

## **MINUTES OF ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 28 September 2010 at 7.00 pm in the Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds.

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor I C Houlder) (in the Chair),  
Councillors Ager, Aitkens, Mrs Alexander, Beckwith, Mrs Bone, Bradbury, Buckle, Chappell, Mrs Charlesworth, Clements, Clifton-Brown, Cox, Ereira-Guyer, Everitt, Farthing, Mrs Gower, Griffiths, Hale, Jones, Lockwood, Marks, Mrs Mildmay-White, Nettleton, Oliver, Price, Ray, Redhead, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Rushbrook, Stevens, Thorndyke, Mrs P A Warby and A Whittaker

### **44. Prayers**

The Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend John Parr, of All Saints Church, Bury St Edmunds, opened the meeting with prayers.

### **45. Remembrance**

The Council stood in silence in remembrance of the late Arthur Reginald Biggs and David Bird.

Mr Biggs had been a Councillor in the former Bury St Edmunds Borough Council from 29 September 1970 and then continued on to the St Edmundsbury Borough Council until 1991.

David Bird had been the Council's Emergency Planning Officer since 2003.

### **46. Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 29 June 2010 and 22 July 2010 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

### **47. Mayor's Communications**

The Mayor reported on the civic engagements and charity activities which he, the Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and Consort had attended since the last meeting of the Council held on 29 June 2010. He stated that his engagements had highlighted the exceptional work and commitment that many volunteers showed across the Borough.

Councillor Aitkens considered that the Battle of Britain Commemoration Parade and Service had been a tremendous success and congratulated those that had organised the event. He added that the soldiers from 2 Squadron RAF Regiment really appreciated visiting Bury St Edmunds when off duty and between tours.

### **48. Announcements from the Leader of the Council**

Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council, expressed condolences and deepest sympathy to the families of both the former Councillor Reg Biggs and David Bird, former Emergency Planning Officer.

Councillor Griffiths then announced that, for health reasons, Councillor Farmer decided that he would have to stand back from some of his more onerous duties, including his portfolio, to enable him to concentrate on his ward activities and, far more importantly, getting back to good health. Councillor Griffiths thanked

him for the huge amount of work that he had done in his capacity as a Portfolio Holder and was sure that all the Council wished him well.

49. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anderson, Mrs Broughton, Cockle, Farmer, Mrs Levack, McManus, Rout, Spicer, Turner, F J Warby and Mrs D A Whittaker.

50. **Declarations of Interest**

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

51. **Public Question Time**

(a) **Petition**

In accordance with Part 4, Rules of Procedure, of the Council's Constitution, the Council received a petition containing over 700 signatures that supported the proposition that the Wednesday Craft Market currently operating in the Corn Exchange, Bury St Edmunds be transferred to the new public building, The Apex. The operator of the craft market and organiser of the petition, Lynnette Plumb, presented the petition and addressed the Council.

Mrs Plumb presented the petition from over 700 users of the Corn Exchange. Attached to the petition were letters of support from charities, stall holders, written comments from some of her customers and a DVD from Connexions Suffolk. The petition requested that the indoor market should transfer to The Apex because the Corn Exchange was about to close. If the Council decided otherwise then Mrs Plumb stated she would demand compensation for the loss of her business, which would also result in the loss of her home. The number of signatures on the petition represented over three times the number of people who actually attended the public consultation on the future use of the Corn Exchange.

Mrs Plumb continued by stating that if the Council had spent some of the amount of money promoting The Apex on promoting the Corn Exchange then it would now be self financing and a busy asset to Bury St Edmunds. She had always been led to believe that The Apex was a multi-functional public building but in the documents tabled at this meeting of the Council it was stated that it was now a performing arts centre, which was totally different. If it was multi-purpose then the market should be allowed to operate from The Apex.

The business plan in March 2009 clearly included that the revenue for The Apex from Mrs Plumb in 2011 represented 17% of income and this decreased to 10% in 2013. She questioned why this plan had been dramatically altered and why she was not informed. She had been informed that there were to be no block bookings in The Apex. However, she had identified that block bookings had been accepted for the Fat Cat Comedy Club and a new 'chic' market. The Wednesday Market had been tried and tested and had been in the Corn Exchange in excess of 20 years and Mrs Plumb had operated it for in excess of 12 of those years.

The programme for The Apex stated that there were over 100 events expected. In its last year the Corn Exchange had 46 bookings made by Mrs Plumb, which represented 25% of its revenue. Closing the Corn Exchange and refusing to transfer the market to The Apex would result in herself, helpers and stall holders

losing valuable weekly income and in the current difficult economic climate. The total number affected totalled 20. In addition, local charities would have no real outlet to gain support. Connexions would lose a very important part of what they plan to do by encouraging businesses throughout Suffolk to take on young people without references.

