



St Edmundsbury  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# E267

## Cabinet 11 February 2014

### Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 22 January 2014

#### 1. Summary and reasons for recommendation

1.1 On 22 January 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the following items:

- (1) Draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014/2016 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/2016;
- (2) Decision Plan: February to May 2014;
- (3) Quarter 3 Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications;
- (4) New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group – Progress Report; and
- (5) Work Programme Update.

#### 2. Recommendation

2.1 The Cabinet is requested to **NOTE** the content of Report E267 being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### Contact details

	<b>Chairman of the Committee</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
Name	Councillor Ian Houlder	Christine Brain
Title	Chairman	Scrutiny Officer
Telephone	01284 810074	01638 719729
E-mail	<a href="mailto:ian.houlder@stedsbc.gov.uk">ian.houlder@stedsbc.gov.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk">christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>

### **3. Corporate priorities**

3.1 The recommendation meets the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:

(a) Corporate priority 3: *'Working together for an efficient Council'*.

### **4. Key issues**

#### **Draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014/2016 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/2016 (Report E233)**

- 4.1 Prior to the formal meeting, the first informal joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting was held with Members of Forest Heath District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. All Members of the St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend the District Offices in Mildenhall to enable joint informal discussions on the two documents to take place between the two authorities prior to their presentation to both authorities' Cabinets and Councils during February 2014.
- 4.2 The report summarised the considerable work that had been carried out to date on the development of a Draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and sought both Committees' views on the draft documents. The draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan represented a revision of the existing St Edmundsbury Borough Council Corporate Plan 2012/2016 and the Forest Heath District Council Strategic Plan 2012/2016. The revised West Suffolk Strategic Plan for 2014/2016 would shape the allocations made in the MTFS for this period. As in previous years, the MTFS for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 would make some reasonable assumptions about the likely future financial context for the Councils and sought to identify areas where future pressures would be addressed.
- 4.3 Members from both authorities posed a variety of questions on the content of the draft documents which were responded to by Officers present. A number of comments were made with regard to the language and terminology of the documents; the lack of detail particularly in the Strategic Plan, which was considered to be lacking in substance with regard to how the priorities were going to be achieved by the Councils; that emphasis be included on the 'day job' (the delivery of all services provided by the Councils, including those that did not directly relate to any of the priorities); more emphasis on partnership working and links to another public body; and working with families and communities and the exact role the Councils would play.
- 4.4 Due to the reservations that Members of both Overview and Scrutiny Committees expressed, the general consensus was that the draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan and MTFS could not be progressed onto either authority's Cabinet or Council until the suggestions made by the two Committees had been reflected in the documents and presented again to these Committees.
- 4.5 It was therefore, agreed, for formal resolution as part of the subsequent separate formal meetings of each Committee, that a second informal extraordinary joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting be held in early February 2014, prior to both authority's budget-setting meetings of Cabinet and Council, to enable both Committees to jointly reconsider revised versions (including

tracked changes) of the Draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014/2016 and Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/2016.

*(Update: The second informal Extraordinary Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting has now been arranged to take place on Wednesday 5 February 2014 and recommendations emanating from that meeting will be circulated to Cabinet following that meeting as Report E268).*

### **Decisions Plan: February to May 2014 (Report E234)**

- 4.6 Members considered the latest Decision Plan, covering the period February to May 2014. Clarification was sought on two items on the Plan, these being the latest position with regard to Procurement of Waste Transfer and Recycling Services and the Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Provision.
- 4.7 Members were advised that work was ongoing and Suffolk County Council had extended the period on identifying alternative sites with regard to the procurement of waste transfer and recycling services.
- 4.8 In relation to the Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Provision, Members were advised that a Councillor led Working Group had been set up to look into homelessness provision and it would be making recommendations to Cabinet in due course.
- 4.9 Members suggested when items are removed from the Decisions Plan that a reason is provided.
- 4.10 The Committee did not request any further information or involvement in any of the current planned decisions.

### **Quarter 3 Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications (Verbal)**

- 4.11 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources) Order 2010 requires that Members should scrutinise the authority's use of its surveillance powers on a quarterly basis. In June 2010 it was agreed that this requirement should be fulfilled by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Monitoring Officer advised that in Quarter 3, no such surveillance had been authorised.

### **New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group – Progress Report (Report E235)**

- 4.12 The Committee received and noted Report E235, which updated Members on progress made by the Joint Task and Finish Group to date. A Joint Task and Finish Group had been set up with Forest Heath District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 6 March 2013. The Group to date has met on three occasions and is tasked with:

*'Jointly reviewing the unacceptable length of time taken by housing developers to bring highways, footpaths and community facilities (landscaping/open-space/drainage/sustainable urban drainage) up to adoption standards on new developments'.*

- 4.13 The Group invited eight developers having development sites across West Suffolk to a round table discussion on 4 November 2013, to which one developer attended and one sent their apologies on the day of the meeting.

- 4.14 During the round table session, it came to light that discussions are currently taking place between Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways Authority and developers on the use of Section 37 Agreements which is the preferred option for most developers. The outcome from the round table session was:
- (1) A letter be sent to the Director of Economy, Skills and Environment at Suffolk County Council (SCC), setting out the Group's observations on Section 37 Agreements and to find out whether SCC was looking at Cambridgeshire County Council who used Section 37 Agreements to find out how they worked and whether any changes were needed; and
  - (2) Officers to look at what can be achieved corporately at the planning stage.
- 4.15 There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the progress made by the Joint Task and Finish Group to date.

### **Work Programme Update (Report E236)**

- 4.16 The Committee now has a rolling work programme, whereby suggestions for scrutiny reviews are brought to each meeting, and if accepted, are timetabled to report to a future meeting. The work programme also leaves space for Call-ins and Councillor Calls for Action.
- 4.17 Members reviewed the current position of the work programme and the Chairman reminded Members that if they had any suggestions for future scrutiny topics to complete the work programme suggestion form.
- 4.18 The Committee noted the items which were expected at the next meetings of the Committee and the scheduling of an additional extraordinary informal joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting in early February 2014 to reconsider the Draft Strategic Plan 2014/2016 and Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/2016.

## **5. Other options considered**

- 5.1 See Reports listed in Section 12 below.

## **6. Community impact**

- 6.1 See Reports listed in Section 12 below.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1 See Reports listed in Section 12 below.

## **8. Financial and resource implications** *(including asset management implications)*

- 8.1 See Reports listed in Section 12 below.

## **9. Risk/opportunity assessment** *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

- 9.1 See Reports listed in Section 12 below.

## **10. Legal and policy implications**

10.1 See Reports listed in Section 12 below.

## **11. Wards affected**

11.1 All Wards.

## **12. Background papers**

12.1 Report E233 to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/16;

12.2 Report E234 to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Decisions Plan – February to May 2014

12.3 Report E235 to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group – Progress Report

12.4 Report E236 to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme Update

## **13. Documents attached**

None.