

MINUTES OF ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 28 February 2012 at 7.00 pm in the Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds.

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor C J E Spicer) (in the Chair),
Councillors Beckwith, Ms Byrne, Chung, Clements, Clifton-Brown, Cockle, Cox, Everitt, Farmer, French, Mrs Gower, Griffiths, Hale, Mrs Hind, P Hopfensperger, Mrs R V Hopfensperger, Hordern, Houlder, Mrs Levack, Marks, McManus, Mrs Mildmay-White, Nettleton, Oliver, Pugh, Ray, Redhead, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Rushbrook, Mrs Rushen, Springett, Mrs Stamp, Stevens, Thorndyke, F J Warby, Mrs P A Warby and A Whittaker.

84. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 13 December 2011 and 15 February 2012 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

85. Mayor's Communications

The Mayor reported on the civic engagements and charity activities which he, the Mayoress and the Deputy Mayor had attended since his last report to Council on 13 December 2011. In particular he informed the Council about the launch event of the Sea Cadets and his visit to HMS Vengeance. He also read out a letter from a visitor to Bury St Edmunds in which the courteous way the motorists drove was praised.

86. Announcements from the Leader of the Council

Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council, informed the Council that the newly appointed Joint Chief Executive with Forest Heath District Council, Ian Gallin, would commence work on 10 April 2012. He then informed the Council about the launch of the three Vision 2031 documents in respect of Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and the Rural Area, and that the consultation would last for approximately two months until the end of April 2012.

Councillor Griffiths was delighted to announce that on Monday, 27 February 2012, the Borough Council and J D Wetherspoon had completed the lease of the Corn Exchange in Bury St Edmunds. He considered this to be excellent news all round, both for those who wished to see the building open again, and for Council Tax payers. He understood that all necessary permissions were in place and that work would start on transforming the interior of the building in mid March 2012, with an anticipated opening in early summer. Apart from re-opening a much loved building, and creating around 45 full and part-time jobs, there was a real financial benefit for the Council Tax payer. The Borough Council would receive a rent of £80,000 a year for letting the top floor of the Corn Exchange. This was important income for the Borough Council, at a time when income was declining. He stated that J D Wetherspoon operated a Code of Conduct for Responsible Retailing and he added that the Borough Council, and others, would be monitoring this Code of Conduct closely to ensure that J D Wetherspoon complied with it, as well as complying with all their licensing conditions. In conclusion, he took the opportunity to welcome J D Wetherspoon to Bury St Edmunds and looked forward to this new use of the Corn Exchange adding to the vitality of the town centre.

Councillor Griffiths then referred to the petition that was being presented later in the meeting, which was against increased car parking charges within the

Borough. He stated that nobody liked increasing parking charges, and he certainly did not. As a Borough Council, which had both supported and invested heavily in the Borough over the last few years, it was not immune to the tough economic conditions facing the country. Moreover, during 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, the Borough Council's Government grant had been reduced by 32.5%, a reduction of £2.1m. The Council had to make difficult decisions, but before it did it had conducted extensive consultation with residents, and the bottom line was that in 2012/2013 the Council had to deliver savings of £2.4m of which a proposed increase to parking charges accounted for about 6%. The proposal to freeze Council Tax for the third time in four years would support the residents during these challenging times.

87. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ager, Mrs Broughton, Buckle, Rout, Simner and Mrs D Whittaker.

88. **Declarations of Interest**

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

89. **Public Question Time**

Mr Tom Murray of Bury St Edmunds required clarification on car parking charges for blue badge holders. He asked whether blue badge holders would be required to pay for car parking on Angel Hill and Market Square in Bury St Edmunds.

In reply, **Councillor Clements, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport**, stated that the proposed system for charging for blue badge holders related to off-street car parking, and not on-street car parking. Therefore, parking on Angel Hill and Market Square would continue as at present.

As a supplementary question, **Mr Murray** then stated that blue badge holders were concerned that their costs would increase due to the increased cost of fuel and now car parking charges.

