

**MINUTES OF
CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL CABINET**

on 24 January 2023 at 7.00pm

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor S Robinson, Leader of the Council (Chair)
Councillor M Goldman, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford
Councillor C Davidson, Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford
Councillor M Mackrory, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development
Councillor R Moore, Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford

Opposition Spokespersons

Councillors R Poulter, J Raven, I Roberts, M Steel, A Thorpe-Apps and R T Whitehead

Also present: Councillors A Davidson, I Grundy S Goldman, B Knight and A Sosin.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bentley, Gulliver, Hyland, Massey, Sismey and Thorpe Apps.

2. Declarations of Interest

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 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record. No decisions at that meeting had been called in.

4. Public Questions

One question was asked at the meeting which related to ongoing concerns from several residents about a business operating in Great Baddow. The Cabinet were informed that there had been issues with noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour at the premises. It was noted

that at the planning stage, concerns had been raised with the Council and what appeared to be a short-term holiday let has instead become a party venue for stag and hen do's. The Cabinet heard that no staff were present at the premises and this led to 24/7 drinking and loud amplified music. The Cabinet heard that residents had been unsuccessful in liaising with the business and had instead turned to the Council for help. The Cabinet heard that often once Council officers arrive, the noise has reduced. The Council were asked to be more proactive as residents felt the problem would only increase in the summer months.

In response the Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford, thanked the resident for bringing the issue to the attention of the Cabinet. The Cabinet heard that the Council had been made aware of complaints previously and that they had been investigated. It was noted that some noise had to be expected from a venue of that type but that for it to amount a statutory nuisance, officers must witness noise from the affected resident's property. The Cabinet heard that residents had access to the out of hours noise service and advised that residents call straight away, rather than waiting for 40 minutes before reporting excessive noise. It was also noted that residents affected by noise were asked to complete nuisance log sheets, to help officers determine further steps and action required. The Cabinet also heard that venues of this type did not require a licence, but that officers had contacted the owners and relayed details of the issues, alongside making them aware of measures they should have in place. The Cabinet Member reminded the resident to report any issues straight away and that the Council continued to be committed to dealing with any unreasonable noise and would take formal action, if a statutory nuisance was witnessed.

5. Members' Questions

One question was asked by Councillor Knight at this point of the meeting, other questions were asked by Councillors under the relevant items. Councillor Knight asked about the gender equality consultant that the Council had appointed to oversee the safer women's charter, developed by the Council. They asked what prior training, experience and track record the consultant had in improving women's safety. In response the Cabinet Member for a Greener and Safer Chelmsford stated that the person appointed to the role was highly qualified. It was noted that they had been instrumental in recent years as a spokesperson for women on various causes and had been a strong defender of women's rights. It was noted that they had helped to create the women's safety charter, the first one outside of London and would help to run programs around educating businesses and staff and that they would transform the landscape for women in Chelmsford. The Cabinet Member for Connected Chelmsford also detailed various campaigns the consultant had been involved with, alongside details of published research papers, roles on training bodies and that they were eminently qualified for the role. It was also noted that they had received no payment to date, despite many hours of support and advice being provided.

6. Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme 2023/24 (Connected Chelmsford)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

The Cabinet was informed that the Council was required to approve, by 11 March 2023, a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023-24. It was proposed that the Scheme adopted for 2022-23 be retained in its current form.

Options:

Retain the present scheme or adopt an amended version.

Preferred option and reasons:

The existing scheme would be affordable to the Council and fair to recipients of Council Tax support.

RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022-23 be retained as the Scheme for 2023-24.

(7.21pm to 7.22pm)

7.1 Capital, Treasury Management and Investment Strategies 2023/24(Fairer Chelmsford)

Declarations of Interest:

None

Summary:

The Cabinet received a report setting out a proposed approach to the management of the Council's cash, capital investments (the capital expenditure programme) and other types of investment, including property.

Options:

1. Accept the recommendations contained within the report
2. Recommend changes to the way the Council's investments are to be managed

Preferred Option and Reasons:

The proposed Strategies met statutory requirements for the production of a treasury management strategy that achieved an acceptable balance between risk and return and capital and investment strategies that ensured the proper financial management of the Council's resources.

RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that the Capital, Treasury and Investment Strategies 2023-24 as submitted to the meeting be approved.

(7.22pm to 7.23pm)

7.2 Revenue Budget 2023/24 (Fairer Chelmsford)

Declarations of Interest:

None

Summary:

The report to the meeting contained recommendations for the setting of the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2023-24 and the level of Council Tax for that year.

Options:

Agree or vary the proposals contained within the report but with regard to the financial sustainability of any amendments.

Preferred Option and Reasons:

The recommended budget would be prudent and in the best financial interests of the city.

Discussion:

The Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford informed the Cabinet that the last few budgets had been difficult but the current economy, meant setting budgets for 2023-24 would be even more difficult for local authorities. They thanked officers for their continued hard work and stated it was a tribute to their professionalism, that a balanced budget had been put together.

The Cabinet heard that inflation alongside falling income had meant difficult decisions had been made, including higher Council Tax and Fees and Charges, but this had still not matched the scale of cost rises. The Cabinet heard that ambitious investments had continued though, including the theatre, plans for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 and the Council's parks and leisure centres. The Cabinet Member highlighted the recent decision by Essex County Council, to withdraw funding for the Highway Rangers who maintained areas such as overgrown hedges and tidied pavements. It was noted that this continued to be a County Council responsibility, which would now not be funded.

The Cabinet heard that the Council Tax increase was required and noted that the vast majority of Council Tax collected was not kept by the City Council, with nearly 90% going

to the County Council or the Police and Fire services. The Cabinet heard that the increase would help the Council to continue to deliver key services.

