

MINUTES OF
CHELMSFORD CITY COUNCIL CABINET

on 2 March 2021 at 7.00pm

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 M J Mackrory, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development
Councillor R J Moore, Cabinet Member for Greener and Safer Chelmsford

Cabinet Deputies

Councillor A Davidson, Healthy Living
Councillor N Dudley, Community Engagement
Councillor S Goldman, Economy and Small Business
Councillor S Rajesh, Community Safety
Councillor Chloe Tron, Affordable Housing

Opposition Spokespersons: Councillors

K Bentley, N Chambers, P Clark, S Dobson, J Galley, N Gulliver,
R Massey, I Roberts, M Sismey, M S Steel and R T Whitehead

Also present: Councillors D Clark and A Sosin

Barry Knight

The Chair referred with regret to the recent death of Barry Knight, who had worked for the Council for 41 years in the Planning service and had been responsible for the mapping of planning documents and the electronic mapping system. He had also contributed significantly to the documents that had supported the bid for city status. Barry had been a valued, popular and much loved employee who would be sorely missed.

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of members was confirmed. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R J Hyland, Opposition Spokesperson.

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 26 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record. No decisions at that meeting had been called in.

4. Public Questions

Questions were asked by members of the public and a number of parish and town councils on the Masterplan for land north of South Woodham Ferrers. The questions, which were lengthy and detailed in nature, mainly concerned the impact of the development on what many regarded as an already inadequate road network in and around the town. This would lead to congestion and air pollution and gave rise to concerns about road safety. Junction improvements would not resolve the problems and would simply slow traffic and increase journey times. The Bradwell B development would exacerbate the pressure on the road network and the long-term solution lay in the provision of a northern by-pass. There were also concerns that the development would make worse flooding and drainage problems already being experienced in that part of South Woodham Ferrers.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development said that the site had been allocated in the Local Plan, which the Planning Inspector had found to be sound. In coming to that view the Inspector had said that any traffic mitigation confirmed by a detailed traffic assessment at the planning application stage should be sufficient to alleviate any concerns or potential problems and did not feel that any new roads would be needed as a result of the development. Essex County Council, as the highway authority, would be carrying out a detailed traffic assessment at the planning application stage. Any development at Bradwell B would need to include proposals to mitigate its impact on the road network in the area.

Addressing a point raised by the Town Council, the Cabinet Member said that the County Council's Cabinet had recently accepted the need for a primary school as part of the development.

A separate question was asked by a member of the public in connection with the decision to introduce charges for car parking in Hylands Park. The Cabinet was asked whether this represented an intention to introduce similar charges at other parks or whether the Council intended to reduce costs in other ways.

The Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford replied that the Council had no plans to introduce charges at any of its other parks, including Galleywood Common. With the Council

increasingly reliant on income from car parks and other facilities, and the pandemic likely to have a long-term impact on those sources of income, the Council would need to look at all options for reducing the expected budget gap in future years if it was to continue to provide the vital services the residents of Chelmsford depended on, including its parks and play grounds.

(7.06pm to 7.27pm)

5. Members' Questions

Councillor N Gulliver referred to the fact that although he had requested that he be sent paper copies of agendas for meetings of City Council bodies of which he was a member, he had not received them for recent meetings. He had received an apology and explanation from Democratic Services and an assurance that he would be sent paper copies.

The Leader of the Council agreed that Councillor Gulliver's circumstances meant that he needed paper copies of agendas and should receive them as a matter of course.

(7.27pm to 7.32pm)

6. Strategic Growth Site Policy 10 – Masterplan for Land North of South Woodham Ferrers (Sustainable Development)

Declarations of interest:

None.

Summary:

At its meeting on 14 January 2021, the Chelmsford Policy Board had considered a Masterplan to guide the development of strategic growth site 10 on land to the north of South Woodham Ferrers. The Policy Board had recommended that the Cabinet adopt the Masterplan and whilst it had not changed since it had been considered by the Board, a late consultation response was included in the report to the Cabinet.

Options

Approve the Masterplan, with or without amendments, or not approve it.

Preferred Option and Reasons

The Masterplan as presented met the requirements of the Local Plan and would help achieve a high quality development well related to its context.

Discussion

In presenting the Masterplan to the meeting, the Cabinet Member reiterated some of the responses he had given to the questions and statements put earlier in the meeting. He said that the Masterplan now provided for up to 1200 dwellings, a reduction on previous numbers put forward by the developer, and would include a 35% allocation for affordable

housing. Whilst it could not be guaranteed at this point until confirmed in writing by the County Council, a primary school was also likely to be provided.

It was clear that local people had concerns about the adequacy of any highways infrastructure but, as stated earlier in the response to public questions, the planning application would need to be accompanied by a detailed traffic assessment and the County Council would advise on whether the highway measures proposed were satisfactory.

The Cabinet Member had no wish to lose green fields and farmland as part of the development but it was necessary in this case to provide much needed housing. The Masterplan proposed the retention of many hedgerows and trees and sought to protect wildlife and biodiversity. About 45% of the development would be open space and a green grid and new tree planting was planned, whilst there would be a net biodiversity gain of 10%. There would be a large area for sports pitches and designated children's play areas. Sustainable travel was a prominent feature, with pedestrian and cycle routes, controlled crossing points and enhanced bus services. The Cabinet Member believed that the Masterplan would meet the objectives of the Local Plan and provide a high quality development.

During the Cabinet's discussion of the report, the concerns expressed by residents and local councils about the size of the development, highways, drainage and the lack of a primary school were revisited and the responses given to them reiterated. In connection with drainage issues, the Cabinet Member said that the County Council as drainage authority would assess whether the drainage and flood alleviation measures proposed as part of a future planning application would be sufficient, just as it would, as the highway authority, assess the measures proposed to manage traffic. The proposals for open space and the creation of a green necklace were welcomed but extending them outside of the boundary of the site was beyond the scope of the Masterplan. It was for the developer to judge how many housing units, up to the maximum of 1200, could be accommodated on the site and for the Council to consider at the planning application stage whether that was a reasonable number.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Masterplan for Strategic Growth Site Policy 10, Land North of South Woodham Ferrers, as submitted to the meeting, be approved.
2. The Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development, be authorised to make all necessary revisions to the approved Masterplan.

(7.32pm to 8.09pm)

7. Community Funding Applications (Fairer Chelmsford)

Declarations of Interest:

None

Summary:

The report set out the recommendations of the Community Funding Panel for the award of funding grants for schemes and projects proposed by groups in Chelmsford.

Options:

Agree the recommendations put forward by the Community Funding Panel, with or without amendment.

Preferred Option and Reasons

The projects and schemes recommended for approval met the criteria for funding under the Community Funding process and would be of most benefit to the residents of Chelmsford.

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Community Funding Panel for the five Community Funding grants detailed in the report and appendix to the meeting totalling £37,500 be approved.

(8.09pm to 8.11pm)

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

9. Reports to Council

Neither of the reports to the meeting needed to be referred to the Council for approval.

The meeting closed at 8.11pm

Chair