In reply, **Councillor Clements** stated that the proposed charge for blue badge holders had been set so that the holder would be entitled to park free for the equivalent time that had been paid for.

(Mr Mark Cordell, Chief Executive of Bid4Bury, wished to present a petition containing over 3,000 signatures regarding car parking charges in Bury St Edmunds. The Mayor determined that, although the seven days notice had not been given as required by the Council's Constitution, he considered it appropriate that the Council receive the petition as it related to the Council's budget, which would be discussed later in the meeting.)

Mr Mark Cordell, Chief Executive of Bid4Bury, fully acknowledged the excellent work of the Council and many people within this meeting in contributing over a number of years in improving Bury St Edmunds town centre. Therefore, he could not understand why the Council was considering increasing car parking charges yet again. He then made reference to the number of independent traders that had ceased business in 2011, and questioned whether the Borough Council had considered the implications of last year's increase in car parking had a detrimental effect on these businesses. He stated that car parking usage had increased over the last five years and he considered that it would continue to increase due to the entrepreneurial businesses within the town and the work of

Bid4Bury and the Chamber of Commerce. These organisations had been working hard to attract people into the town centre. He referred to the recently commissioned review for the Government undertaken by Mary Portas, which identified car parking to be a key issue and a negative impact on the health of the 'High Street'. He wished to see the Borough Council undertake an inventive and entrepreneurial approach other than increase car parking charges across the board. He concluded by asking why the Council had appeared only to consider using that heavy blunt instrument of increasing car parking charges everywhere?

In reply, **Councillor Clements, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport**, stated that the Council report on the budget for 2012/2013 showed that extensive work had been undertaken on numerous cost centres within the budget, the Council had not just looked at car parking charges. The Council had invested substantial sums of money in its car parks, and £4m had been spent on constructing new car parking spaces, and a further £1.2m upgrading existing spaces. Seven of the car parks had now been awarded a prestigious 'Parkmark' status in recognition of their safe and secure environment. He reiterated that the increase in car parking charges was a relatively small amount when compared to the rest of a large budget, and that the Council and Bid4Bury, together with other organisations, should be working as a team to promote the Borough.

Mr Cordell then stated that he was against increasing car parking charges 'across the board' by 10%, and considered that a far more sophisticated, creative approach to gain the additional income by the Borough Council was required. Consideration should be given to a different way of charging. He stated that the petition had been raised at this late stage because he was unaware, and no one from the Council had the courtesy to discuss it with Bid4Bury, that these charges would be discussed at this meeting of full Council.

In reply, **Councillor Clements** refuted the statement made by Mr Cordell, and he had been informed that Bid4Bury had been aware of the proposals to increase car parking charges for some time previously.

Mr Andrew Denny, Chairman of Bury St Edmunds Chamber of Commerce, expressed deep disappointment that car parking charges had not been the subject of consultation with the Chamber prior to it being put into the public domain. He questioned whether it was credible to say that there was no other option to secure this additional £150,000 of income when so many other savings had been made. He asked whether the Council had taken into consideration the number of businesses that had recently closed within Bury St Edmunds town centre, and that the review undertaken by Mary Portas clearly identified car parking charges as being a key issue. He asked whether the Council could not have identified a more innovative approach to plug the £150,000 gap in its budget?

In reply, **Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council**, reiterated that the Borough Council's Government grant had been cut during 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 by 32.5%, a reduction of £2.1m. He considered that by freezing Council Tax for three of the last four years was the best way to help the maximum number of people, whether residents, customers or employees. The Borough Council's extensive consultation included not only increasing car parking charges, but numerous other options for savings and increases in income. The Borough Council had to take a balanced approach, and no one was in favour of putting up car parking charges, but it was recognised that car parking events had increased considerably. Councillor Griffiths then added that a review would be undertaken by the appropriate Committee into car parking charges throughout the Borough to see if there were more entrepreneurial ways of charging, and that businesses and other organisations should be involved. He

concluded by stating that the Borough Council was keen to continue to work with businesses and organisations to attract people into the Borough.