In response to a question, it was noted that the £157k cost was for switching to low carbon fuels and that the additional fuel costs for vehicular use were £300k and building energy were £1.5m. It was also noted that the negative charges to the South Essex Parking Partnership were for City Council officers' time, that was charged back to SEPP.

Concerns were also expressed about the removal of the funding for the Highway Rangers. It was noted that they provided a valuable service, and it was not an area in which Parish Councils could carry out the works themselves.

The Leader of the Council stated that the deficit being faced was a significant one, but that a balanced budget had been presented that would allow important projects to continue, alongside making the City a better place for its residents.

RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that:

1. the contents of Appendix 1 to the report to the meeting, the Budget Report, be approved, and specifically the following be agreed:
 - i. The new Capital investments in Council services shown in **Section 4**
 - ii. The delegations to undertake the new capital schemes identified in **Section 4**, Tables 8 and 8a.
 - iii. The Revenue Budgets in **Section 9** and Capital Budgets in **Section 10**
 - iv. An increase in the average Band D level of Council Tax for the City Council to £215.08, the maximum allowed before a referendum, in **Section 8**
 - v. The movement in reserves shown in **Section 6**
 - vi. The Budget forecast in **Section 6** and **Section 7** the s151 officer's review of the budget, which Members are required to note.
 - vii. Special expenses, parish and Town Council's precepts as identified in **Section 8**, Table 17 (Parish precepts are not available until Full Council).
 - viii. Delegation to the Chief Executive to agree, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, the pay award for 2023/24 within the normal financial delegations.

RESOLVED that:

1. The precepts for the two new Parishes, Chelmer Village and Garden Community, will be recommended under officer delegation to Council in February.
2. A delegation to the S151 Officer to update the budget report for parish precepts, changes to final Government settlement, Business Rate Retention income, following completing of NNDR1 statutory return to Government, and new Parish precepts after consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford.
3. A delegation to S151 officer to prepare a legal resolution for submission to Council for consideration after consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford.

(7.24pm to 7.40pm)

8. Chelmsford Garden Community – Strategic Growth Site 6 Stage 1 Masterplan Framework (Sustainable Development)

Declarations of Interest:

None

Summary:

The report sought the Cabinet's approval of the Chelmsford Garden Community Development Framework Document, which formed part of the Stage 1 Masterplan Framework, subject to the completion of a legal Planning Framework Agreement and to delegate the agreement of the baseline Infrastructure Delivery Plan to the Director of Sustainable Communities.

Options:

To approve or note approve the Chelmsford Garden Community Development Framework Document.

Preferred Option and Reasons:

The Chelmsford Garden Community Development Framework Document as approved by the Chelmsford Policy Board would form an important part of the Stage 1 Masterplan Framework for the Chelmsford Garden Community.

Discussion:

The Cabinet Member stated that this stage represented a significant milestone, and highlighted the excellent work undertaken by the Spatial Planning Team and the developer consortium in reaching this stage. It was noted that the masterplan had embraced the Council's green agenda and the support from Essex County Council and Homes England was acknowledged. It was noted that the masterplan contained the Infrastructure delivery plan and planning framework agreement. The Cabinet Member highlighted the site wide design principles, which would lead to a strong active travel network across the development. It was noted that the masterplan provided an exciting opportunity for an exemplar Garden Community and would assist the Council with meeting its housing needs, alongside significant green infrastructure.

In response to a question, it was noted that it was the intention that the strategic open spaces would be transferred to Council ownership and management, either the new Garden Community Council or the City Council. It was also noted that various routes for cycling and walking to Broomfield Hospital would continue to be explored.

It was noted that the development detailed a significant departure from previous schemes and would accelerate the pathway to zero-carbon housing in sustainable new neighbourhoods. The Cabinet also heard that residents would be able to access services they needed within 15 minutes, via sustainable and active travel methods. It was also noted that the Council wanted resident's service charges to be as low as possible. The

Cabinet agreed that all those involved should be proud of what had been achieved over the past three and a half years.

RESOLVED that

1. Cabinet agreed the Development Framework Document (DFD) attached at Appendix 3, subject to the completion of the Planning Framework Agreement (PFA) to be made under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and s111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and that the Director of Sustainable Communities use their existing delegated powers to negotiate and complete the Planning Framework Agreement in accordance with the summary set out at Appendix 4.
2. Cabinet delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development to settle the final presentation of the Development Framework Document (DFD).
3. Cabinet delegated the agreement of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to a baseline position to the Director of Sustainable Communities with future monitoring and updating to be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Framework Agreement.

(7.41pm to 7.56pm)

9. Memorandum of Understanding with North Essex Authorities (Leader)

Declarations of Interest:

None

Summary:

The report sought the Cabinet's approval for the City Council to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with North Essex Councils.

Options:

1. Sign up to the MOU
2. Seek amendments to the MOU
3. Agree not to enter into an MOU

Preferred Option and Reasons:

Signing up to the MOU would provide greater opportunities for joint working and increases the Councils collective negotiating power with Government and other bodies.

Discussion:

The Leader of the Council stated that the MOU would be a consultation forum and a framework by which all of the Councils would have discussions. It was noted that this already happened in the South of Essex and would be a platform for what could be achieved in the future in North Essex.

RESOLVED that

1. Cabinet agreed to sign the MOU.
2. The CEO in consultation with the Leader be authorised to make minor amendments to the MOU should other authorities request these provided any changes would not be detrimental to the City Council.

(7.57pm to 7.58pm)

10. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

11. Reports to Council

RESOLVED that Items 6, 7.1 & 7.2 be the subject of report to the Council.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm

Chair