

## **ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

#### **Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 9 July 2013 at 5.00 pm in the Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

*(Contrary to the information published on the agenda, the meeting was held in the whole Conference Chamber and not just the west side.)*

PRESENT: Councillor J H M Griffiths (Leader of the Council)  
(in the Chair)  
Councillors Clements, Everitt, Mrs Gower,  
Mrs Mildmay-White, Pugh, Ray, Mrs Stamp and Stevens

BY INVITATION: Councillors Houlder (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Nettleton and Thorndyke

#### **10. Remembrance**

The Cabinet observed a one minute silence in remembrance of the late Councillor John Hale, a former Member of the Borough Council.

#### **11. Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **12. Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 May 2013 (Special Meeting) and 22 May 2013 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

#### **13. Declarations of Interests**

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

#### **14. Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 3 June 2013** ***Decisions Plan Ref: N/A Cabinet Members: All Portfolios***

The Cabinet received and noted Report E50 (previously circulated) which informed the Cabinet of the following items discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 June 2013:

- (1) Annual Report: 2012/2013;
- (2) Decisions Plan: June 2013 to May 2014;
- (3) Monitoring the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership;
- (4) Housing Reforms: Review of Tenancy Strategy;
- (5) Report of the Educational Attainment Task and Finish Group; and
- (6) Work Programme Update and Appointments to Task and Finish Groups and Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Houlder, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the Committee had resolved to undertake its first Joint Scrutiny Review with Forest Heath District Council. The Joint Task and Finish Group that had been established to provide recommendations to both Overview and Scrutiny

Committees would review the adoption of highways and open spaces on new housing development sites across St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath.

**15. Annual Report 2012/2013**

***Decisions Plan Ref: Jul13/03 Cabinet Member: Cllr John Griffiths***

The Cabinet considered Report E51 (previously circulated) which presented the Annual Report for 2012/2013.

The Annual Report highlighted the key activities and developments that had been achieved against the Cabinet's priorities detailed in the 2012/2016 Corporate Plan. The Annual Report also set out the Cabinet's Portfolio Holders and their respective responsibilities for 2013/2014.

On 3 June 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was presented with the report by the Leader of the Council. He had provided an overview of the progress made in 2012/2013 and had comprehensively responded to questions raised. When considering the report, the Committee had broadly supported it and suggested some additions, which had been incorporated.

The Leader of the Council drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that he wished to insert an additional word to the second paragraph of the Leader's Foreword contained on page 3 of the Annual Report so that it was amended to read '... support for **both** the Suffolk Business Park development and construction of the essential Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road; ...'. The Cabinet accepted this minor amendment.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet's Annual Report 2012/2013, as contained in Appendix A to Report E51, be approved, subject to the following minor amendment to the Foreword from the Leader contained on Page 3 of the Annual Report:

'... support for **both** the Suffolk Business Park development and construction of the essential Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road; ...'

**16. Level of Council Tax Support Grant to Town/Parish Councils, and SEBC Revenue Grant Scheme for Parish Councils for 2014/2015 onwards**

***Decisions Plan Ref: Jul13/06 Cabinet Member: Cllr David Ray***

The Cabinet considered Report E52 (previously circulated) which sought approval for establishing the level of Council Tax Support Grant to town/parish councils and St Edmundsbury Borough Council's (SEBC) grant scheme for parish councils (Parish Revenue Grant Scheme) for 2014/2015 onwards.

Report E52 was presented to Cabinet which took into account the significant financial challenges faced by the Borough Council, like most others, over its current Medium Term Financial Strategy. For SEBC alone, the annual savings target for 2015/2016 was expected to be in the region of £1.7 million, that is over and above the savings to be achieved through sharing services with Forest Heath District Council (FHDC). Shared services alone may not address the saving requirements for next year's budget and therefore local savings were also expected to be developed in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2014/2015.

Councillor Ray, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet. Recognising the financial challenges, Members acknowledged that neither the Council Tax Support Grant, nor the parish revenue support grant were financially sustainable schemes going forward. The Council Tax Support Grant Scheme would be subject to annual reductions through the scaling back of Council funding by Central Government. The parish revenue support grant, like all revenue expenditure items was subject to review as a result of the overall financial pressures on the Council. It was therefore considered that the Council Tax Support Grant for Parish/Town Councils should be phased out over a four year period at a 25% reduction each year starting in 2014/2015, with year one being 2013/2014. The separate Parish Revenue Grant Scheme, which out of all the Suffolk local authorities, SEBC was the only Council to operate such a grant scheme, would also be phased out over a four year period with a 25% reduction in the funding pot each year starting in 2014/2015, with year one being 2013/2014. The Cabinet also agreed to the principle of retaining the first two years' reduction amounts arising from the Parish Revenue Grant Scheme and the monies being allocated to the established Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme.

