangement had generally been welcomed by users and the behaviour of young people using the gym had improved; and that the gym's membership had increased since the new hours of use had been introduced. She therefore saw no reason to review the present arrangements.

Councillor I Grundy on whether the Council was pressing the Environment Agency to begin work on the flood alleviation scheme at Margaretting.

The Cabinet Member for Safer Chelmsford replied that the Environment Agency had been encouraged to progress the scheme as quickly as possible.

6.1 **Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-24 (Fairer Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: (M6.1, CAB12, 2019) Consultation had been carried out with partners on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-24 and the final strategy was presented for the Cabinet's comments before its submission to the Council on 22 January 2020. The Cabinet was informed that a number of minor corrections still needed to be made to the document but that the final version would be available for the Council meeting.

Options: Approve the draft Strategy, with or without amendment.

Chosen Option and Reasons: The draft Strategy had been produced in accordance with statutory requirements and had the support of partner organisations as an effective response to tackling homelessness in Chelmsford.

Discussion: The Cabinet was informed that the question at Item 5 on the cost of the Strategy had been prompted by the belief that the Council should be aware of the financial implications to it of any strategy before it was adopted. The Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford acknowledged that point but said that the Council had a statutory duty to prevent, reduce and deal with the results of homelessness and, accordingly, meet its costs whatever they may be. The detailed cost of the Strategy would be assessed by the Working Group that had produced it and would be included in the budget for 2020/21 when it was considered by the Cabinet and Council in January/February 2020.

The Working Group that had produced the Strategy, and the partners who had contributed to it, were thanked for their work.

RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that, with any minor corrections that may be necessary, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for 2019-24 detailed in Appendix 1 to the report to the meeting be approved.

6.20pm to 6.30pm

6.2 **Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/20 (Fairer Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The report to the meeting detailed the Treasury Management activities carried out so far in 2019/20, the extent to which they complied with the Strategy governing those activities, and whether any adjustments were needed to it.

Options: Approve or not the proposed changes to the Treasury Management Strategy.

Chosen Option and Reasons: Increasing the maximum permitted level of external debt would provide flexibility for borrowing to meet the cost of new capital schemes.

Discussion: In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford agreed that the maximum permitted level of external debt should be reviewed annually. He also confirmed that no monies from the Community Infrastructure Fund would be permanently appropriated for other means and would only be used for the short-term funding of capital expenditure.

RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that it note the Treasury Management activity to date in 2019/20 and approve an increase in the maximum permitted level of external debt from £25m to £45m, that level to be reviewed annually.

6.30pm to 6.37pm

6.3 **Revenue Monitoring 2019/20 (Fairer Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The latest budget forecast for the Council's services as at November 2019 was presented, together with explanations for any major variations.

Options: Approve or not the proposed changes to service budgets.

Chosen Option and Reasons: The budgets as presented reflected accurately the financial position for each service and its estimated expenditure and income.

RESOLVED that the position on the Council's revenue budgets to November 2019 be noted.

6.37pm to 6.40pm

6.4 **Capital Programme Monitoring and Update (Fairer Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The report to the meeting set out variations to schemes in the capital programme and to the Asset Replacement Programme.

Options: Approve or not the proposed variations and budgets.

Chosen Option and Reasons: The reasons for the variations as a result of increases in the cost of schemes or changes to their timing were acceptable.

RESOLVED that:

1. the proposed increase of £306,000 in the cost of capital schemes shown in Appendix 1 and paragraph 6.3 of the report to the meeting be approved; and
2. the proposed Asset Replacement Programme for 2019/20, with an increase in scheme costs of £79,000, proposed new schemes of £18,000 and the rephasing of expenditure of £262,000 from 2019/20, as shown in Appendix 3 and paragraph 7.3 of the report, be approved.

6.40pm to 6.44pm

6.5 **Options for Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21 (Fairer Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The Cabinet considered a report on the ways in which the Local Council Tax Support Scheme could be operated in 2020/21 and the effect the various options would have on expenditure and collection rates.

Options: Adopt the existing Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21 or make changes to the existing scheme.

Chosen Option and Reasons: The retention of the present year's scheme would be the most equitable and affordable option and would not result in lower collection rates.

RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that it adopt the current year's Local Council Tax Support Scheme as the scheme for 2020/21.

6.44pm to 6.46pm

7.1 **Community-Led Housing Fund (Greener Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The Cabinet was presented with options for the use of a government grant of £41,135 to support community-led housing in Chelmsford.

Options:

1. Reopen the grant funding application period based on the same criteria as the previous funding scheme, with an opening and closing date for the application period.
2. Reopen the grant funding application on the same criteria as the previous funding scheme but allow potential applicants to bid on a continuous basis, rather than having a deadline for bids to be submitted, until all the remaining funds are allocated.
3. Retain the funding pending the development of the business case for and establishment of the Eastern Region Community-led Housing Hub being developed by the Rural Community Councils in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.
4. Not to approve the release of the funds to facilitate the development of community-led housing.

Chosen Option and Reasons: Option 3 was the best practical use to which to put the funding and would have the most benefit in the long term to support community-led housing.

RESOLVED that:

1. in accordance with Option 3, the release of £41,135 be determined when the business case for the Eastern Region Community-Led Housing Hub has been developed and is approved;

2. the Director of Sustainable Communities, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford, be authorised to approve the release of the funding to support the Eastern Community-Led Housing Hub, once the business case has been assessed and the Hub has been formally established; and
3. if the Director of Sustainable Communities, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford, decides not to approve the release of the monies to support the Eastern Community-Led Housing Hub, or the Eastern Community-Led Housing Hub is not formally established, recommendations regarding the release of the remaining £41,135 be brought back to Cabinet to determine.

6.46pm to 6.52pm

7.2 **Authority Monitoring Report 2018/19 (Greener Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The latest Authority Monitoring Report, which monitored the implementation of the adopted Local Development Framework and the production of the new Local Plan, was submitted for approval for publication.

Options: The report was factual and the consideration of options was not relevant.

Discussion: Asked whether the Council would be told about any changes the Inspector had made to the Local Plan as a result of the consultation on the Main Modifications, the Cabinet Member said that these would be reported to the meeting of the Council at which it would be considering the adoption of the Plan.

RESOLVED that the Authority Monitoring Report for 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 be approved and that the Director of Sustainable Communities be authorised to finalise it for publication.

6.52pm to 6.59pm

8. **Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019 (Safer Chelmsford)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The Cabinet was requested to consider the Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan for 2019 which had been drawn up in conjunction with Livewell Chelmsford, Essex County Council and the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group.

Options: Approve, not approve or amend the proposed Plan.

Chosen Option and Reasons: The Plan as submitted established the Council's priorities and principles for supporting the development of healthy and active lifestyles and enabled resources to be directed to those areas of greatest need.

Discussion: The Cabinet expressed appreciation for the work of officers and members on the production of the Plan.

RESOLVED that the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019 be approved.

6.59pm to 7.01pm

9. **Review of Members' Allowances Scheme (Leader)**

Declarations of Interest: None

Summary: The views of the Cabinet were requested on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel appointed to review the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

Options: Comment or not on the report of the Panel.

Chosen Option and Reasons: The Cabinet had no comments on the proposed scheme.

RESOLVED that the Council be informed that the Cabinet has no comments on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme.

7.01pm to 7.03pm

10. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

11. **Reports to Council**

The following items would be referred to the Council:

Item 6.1 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
Item 6.2 – Treasury Management Mid-Year Review
Item 6.5 – Local Council Tax Scheme for 2020/21
Item 9 – Review of Members' Allowances Scheme

The meeting closed at 7.04pm

Chairman