Mr Simon Harding of Bury St Edmunds asked how would the new Joint Chief Executive with Forest Heath District Council divide his time between Forest Heath District Council and the Borough Council.

In reply, **Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council**, informed Mr Harding that it was anticipated that overall the Joint Chief Executive would divide his time equally between both Councils. How he planned his presence on a week by week basis would be determined by the nature of the overall workload. There would be a flexible approach to this within the overriding principle of an equal presence at each Council. It must be anticipated that, as the partnership with Forest Heath District Council developed, much of the work of the Joint Chief Executive would be to the benefit of both Councils, and that it would become more difficult to separate its input to a particular Council.

As a supplementary statement, **Mr Harding** then paid tribute to the current Chief Executive, Geoff Rivers.

90. **Mayoralty 2012/2013**

Councillor Hale, Chairman of the Mayoral Advisory Committee, reported informally that the Committee had recommended that at the Annual Meeting of Council, Councillor Timothy (Tim) Marks be nominated for election as Mayor for the 2012/2013 civic year.

Councillor Marks informed the Council that he would be honoured to accept the nomination, and uphold the dignity and tradition of the office of Mayor of St Edmundsbury.

91. **Items Referred to Full Council by Cabinet and Democratic Renewal Working Party**

The Council considered the Schedule of Referrals contained within Report C370 (previously circulated).

(A)(1) Shared Offices Joint Committee (formerly West Suffolk House Joint Committee)

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

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the amended Terms of Reference for the West Suffolk House Joint Committee, attached as Appendix 2 to Report C294 as amended, be approved as the Terms of Reference for the Shared Offices Joint Committee;
- (2) the West Suffolk House Joint Committee be renamed the Shared Offices Joint Committee; and
- (3) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal Services of Suffolk County Council and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services of the Borough Council to amend the Joint Committee

Constitutional Agreement in line with the amended Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee.

(A)(2) Pay Policy Statement 2012/2013

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

RESOLVED:-

That the Pay Policy Statement for 2012/2013, attached as Appendix A to Report C319, be approved.

(A)(3) Empty Homes and Wasted Space Strategy 2009/2011

Councillor Nettleton quoting from the current Strategy, stated that the Council would target empty homes that had been empty for more than 12 months robustly. However, he considered that the Borough Council was not being robust enough. As at December 2011 the Borough Council currently had 301 properties listed as empty, of which 123 had been empty for more than six months, and a further three properties had been empty for over ten years. He considered that the Strategy was not being properly implemented. He was hopeful that at the end of the six month extension to the current policy that the number of properties that had been empty for over six months would reduce considerably.

Councillor Mrs Gower, Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing, agreed with Councillor Nettleton in wishing to see a reduction in the number of homes empty for more than six months. She then provided information regarding a property that had been empty for over 14 years. She considered that using legal remedies, such as Compulsory Purchase Orders, should be undertaken as an absolute last resort, but the Council would use compulsory purchase where necessary.

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

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) the current Empty Homes and Wasted Space Strategy 2009–2011 be extended for a further 6 months to allow a full refresh to be carried out jointly with Forest Heath District Council; and
- (2) the change from giving grants to providing loans for owners to make improvements to their houses in return for nomination rights from the housing register be approved.

(A)(4) Joint Suffolk Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document

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

RESOLVED:-

That the revised Joint Suffolk Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document, as contained in Appendix 2 to Report C331, be adopted.

(A)(5) Air Quality Management and New Development: Draft Supplementary Guidance

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

RESOLVED:-

That the revised Air Quality Management and New Development Supplementary Guidance, as contained in Appendix 2 to Report C332, be adopted as a protocol for dealing with planning applications.

(B)(1) Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2012/2013

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

RESOLVED:-

That the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statements for 2012/2013 and Prudential Indicators, as detailed in Appendix 3 to Report C294, be approved.