In conclusion, Mrs Plumb stated that her customers made the Wednesday Market the heart of their town and their week. She again requested that the Council transfer her operation to The Apex.

In reply, Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management received and thanked Mrs Plumb for her petition. She stated that Mrs Plumb had asked a considerable number of questions which she could not fully answer in the time available and these would be addressed in a written response, including the ones that had been included in the papers tabled at this meeting, by the end of this week.

Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White stated that the Council appreciated the amount of work put into the weekly market by Mrs Plumb. The officers had worked with her in a lot of detail to try and find alternative accommodation. The Athenaeum had been offered for at least 30 weeks in the year. The Apex was geared to be a performing arts centre and it was not possible to book out Wednesdays for 52 weeks for one specific event. This block booking could also potentially impact on every Tuesday evening and possibly Wednesday evenings as well owing to the time required to set up the auditorium for events. It had always been the Council's intention that it would have two main public halls, the Athenaeum and The Apex, both performing very different roles and offering different activities.

In conclusion, Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White stated that the Council appreciated the work that Mrs Plumb put into supporting events in Bury St Edmunds and wished to see her continue but it was not possible for 52 weeks in The Apex. She urged that Mrs Plumb continue to work with officers to seek a solution.

**(b) Public Question Time**

*(Councillor Clements declared a prejudicial interest as a Borough Council representative on the Abbeycroft Leisure Board and withdrew from the meeting when the work of Abbeycroft Leisure was mentioned in the question from Mr Simon Harding.)*

**Mr Simon Harding of Church Walks, Bury St Edmunds** asked why had such a hard to decipher logo for the public venue name been chosen? In addition would the projected yearly income from the public venue include a charge for the compounded interest from the nearly £20 million reserves used to build The Apex had it remained invested?

In reply, **Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, Chairman of the Public Venue (The Apex) Working Party**, considered that opinion about the design of the logo were completely subjective. Some people would like it while others would not. The Council was comfortable with the design and careful thought went into choosing it. In response to the second part of the question she stated that because the Council was debt free it was able to fund capital investment from existing balances. As such, services did not have to bear the cost of external borrowing. The Council did not make notional charges to services to cover the loss of interest on capital expenditure; however the resulting reduction in interest income was taken into account within the Council's medium term financial strategy and annual budget setting exercise.

As supplementary questions **Mr Harding** asked whether the logo for The Apex followed SCT Guidelines? In addition had the projected income from the venue been revised to take into account the £10 million overspend?

In reply, **Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White** sought clarification as to the acronym SCT. In response Mr Harding stated that SCT were guidelines produced by the Advertising Standards Authority where S stood for Simplicity, C stood for Clarity and T stood for Taste.

In reply **Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White** stated that the answer then was yes.

**Mr Harding of Church Walks, Bury St Edmunds** then stated that it was unlikely that Wetherspoon would now be coming to Bury St Edmunds and if accepting that the Abbeycroft Leisure bid for the lease of the Corn Exchange was a non starter, had the Council taken into account that it would not be receiving any income from the Corn Exchange?

In response, **Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management**, stated that as far as the Council was concerned Wetherspoon was still scheduled to come to Bury St Edmunds, subject to regulatory approval for its operation.

**Mr Harding** then asked why the Council had not considered that Wetherspoon could be ideally located within Cornhill Walk in Bury St Edmunds.

In response, **Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council**, stated that Bury St Edmunds was a town for everyone to live in, work in and visit and it should cater for all tastes. It would be good if Mr Harding would join the Council and others to celebrate and promote the town. Decisions were often difficult, but the Council strove to do the best it could for this great town in a great part of the world. The Council was proud of it and was proud at how it was promoted, along with the whole of the Borough. A recent example was that the Tourist Information Centre in Bury St Edmunds had been recognised as the best in Suffolk.

52. **Items Referred to Full Council by Cabinet, West Suffolk House Joint Committee and Democratic Renewal Panel**

The Council considered the Schedule of Referrals contained within Report B215 (previously circulated).

(A)(1) Ixworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

On the motion of Councillor Clements, seconded by Councillor Thorndyke, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the Ixworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, attached as Appendix B to Report B53, be adopted as planning guidance;
- (2) the revised boundary of the Conservation Area attached as Appendix C, as amended to remove the property known as Mere View, to Report B53 be adopted as the new boundary for the Ixworth Conservation Area; and

- (3) any minor typographical, factual and/or grammatical changes to the final document be agreed by the Head of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning.