In response to a question, Councillor Ray explained that a Private Members' Bill which aimed to cap parish and town preceptors by imposing referendums on precept increases of 2% or more had failed; however, legislation was already in place to make parish and town precept increases subject to a referendum of local people, following the introduction of provisions for Council Tax referendums in the Localism Act 2011. At present, the Secretary of State had not enacted these powers however, should parish and town councils be concerned about the possibility of the referendum cap coming into force for 2014/2015, the planned phasing would enable parish and town councils to make provision for such local referendums to be held and ensure funds were earmarked appropriately.



***RECOMMENDED: That subject to the approval of full Council:***

- (1) the Council Tax Support Grant for Parish/Town Councils be phased out over a four year period at a 25% reduction each year starting in 2014/2015 (year one being 2013/2014);***
- (2) the basis for the parish revenue support grant calculation for 2014/2015 onwards be calculated on the previous year's precept level, rather than the forthcoming year's estimated precepts, as outlined in Section 4.24 of Report E52;***
- (3) the Parish Revenue Grant Scheme be phased out over a four year period with a 25% reduction in the funding 'pot' each year starting in 2014/2015 (year one being 2013/2014);***
- (4) the first two years' reduction amounts arising from the Parish Revenue Grant Scheme, as outlined in (3) above, be retained and for Cabinet to determine its use within the rural areas, possibly through a further amount for the established Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme; and***

- (5) ***delegated authority be given to the Head of Resources and Performance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance to finalise the designs for both the Council Tax Support Grant Scheme and the Parish Revenue Grant Scheme following the Parish Conference in Autumn 2013, subject to there being no detrimental impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy beyond that allowed for in recommendations (1) and (3) above.***

**17. Report of the Shared Offices Joint Committee: 7 June 2013**

***Decisions Plan Ref: N/A***

***Cabinet Members: Cllrs Peter Stevens and David Ray***

The Cabinet received and noted Report E53 (previously circulated) which informed the Cabinet of the following items discussed by the Shared Offices Joint Committee on 7 June 2013:

- (1) West Suffolk House and Haverhill House: Building Manager's Report; and
- (2) Items of Interest.

Councillor Ray, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance and Member of the Joint Committee drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the purchasing of a new franking machine at approximately £14,000, was estimated to save approximately £500 per month in postal costs. The costs to procure the machine would be met equally between St Edmundsbury Borough and Suffolk County Councils.

**18. Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 13 June 2013**

***Decisions Plan Ref: N/A***

***Cabinet Member: Cllr David Ray***

The Cabinet considered Report E54 (previously circulated) which presented the report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee in respect of the meeting held on 13 June 2013.

On 13 June 2013 the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee considered the following items:

- (1) ARP Monitoring Officer;
- (2) Fraud;
- (3) Performance Report;
- (4) Final Accounts 2012/2013;
- (5) Budget Surplus 2012/2013;
- (6) ARP Performance Management;
- (7) Welfare Reform; and
- (8) ARP Implementation Plan.

Councillor Ray, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance informed the Cabinet that whilst the majority of the report was for noting there was one recommendation to consider which related to an amendment to the Partnership Agreement. The Joint Committee had been informed that upon drafting the revised Partnership Agreement in November 2012, it had included the requirement for the appointment of a Monitoring Officer for the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership; however, upon further consideration the Joint Committee had recommended that it was not yet appropriate to appoint to this post. This was accepted by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the Partnership Agreement dated 23 November 2012, be amended to delete paragraph 3.24.

**19. Report of the West Suffolk Waste and Street Scene Services Joint Committee: 14 June 2013**

***Decisions Plan Ref: N/A Cabinet Member: Cllr Peter Stevens***

The Cabinet received and noted Report E55 which provided an update on matters considered by the West Suffolk Waste and Street Scene Services Joint Committee on 14 June 2013.

On 14 June 2013 the West Suffolk Waste and Street Scene Services Joint Committee considered the following items:

- (1) Service Level Agreements 2013/2014;
- (2) Review of Waste Management Performance 2013;
- (3) Fleet Replacement Programme 2013/2014;
- (4) Future Legislative and Policy Drivers Affecting Waste Management;  
and
- (5) Update on the Procurement of Waste Transfer and Recycling Facilities.

Councillor Stevens, Portfolio Holder for Waste and Property drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet.

**20. Recommendations from the Sustainable Development Working Party: 27 June 2013**

***Decisions Plan Ref: Jul13/01SP Cabinet Members: Cllrs Terry Clements and Peter Stevens and Jul13/04***

The Cabinet considered Report E56 (previously circulated) which presented the recommendations emanating from the meeting of the Sustainable Development Working Party held on 27 June 2013.