(C)(1) Updating the Contract Procedure Rules

Councillor Mrs Warby, Chairman of the Democratic Renewal Working Party, informed the Council of the discussions held by the Working Party at its meeting on 9 February 2012. The Working Party had recognised the need to review the Contract Procedure Rules as the Borough Council was now participating in a county-wide electronic tendering and contract management system. However, the Working Party was extremely concerned with the proposals for the ordering arrangements for goods, services or works below £10,000, and as such was recommending interim arrangements until these concerns could be addressed at its next meeting. Subsequent to the meeting of the Working Party she understood that the officers would experience difficulties with the Working Party's recommendations concerning the operation of the lower thresholds. However, as Chairman, she considered that she had to move the recommendations as agreed by the Working Party, which were seconded by Councillor Thorndyke.

Councillor Ray, Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Resources, informed the Council that the recommendation made by the Working Party would cause considerable difficulties for the purchase of items below £10,000. He stated that last year there were 11,000 invoices processed for items between £500 and less than £5,000. He proposed an amendment to the resolution that recommendation B within Appendix 1 be deleted, recommendations C and D be accepted, and that for items below £10,000 the current thresholds be used as recorded within Section A of Appendix 1. Amendments to the recommendations were seconded by Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White and being put to the vote were passed and, therefore, became the substantive motion.

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

RESOLVED:-

That, subject to review by the Democratic Renewal Working Party at its next meeting, the threshold value of tenders for goods and works below £10,000 be as detailed in Section A of Appendix 1 to Report C370, and that Sections C and D in Appendix 1 be approved.

(Councillor P Hopfensperger left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

(C)(2) Amendments to the Constitution: Licensing

Councillor Mrs P A Warby, Chairman of the Democratic Renewal Working Party, informed the Council that again this was an interim measure until the full details were known regarding the licensing function in respect of changes to the Licensing Act 2003, which would be effected by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

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

RESOLVED:-

That the amendments to the Council's Constitution regarding the licensing function detailed in Appendix A to Report C345, be approved.

92. **Budget and Council Tax: 2012/2013**

The Council considered Report C371 (previously circulated) which recommended that the level of Band D Council Tax for 2012/2013 be set at the same level as for 2011/2012, at £175.23.

Subsequent to Report C371 being distributed, the Borough Council had received notification of the precept set by Haverhill Town Council, which resulted in amendments to Appendices I and J and to paragraphs 4.10.4 and 4.10.7. As a consequence, recommendations 2.2 (c), (e) and (f) required amendment. Consequently details of these amendments were tabled at the meeting.

The Council was required to consider the budget for the Borough Council, and set the level of Council Tax for 2012/2013 to fund this budget. The proposed 2012/2013 budget was £11.740m, compared to the 2011/2012 budget of £12.229m. Efficiency savings and increased income of £2.15m were being proposed, as well as growth of £0.418m. The Borough Council was approaching completion of a major programme of capital investment across the Borough, and it was estimated that £3.352m would be spent on this programme during 2012/2013. The Cabinet was recommending that Council Tax should not be increased for the 2012/2013 financial year.

Councillor Ray, Portfolio Holder for Performance and Resources, introduced the budget by first thanking the Chief Finance Officer and her team for a clear and comprehensive budget report, and officers who had contributed to the Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) process for the eighth successive year. He also thanked the Performance and Audit Scrutiny and Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their input into the budget process. He turned to the actual budget and drew to the attention of the Council the comments contained in the report by the Chief Finance Officer, Appendix F, and in particular the conclusions that the estimates were robust, taking into account known risks and mitigating strategies, and the reserves were adequate for the 2012/2013 budget plans. Councillor Ray also drew to the attention of Council the outcomes of the DR-IVE process, which were detailed in Appendix D, and had produced a combination of savings and increased generation of income to produce a balanced budget, the reasons for which were identified in Appendix C. He stated that there was an extensive consultation exercise in Autumn 2011, and the outcomes were useful in making difficult choices between different measures to either increase savings or income. He considered this consultation was also a useful exercise to demonstrate to the residents the difficult choices that the Council had to make. He considered that the consultation exercise was statistically valid, and referred the Council to the outcomes detailed in Appendix K. He then reminded the Council that it was proposed to freeze the level of Council Tax for the third year in the last four. Freezing the Council Tax would attract a Government grant of £167,000, which was the equivalent to a 2.5% rise in Council Tax, but this grant would only apply to 2012/2013.