(A)(2) Home Assistance Policy: Decent Home Grants

On the motion of Councillor Everitt, seconded by Councillor Chappell, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the Homes Assistance Policy be amended as detailed in agenda item 11 of the Cabinet agenda for 28 July 2010; and
- (2) the conditions set out in agenda item 11 be attached to applications in respect of Decent Homes Grants.

(B)(1) St Edmundsbury Replacement Local Plan 2016 – Policy HAV3: Employment Site – Hanchett End, Haverhill: Adoption of Draft Concept Statement

On the motion of Councillor Clements, seconded by Councillor Mrs Gower, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:-

That the Concept Statement for Hanchett End, Haverhill, as attached as Appendix C of Report B169, be adopted as non-statutory planning guidance.

(B)(2) The Apex First Floor Area and Business Plan: Use of Chief Executive's Urgency Powers

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Council received and noted the use of the Chief Executive's Urgency Powers as detailed in Appendix A to Report B215 for the allocation of capital expenditure of up to £160,000 to fit out the first floor area of The Apex. It was also noted that the business plan for The Apex had been amended to reflect the additional revenue income and expenditure arising from the Council's control of the entire first floor area and that the existing capital budget for equipping The Apex had been increased by up to £48,000 to accommodate the purchase of additional conference/banqueting furniture and two mobile bars to support the successful delivery of the business plan.

*(Councillor Farthing arrived during the consideration of this item.)*

(B)(3) Community Centre Transfer

On the motion of Councillor Everitt, seconded by Councillor Bradbury, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) full Council endorse the "Transfer of council-owned community centres to community ownership – Expectations Document", attached as Appendix 1 to Report B203, as its adopted framework for working towards the transfer of community centres;
- (2) the project plan attached as Appendix 2 to Report B203 be agreed as the working timetable and basis for work towards the transfer of Southgate Community Centre to the Southgate Community Partnership, subject to the partnership satisfactorily meeting the milestones listed in the plan;
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, to receive updates and determine whether the various milestones have been satisfactorily met;
- (4) where milestones have not been satisfactorily met, further negotiations take place with the Southgate Community Partnership, or the issue to be referred to Cabinet; and
- (5) the final decision on transfer be brought back to the Cabinet for consideration and a recommendation to full Council.

(B)(4) Asset Management Plan: Ground Lease Shopping Centres in Bury St Edmunds

Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management, reminded the Council that as part of its asset management planning regular reviews were undertaken in respect of its assets. Report B205 considered the future ownership of the two shopping parades in Hardwick and St Olaves and the recommendations were that the two shopping parades be declared surplus to the Council's requirements and sold. She also reminded the Council that the Borough Council, as landlord, had very little influence when it came to dealing with those shopkeepers that leased the premises. For the reasons stated in Report B205 and because the Ward Members had raised no objections she proposed that the Hardwick Shopping Parade be sold.

Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White continued that in the case of the St Olaves Shopping Centre consultation was undertaken with the tenants on the sale of the freehold and no objections had been received. However, the Ward Members had objected but had not come forward with any alternative suggestions or solutions. Therefore, she considered that the decision to sell St Olaves Shopping Centre should be deferred to allow discussions to be held with the Ward Members.

Councillor Ereira-Guyer, one of the Ward Members for the St Olaves Ward, considered that selling the shopping parade in St Olaves would not be acting in the best interest of the community or the Council Tax payers, having recently spent approximately £130,000 to improve the area, which was a credit to the Council. He considered that the community really valued the input of the Council on this estate and welcomed the opportunity to discuss options.

In response to a question, the Council was informed that despite the challenging economic climate there was still plenty of interest in purchasing the freehold of commercial property.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, seconded by Councillor Aitkens, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the Hardwick Shopping Parade in Bury St Edmunds be declared surplus and the site sold, either by auction or by private treaty, as outlined in Report B205; and
- (2) the decision be deferred to enable further consultation to be undertaken with the Ward Members in respect of St Olaves Shopping Parade in Bury St Edmunds.

(C)(1) Car Parking to the Front of West Suffolk House

The Council received and noted a narrative item concerning car parking to the front of West Suffolk House.