On 27 June 2013 the Sustainable Development Working Party considered the following items:

- (1) Cambridge Sub-Region Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Memorandum of Co-operation;
- (2) Draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement;
- (3) Joint Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council Local Development Scheme; and
- (4) Joint Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

Councillor Clements, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation informed the Cabinet that Report E44, '*Draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement*', had been considered by the Working Party but at the request of Members, the item had been deferred to the Working Party's next meeting as Members considered the document required re-drafting. No recommendations emanating from that report were therefore considered by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet was informed of a typographical error to the first recommendation relating to Report E43, 'Cambridgeshire Sub-Region Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Memorandum of Co-operation', whereby reference to 'Strategic Housing **Needs** Assessment' should be amended to read 'Strategic Housing **Market** Assessment'.

RESOLVED: That

**(a) Cambridge Sub-Region Strategic Housing Market Assessment Memorandum of Co-operation**

- (1) the content of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment update, contained in Appendix A to Report E43, and the Population, Housing and Employment Forecasts: Technical Report, contained in Appendix B, be noted; and
- (2) the Borough Council agrees to the position as set out in the Memorandum of Co-operation, as detailed in Appendix C to Report E43, in line with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Duty to Co-operate.

**(b) Joint Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council Local Development Scheme**

The Joint Local Development Scheme, as contained in Appendix A to Report E45, with the minor amendment to Page 15 to reflect that consultation on the Vision 2031 documents will take place during June and July 2013, be approved and published.



**RECOMMENDED:**

***That subject to the approval of full Council, the Joint Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, as contained in Appendix B to Report E46, as amended to include the list of minor amendments tabled at the meeting of the Sustainable Development Working Party on 27 June 2013, be adopted.***

**21. Asset Management Plan (AMP) and Capital Management Strategy: Performance Management and Implementation Plans**  
***Decisions Plan Ref: Jul13/01 Cabinet Member: Cllr Peter Stevens***

The Cabinet considered Report E57 (previously circulated) which sought approval for the Asset Management Plan Implementation Programme 2013/2014 and associated action plan.

The report included the outcomes of performance of the Asset Management Plan (AMP) for 2012/2013 and proposals for implementation programmes for 2013/2014. Reporting to Members on performance and agreeing the AMP Plan and programmes were integral parts of asset management planning and reflected the corporate priority goals of the Borough Council. Achieving efficiencies for service delivery through property asset reviews and implementation would continue to play an important role for both St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District Councils.

Councillor Stevens, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Asset Management drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet wished to place on record its thanks to Betty Albon, former Corporate Property Officer who had very recently retired. Members commended her valuable contribution to the Borough Council during the significant number of years that she was employed by the authority.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the outcomes and performance of the Asset Management Plan and the Implementation Programmes 2012/2013, as detailed throughout Section 4 of Report E57, be noted;
- (2) the Implementation Programmes 2013/2014, as detailed in Section 4.4 of Report E57, be approved; and
- (3) the Asset Management Plan Action Plan 2013, as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report E57, be approved.

## **22. Revenues Collection Performance and Write-offs**

***Decisions Plan Ref: Jul13/02 Cabinet Member: Cllr David Ray***

The Cabinet considered Report E58 (previously circulated) which provided the collection data in respect of Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates and sought approval for the write-off of debts as contained within the exempt appendices.

As at 31 May 2013 the total National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) billed by Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership on behalf of St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) (as the billing Authority) was nearly £46.25 million per annum and the collection rate was 22.32%. The end of year target for collection was 99.0%.

As at 31 May 2013 the total Council Tax billed by Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership on behalf of SEBC (which included the County Council, Police and Parish precept elements) was just under £52.96 million per annum and the collection rate was 20.71%. The end of year target for collection was 98.50%.

The Revenues Section collected outstanding debts in accordance with either statutory guidelines or Council agreed procedures. When all these procedures have been exhausted the outstanding debt was written off using the delegated authority of the Head of Resources and Performance (for debts up to £1,499.99) or by Cabinet (for debts over £1,500).

The specific reasons for recommending each write off were included in Exempt Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4.

RESOLVED:

That the write off of the amounts detailed in the exempt appendices to Report E58, be approved as follows:

Exempt Appendix 1: 9 accounts for Council Tax totalling £18,641.21;

Exempt Appendix 2: 5 accounts for Business Rates totalling £17,771.14;

Exempt Appendix 3: 2 Housing Benefit overpayment totalling £4538.88; and

Exempt Appendix 4: 4 Sundry Debtors accounts totalling £14557.11.

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm

**J H M GRIFFITHS  
CHAIRMAN**