Councillor Ray then informed the Council of the major review undertaken on the capital programme, including costings and timescales. He drew to the attention of the Council that the period of significant investment in the Borough was coming to an end, and that any new capital requirement needed to be carefully assessed in terms of funding availability.

Councillor Ray stated that Appendix D showed that there would be estimated savings of over £630,000 in respect of the shared services agenda with Forest Heath District Council. However, the achievement of these savings was very much dependent upon proceeding as quickly as reasonably possible with the shared services agenda.

During the discussion the Council was informed of the following:-

- (1) 67% of respondents to the consultation indicated agreement with reducing the opening hours of the Tourist Information Centre in Bury St Edmunds and/or a merger with Moyses Hall Museum. This was not being proposed at this stage as the proposed level of savings had been identified by other means;
- (2) that the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport would be examining the possibilities for increasing the spaces available for fuel efficient vehicles in the Borough Council's off street car parks;
- (3) that the Borough Council would be increasing its employer contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme by 1% cumulatively each year for a further 5 years, and that the next triennial evaluation of the scheme would be in 2013, at which time an accurate and up-to-date review of the scheme's assets and liabilities would be undertaken;
- (4) that the local government national employers organisation had not made a pay increase offer to the employees;

- (5) the need to increase car parking charges was a balance between making savings and increasing levels of income; and
- (6) in response to a question concerning the estimated income from asset disposals, it was agreed that a written response would be given.

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

RESOLVED:- That

- (1) having taken into account the information received by Cabinet on 15 February 2012 (Report C353) including the Report by the Chief Finance Officer set out at Appendix F, together with the up to date information and advice contained in this report, the level of Band D Council Tax for 2012/2013 be set at £175.23;
- (2) Subject to 2.1 above, the following formal Council Tax resolution be adopted:-
 - (a) the revenue budgets attached as Appendix A, together with the additional revenue requirements ('growth bids') summarised within Appendix C and the efficiency Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise ('DR-IVE') savings and new income detailed at Appendix D be approved;
 - (b) the revised capital programme attached at Appendix B be approved;
 - (c) the statutory calculations under Sections 30 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as detailed in amended Appendix J, be noted;
 - (d) the Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Police Authority provisional precepts issued to the Borough Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below, be noted:-

Precepting Authority	2012/2013 provisional precept by valuation bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
County Council	751.02	876.19	1,001.36	1,126.53	1,376.87	1,627.21	1,877.55	2,253.06
Police Authority	111.18	129.71	148.24	166.77	203.83	240.89	277.95	333.54

- (e) in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the amounts shown in amended Schedule 4 of Appendix I be agreed as the amount of Council Tax for the year 2012/2013 for each of the categories of dwellings shown;

- (f) the Chief Finance Officer be authorised to amend where necessary the amounts in amended Schedule 4 of Appendix I in accordance with any changes notified by Suffolk County Council, and/or Suffolk Police Authority, to the provisional precepts noted in 2.2(d) above;
- (3) the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Resources, be authorised to transfer any surplus on the 2011/2012 revenue budget to the General Fund, and to vire funds between existing Earmarked Reserves (as set out at Appendix G) as deemed appropriate throughout 2012/2013.
- (4) the Borough Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2012/2013 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (5) the following be included in the 2012/2013 Service and Team Plans to cover the period 2012/2013 to 2015/2016:-
 - (a) new schemes with approved funding as listed in Appendix C of this report;
 - (b) minor non-recurring schemes below £5,000, on the condition that they will only proceed if they can be funded from existing budgets or working balances;
 - (c) the savings and extra income arising from the DR-IVE review for 2012/2013 as outlined in Appendix D to this report; and
 - (d) other initiatives which are to be met from within existing base budgets, external grants or which have no new resource implications.