On 29 June 2010, Councillor Nettleton moved a motion on the use of the car park to the front of West Suffolk House concerning staff using this car park to the detriment of visitors. This motion was seconded by Councillor Beckwith and the Mayor, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, considered that this motion should be referred to the appropriate forum for consideration, which was the West Suffolk House Joint Committee. On 23 July 2010, the West Suffolk House Joint Committee resolved that:-

- (1) *monitoring of abuses to the car park located to the front of West Suffolk House be undertaken over the next three months; and*
- (2) *if significant levels of abuse continue, an option (a), as detailed in Section 3.1 of Report B132, be implemented.*

Councillor Ray, Chairman of the Joint Committee, informed the Council of the discussions held by the Joint Committee, and also that he had been informed that the situation had improved.

Councillor Nettleton considered that the Joint Committee by continuing to allow staff to park for one hour in the front of West Suffolk House would create problems for the future when the initial monitoring period had finished.

(D)(1) Member Development Update

On the motion of Councillor Mrs P A Warby, seconded by Councillor Ray, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the Member Development Programme for 2010/2011 be amended and the items in respect of 'Development of Future Portfolio Holders and

Committee Chairmen' and 'Communication Skills' be deferred until after the May 2011 elections; and

- (2) the assessment arrangements for achieving the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Elected Member Development Charter, outlined in Appendix A to Report B186, be endorsed.

(D)(2) Community Governance Review

The Council received and noted a narrative item which provided an update on the progress of the Community Governance Review.

On 29 June 2010 the Council approved that a Community Governance Review be carried out under the terms of Chapter 3 of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and also, the scope of the Review as outlined in Report B32.

Attached to the Council Report B215 was an extract from the draft minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Panel held on 9 September 2010. Minute 21 provided the interim report on the Community Governance Review. The Panel approved a variety of options for changes that would be subject to consultation with those within the area concerned, Councillors, political parties and other interested bodies. The consultations going forward were either in line with the principle agreed by Council on 29 June 2010, namely that where a community expanded into a neighbouring parish, the existing parish boundary should be reviewed to prevent it becoming anomalous, or related to modest changes proposed by parishes where a small number of houses which had a natural affinity with one parish were just over the boundary in a neighbouring parish where there was less connection or use of local services. The outcome of a consultation would be reported to the next meeting of the Democratic Renewal Panel scheduled for 25 November 2010. Taking account of the debate at the Panel's meeting the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel, would then implement the outcomes of the Review by reflecting any changes agreed in the Register of Electors to be published by 1 December 2010, in line with the delegated authority to implement the outcome of the Review agreed by the Council on 29 June 2010.

Councillor Mrs Warby, Vice-Chairman of the Panel, reminded the Council of the timetable of the review and that it was agreed at the last meeting of the Council that the creation, abolition or break-up of a parish or town council would need to be considered separately because it would involve considerably more work and would not fit into the timescales of the current review.

(D)(3) Borough Council Elections May 2011: Voice of the Community Campaign II

On the motion of Councillor Mrs P A Warby, seconded by Councillor Nettleton, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) St Edmundsbury run a campaign to encourage people to consider standing in the Borough Council elections in May 2011 making use of relevant 'What



Will You Stand For' materials and supplementing these with local information;

- (2) officers explore the capacity for this activity to be co-ordinated with Forest Heath District Council;
- (3) a small Councillor sub-group with up to 5 Members be formed to be a sounding board for officers in the development of the campaign and Group Leaders be requested for appropriate nominations;
- (4) 'Local Democracy Week' be used to launch the local campaign; and
- (5) delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to agree the initial details of the campaign with the Chairman of the Democratic Renewal Panel, following consultation with group leaders, and the input of the Councillor sub-group.

(D)(4) Membership of Committees, Working Parties and Panels

On 29 June 2010 Councillor Nettleton moved the following motion at Council:-

*'That Membership of the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party is drawn from the 17 Members who represent the nine town wards plus the five rural wards which about Bury St Edmunds, namely: Barrow, Fornham, Great Barton, Horringer and Whelnetham and Rougham.'*

This motion was seconded by Councillor Beckwith.

The Mayor, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, considered that this motion should be referred to the appropriate forum for consideration and on this occasion the appropriate forum was the Democratic Renewal Panel.

Councillor Mrs Warby, Vice-Chairman of the Panel, informed the Council that there was a consensus amongst the Panel that Councillors were elected to represent the whole of the Borough and not specific wards. In addition, it was further recognised that all residents and their elected representatives had, for a number of reasons, an interest in issues associated with Bury St Edmunds due to it being a major service centre for the area. The Panel had concluded that the current system for allocating seats to any group on the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party should continue.

Councillor Chappell sought clarification on why the first recommendation stated that membership of the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party should be initially based on the political balance of the Council. In reply, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services stated that Membership was initially allocated on the political balance of the Council and group leaders were then asked to nominate members to the Working Party. In the event that a group was not able to fill its allotted place(s) or would like more than its allotted number of places then there was a need for the group leaders to 'broker' a deal.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs P A Warby, seconded by Councillor Everitt, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the current system for allocating seats to any group on the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party continue and be initially based on the political balance of the Council; and
- (2) if there is a Member who is particularly interested in a specific topic and would readily volunteer for the Working Party then the relevant Group Leader contact the other Group Leaders to 'broker' a deal.

(D)(5) Amendments to the Constitution

On the motion of Councillor Mrs P A Warby, seconded by Councillor Everitt, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:-

That the amendments to the Council's Constitution proposed in Appendix A to Report B190 be approved.

53. **Approval of Partnership Arrangement for the Delivery of the Revenues and Benefits Service**

The Council considered Report B216 (previously circulated) which sought approval for the Borough Council's Revenues and Benefits Service to join the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) as a full partner from 1 April 2011.

Councillor Mrs Gower, Portfolio Holder for Haverhill and Housing, informed the Council that on 28 April 2010, the Cabinet considered a report setting out the options for a partnership arrangement for the delivery of the Revenues and Benefits Service. Cabinet recommended that, following a process of due diligence, approval should be granted for the Revenues and Benefits Service to join the Anglia Revenues Partnership. On 29 June 2010 the Council endorsed this recommendation. Report B216 set out the findings of the due diligence process, and recommended that the Revenues and Benefits Service join the Anglia Revenues Partnership as a full partner from 1 April 2011. The rationale behind this decision was both financially and service-driven:-

- (a) financially, the Revenues and Benefits service was operating at a level where it would be very difficult to reduce staff or other costs and continue to deliver the service. Joining a larger partnership will allow the Borough Council to deliver savings of £325k in 2011/2012, rising to £365k in 2012/2013 and beyond. The savings would be delivered through reduced management costs, better purchasing power, and eliminating duplication; and
- (b) the service itself would benefit from considerably increased resilience, and the opportunity for staff to deliver improved service through more ability to specialise in some of the many complex areas involved in revenue collection and benefits administration.

Mrs Gower continued by informing the Council that the process of due diligence had been exhaustive and thorough, and had involved teams of staff from the

Borough Council and ARP working on a wide range of areas, which were listed under 5.1 of the report. This work had been led by the Chief Finance Officers from each of the 3 existing authorities and from the Borough Council. Much of this work was still ongoing, but it was now clear that the savings could be delivered whilst maintaining the service, and delivering improvements in the longer term.

Joining the ARP would be a significant challenge for staff, most of whom would be required to work from Thetford. However, the following mitigating factors were in place:-

- (a) 4 years of travel costs, in accordance with the Borough Council's existing Travel and Disturbance Policy;
- (b) continued options to homework and work flexibly, meaning that those staff who chose to be 'home-enabled' could still work from home regularly; and
- (c) a comprehensive programme of Human Resource (HR) and communications support to make the transition as smooth as possible. This would involve 1 to 1 meetings during October and November 2010, with every member of staff affected, as part of the formal consultation process.

There may be some job losses, but these would be across all four authorities, and not restricted to the Borough Council. HR would be working hard to minimise the number of redundancies but there may be some. The Borough Council had been working towards this for some time and had not been filling vacancies and had been following a joint vacancy protocol to ensure the best position was maintained for existing permanent staff. The new structure required 11.6 fewer full time equivalent staff in Year 1, and there were currently approximately 10 vacancies across the authorities, although obviously these would not all be in the 'right places'. The Borough Council's Revenues and Benefits staff had already demonstrated that they responded to change, and while it was recognised that it would not be an easy time for them, it was clear that in the current financial climate this was the best long-term solution.

In conclusion, Councillor Mrs Gower stated that for Members, the key change would be that the Borough Council's responsibility for delivering the Revenues and Benefits service would be delegated to a Joint Committee, on which 2 of the Borough Council's Cabinet members would sit. This was identical to the arrangements already in place for the Waste Joint Committee with Forest Heath District Council and the West Suffolk House Joint Committee with the County Council.

The Mayor agreed that Mr Howard Cook, Chairman of the St Edmundsbury branch of UNISON, could address the Council. He stated that since the Cabinet meeting in April 2010, communications with staff had improved considerably. Staff had been advised at recent staff briefings that the finishing touches had been put on the business case before consideration by full Council. If approved tonight, work would then commence in implementing the plan. This seemed a little bit like 'putting the cart before the horse'. Mr Cook thought that the intention of a business plan was to look at the operation of how the business was going to actually operate, not what was generally intended. Staff structures and the logistics of the move were at present unknown which appeared to be contrary to the information received at the meeting of the Cabinet in April 2010. If approved, staff consultation would commence. However, he was concerned at the volume of work for the Human Resources Team because it was intended that

there were to be one-to-one interviews over October and November for all the staff involved.

Mr Cook continued by stating that staff had visited the Thetford offices of ARP and were concerned that the service standards provided by the Borough Council were different to those operated by ARP. Also, the building in Thetford had a number of health and safety issues, not least that it was not disability friendly.

At the Cabinet meeting in April 2010 it was understood that the Borough Council service standards would be maintained. This was what Councillors and the Council Tax payer would expect. The Borough Council's officers were providing a pro-active service with considerable help from partners, such as the Citizens' Advice Bureaux. Staff provided a caring service and found ways to help families in difficulty. This service was based on care, experience and expertise and the working patterns developed by this authority over a number of years. Mr Cook expressed concerns about a major shift in service delivery.

In conclusion, Mr Cook stated that all the staff that worked within the Revenues and Benefits Section were motivated by providing an excellent service to its customers, including face to face contact and there were now doubts as to whether this service would continue.

Councillor Mrs Gower, responded to some of the points raised by Mr Cook. She was very much aware that the Revenues and Benefits staff provided an excellent service to customers and appreciated that they built relationships in trying to help people in difficult times and not resort to a pre-prepared script. She considered that everyone in the partnership would have to make adjustments and stressed that it was a partnership. She believed that there would be no visible difference to the service provided. The front office would remain in both Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds providing the same level of service. She continued by stating that until the one-to-one interviews were held with staff, the Council would not be in a position to determine the finer points of the business plan and how it was going to actually operate, but staff welfare was a prime concern and the Council would work with staff to address any concerns. She stated that she was unable to answer the question regarding disability access at the Thetford offices and agreed to provide a written response. She considered that the changes in working practices would impact on all the partners and not just on Borough Council. There were some aspects of the work that ARP did better than the Borough Council and the Borough Council would have to learn from that and she was sure that the opposite was also the case.

A general debate was held and Members recognised the excellent service provided by the staff in the Revenues and Benefits Section. There was a general consensus that partnerships were the way forward to increase efficiency in the current economic climate. However, some concerns were expressed concerning whether the Borough Council partnership should include local authorities outside of Suffolk or only from those within. There was also some concern expressed concerning the working arrangements and membership of the Joint Committee.

On the motion of Councillor Mrs Gower, seconded by Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:-

That the Borough Council's Revenues and Benefits Service join the Anglia Revenues Partnership as a full partner from 1 April 2011.

*(Councillor Nettleton wished it be recorded that he voted against this resolution.)*

#### 54. **Havebury Housing Partnership: Nominating Non-Executive Directors**

*(Councillor Everitt and Liz Watts, Chief Finance Officer, declared prejudicial interests as nominees to the Havebury Housing Partnership (HHP) Board. Councillors Farthing and A Whittaker declared prejudicial interests as non-executive HHP Board Members. All four persons left the meeting for the consideration of this item.)*

The Council considered a narrative item which sought approval for the nomination of two of the Borough Council's representatives as non-executive directors of the Havebury Housing Partnership (HHP).

Councillor Clements and former Councillor, now Honorary Freeman, Sheila Wormleighton M.B.E. had completed their maximum terms of office, a total of nine years each, as Board Members to the Havebury Housing Partnership as the Borough Council's representatives. Consequently, the Borough Council had to nominate two replacements. In this instance, one of the retirees was a non-Councillor and, therefore, expressions of interest were also sought from the local community for one of these two places. In particular, HHP was interested in finding a director with financial, audit and risk management experience to complement the existing mix of its Board. The position was publicly advertised by HHP and the Council and the response was very positive. Interviews were held by a Joint Panel which included the Council's Portfolio Holder for Haverhill and Housing, Councillor Mrs Gower, and the Corporate Director for Community Services. The candidate who, it was felt by the Panel, offered the closest match to HHP's requirements at this particular time was Liz Watts, the Council's Chief Finance Officer, given her financial experience within and outside local government.

Councillor Griffiths, considered it appropriate that the Council's appreciation of the achievements of both Councillor Clements and Honorary Freeman Wormleighton for their nine years excellent service to the Board as the Borough Council's representatives should be formally recorded. He also stated that HHP had also recognised their achievements, and at the Annual General Meeting made them both Life Presidents so that their experience was not lost in the future.

A general discussion was held on the Borough Council's representation on the HHP Board and the remuneration paid to Board Members. It was agreed that a written response be given to all Members on the allowances paid to HHP non-executive directors.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, seconded by Councillor Ray, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) Councillor Everitt be nominated to the position of non executive director of the Havebury Housing Partnership; and
- (2) following an external recruitment exercise, the Borough Council also confirms its nomination of Liz Watts as non-executive director of Havebury Housing Partnership; and
- (3) the Council record its gratitude to Councillor Clements and Honorary Freeman Sheila Wormleighton M.B.E. for their nine years excellent service to Havebury Housing Partnership as non-executive directors representing the Borough Council.

55. **Motions on Notice**

Under paragraph 12.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, as contained within the Council's Constitution, Councillor Nettleton had given notice of two motions, namely

- (1) *'That the next meeting of the Democratic Renewal Panel is open to the press and public.'*; and
- (2) *'That with effect from 1 January 2011 all meetings of the Council and its Committees, Sub-Committees, panels etc are open to the press and public.'*

Both these motions were seconded by Councillor Beckwith.

The Mayor, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, considered that these motions could be dealt with at this meeting of the Council as they would not involve the Council in expenditure not included in the Council's approved revenue or capital budget.

Councillor Griffiths said that these meetings should be open to the public but added that there was still a requirement to hold some 'unofficial' meetings, where there would be no 'proper' agenda or standard formatted reports and which met at short notice with no members of the public present. He had been informed that these small 'task and finish' groups set up to consider usually one specific topic had invariably been a tremendous success. He then proposed an amendment to the motions.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, seconded by Councillor Nettleton, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) in addition to the statutory requirements of public attendance at meetings, the public be admitted to meetings of the current Working Parties and Panels with effect from 1 November 2010;
- (2) any group, other than Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees, which the public are allowed to attend, be renamed or named Working Party; and
- (3) the Council continues to operate 'task and finish' groups that are not subject to the formal meeting rules, procedures and production of documents which the public are not entitled to attend.

56. **Question on Notice**

Councillor Buckle had given notice under paragraph 11.2 of the Council Procedure Rules of the following question to Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management:-

*'Will Councillor Mrs Mildmay – White, as the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for West Suffolk House, please inform the Council when the continuing problems encountered with the hearing loop in the Conference Chamber will be finally rectified in order that those with hearing difficulties can take a full part in*

*debates and whether consideration is being given to replace the current portable hearing aids so as not to discriminate against those hard of hearing?'*

Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White stated that an engineer had recently examined the issues with the hearing system. He had identified that there were problems with the original cabling to the infra red emitter panel which resulted in a reduction in the level of the signal reaching the units. A signal booster had been installed as a temporary fix and the systems in both east and west were tested and proved to be working properly. The engineers were also scheduled to visit again on 27/28 October 2010 to carry out a full overhaul of the entire sound and conference systems within the chamber.

The Chief Executive apologised to Councillors and members of the public for these problems not being rectified very much earlier.

**57. Constitution: Amendment**

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) required that where it appeared that a proposal or plan was likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and was not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives should be undertaken. In relation to proposals requiring planning consent, this work would need to be managed by the local planning authority. In order to expedite the development control function of the Borough Council efficiently, it would be appropriate for this function to be delegated to officers as and when such assessments were required.

On the motion of Councillor Clements, seconded by Councillor Stevens, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:-

That as well as the Head of Planning and Economic Development, all Principal Planning Officers in the Development Control Section and Principal Planning Policy Officers to give and adopt such notices and opinions and to take such other action as may be necessary to ensure compliance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) in relation to Habitat Regulations Assessments.

**58. Quarterly Report on Special Urgency**

The Council received and noted a narrative item as required by the Council's Constitution in which the Leader of the Council reported that, at the time the Council agenda was published no executive decisions had been taken under the special urgency provisions contained within the Constitution.

**59. Reports and Questions**

(a) Report from the Leader of the Council: Councillor Griffiths (Report B217)

The following topics were the subject of questions put to Councillor Griffiths, who duly responded:-

(1) the potential benefit of following the 'Feed in Tariff' guidance issued by the Energy Secretary; and

- (2) financing new developments against predicted growth in business rates.

(b) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Bury St Edmunds and Community Safety Portfolio: Councillor Everitt (Report B218)

The following topics were the subject of questions put to Councillor Everitt, who duly responded:-

- (1) the charging policy for people using the proposed electric charging points in the multi-deck car park in Bury St Edmunds; and
- (2) whether the electric charging points could be used for electric bicycles.

Councillor Everitt, agreed to provide a written answer in respect of (2) above.

(c) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Culture and Sport Portfolio: Councillor Mrs Alexander (Report B219)

Councillor Mrs Alexander informed the Council that 85% of the Gershom Parkington collection of clocks was currently on display in Moyses Hall Museum in Bury St Edmunds and that a commemorative service would be held on 29 September 2010 to inaugurate the baby and child memorial at Bury St Edmunds Cemetery.

The following topics were the subject of questions put to Councillor Mrs Alexander, who duly responded:-

- (1) landscaping work undertaken at the St Olaves Shopping Parade in Bury St Edmunds; and
- (2) the operation and ticket sales of The apex box office.

(d) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Asset Management Portfolio: Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White (Report B220)

Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White informed the Council of the achievements of the Tourist Information Centre in Bury St Edmunds and of Sharon Fairweather, the Tourism Manager. In addition she considered the operation of the apprenticeship scheme in partnership with West Suffolk College had proved successful.

The following topics were the subject of questions put to Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White, who duly responded:-

- (1) the funding of the new MENTA Business and Training Centre in Haverhill; and
- (2) the abolition of the East of England Development Agency by the Government.

(e) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Street Scene Portfolio: Councillor Stevens (Report B221)

No questions were asked.



- (f) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Haverhill and Housing Portfolio: Councillor Mrs Gower (Report B222)

*(Councillors Farthing and A Whittaker declared a prejudicial interest as Borough Council representatives on the Havebury Housing Partnership Board and left the meeting for the consideration of the item concerning sheltered housing in Stanton.)*

Councillor Mrs Gower informed the Council that the consultation regarding Clements Primary School Site in Haverhill would commence on 30 September 2009.

The following topic was the subject of a question put to Councillor Mrs Gower, who duly responded:-

- (1) the future of Field Court Sheltered housing scheme in Stanton.

- (g) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Performance and Organisational Development Portfolio: Councillor Ray (Report B223)

The following topic was the subject of a question put to Councillor Ray, who duly responded:-

- (1) a comparison of the sickness levels of Borough Council staff with those within the private sector and self employed. A comparison between staff based at work and those that were home enabled.

Councillor Ray agreed to provide a written response in respect of this question.

- (h) Report for the Resources and Efficiency Portfolio (Report B224)

The following topics were the subject of questions put to Councillor Griffiths, who duly responded:-

- (1) the timing of the procurement reports issued to Members on a regular basis; and  
(2) the announcement regarding the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Efficiency.

- (i) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Transport and Planning Portfolio: Councillor Clements (Report B225)

The following topic was the subject of a question put to Councillor Clements, who duly responded:-

- (1) the maintenance of the grassed area attached to the new zebra crossing installed at the junction of out Northgate/Station Hill, Bury St Edmunds.

- (j) Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Lockwood (Report B226)

No questions were asked.

- (k) Report from the Chairman of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Hale (Report B227)

No questions were asked.

- (l) Report from the Chairman of the Policy Development Committee: Councillor Aitkens (Report B228)

No questions were asked.

- (m) Questions to the Chairmen of other Committees

No questions were asked.

*(In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Mayor determined that the one and a half hours allocated for this session had not been fully utilised and further questions could be asked.)*

- (n) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Culture and Sport Portfolio: Councillor Mrs Alexander (Report B219)

The following topics were the subject of questions put to Councillor Mrs Alexander, who duly responded:-

- (1) the official opening of the new Haverhill Community Football Project on the first day of the new football season;
- (2) invitations to the new green gym facility on the Motts Field area of the East Town Park, Haverhill;
- (3) planning permission for a low metal sign located outside the premises of the new Haverhill Football Project;
- (4) the hiring out of the Chalkstone Road football pitches in Haverhill; and
- (5) the increase in attendance at Haverhill Rovers Football Club since the opening of the new Haverhill Community Football Project and increased support from the community for its operation.

Councillor Mrs Alexander agreed to provide a written response in respect of questions (2) and (3) above.

- (o) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Transport and Planning Portfolio: Councillor Clements (Report B225)

The following topic was the subject of a question put to Councillor Clements, who duly responded:-

- (1) the temporary build at the junction of St Martins Street and Long Brackland in Bury St Edmunds.

## 60. **Conclusion of Business**

The meeting concluded at 9.53 pm.

**MAYOR**