93. **Representation on Outside Bodies: Rural Services Network (SPARSE Rural)**

The Rural Services Network comprised SPARSE Rural, a local authority grouping, Rural Services Partnership and the Rural Services Network Community Group. The Network sought to represent rural services in England, to network between rural service organisations, and to establish and broadcast best practice in rural service provision. It was considered appropriate that Councillor Stevens, the Borough Council's representative on the Local Government Association Rural Commission, would be appropriate to represent the Borough Council on this organisation.

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

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Stevens represent the Borough Council at SPARSE Rural and at the Rural Services Network.

94. Prayers at Council Meetings

(The Mayor had agreed that this item could be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100 B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, in order that this matter could be resolved within the necessary timescale.)

The Council considered Report C384, which sought approval for the inclusion of prayers as part of the formal business of meetings of full Council.

The High Court had issued a judgement in the case brought against Bideford Town Council that prayers could not be held as part of Council meetings because there was no power to do so under the existing legislation as set out in the Local Government Act 1972. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, had now made an order bringing into effect Section 1 of the Localism Act. This contained a '*general power of competence*' which enabled a local authority '*to do anything that individuals generally may do*' so long as no other law was contravened. A letter dated 20 February 2012 had been sent by the Secretary of State to all Council Leaders which explained what he had done, and his view that this would allow Councils the choice on holding prayers. The Council now had the option to exercise the power of general competence to reinstate prayers as part of its meetings or to hold prayers prior to Council meetings.

On the motion of the Mayor, Councillor Spicer, seconded by Councillor Farmer, it was

RESOLVED:-

That the Council exercise its general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to approve the inclusion of prayers, conducted by the Mayor's Chaplain, as part of the formal business of its full Council meetings.

95. 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 of the Constitution.

96. Reports and Questions

(a) Report from the Leader of the Council: Councillor Griffiths (Report C372)

Councillor Griffiths, the Leader of the Council, encouraged all Members to attend the Parish Conference, which would be held on 23 April 2012 at Great Barton Village Hall.

(b) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Culture and Sport Portfolio: Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White (Report C373)

Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White informed the Council that tickets for the Bury St Edmunds Festival went on sale yesterday, 27 February 2012 and £21,000 of bookings had already been taken, which she considered to be a tremendous achievement. The Fat Cat Comedy Club was proving to be even more successful now it was located within The Apex, and the tickets for the forthcoming show by Tim Minchin had sold out in under 45 minutes.

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

- (1) the new Visitors' Centre at Nowton Park; and
- (2) the successful opening event at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre with Sally Gunnell.

(c) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Waste Management Portfolio: Councillor Stevens (Report C374)

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

- (1) the implications of another fire at the waste recycling centre at Haverhill; and
- (2) the future reorganisation of waste transfer stations in the west of the county, and implications of additional mileage necessary in using these sites.

(d) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Housing, Licensing and Environmental Health Portfolio: Councillor Mrs Gower (Report C375)

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

- (1) how did the situation arise whereby only three fully trained Members of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee were eligible to sit on a recent Sub-Committee hearing; and
- (2) the robustness of the Section 106 Agreement to ensure that those legible for housing in Cavendish would be specifically for people with a local connection to Cavendish.

Councillor Mrs Gower agreed to provide a written response to (1) above.

(e) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Performance and Resources Portfolio: Councillor Ray (Report C376)

Councillor Ray urged all Members to complete the training needs analysis form that was to be circulated to all Members shortly. The Democratic Renewal Working Party would consider the results of the training needs analysis forms exercise, and would set the new training programme based on those results.

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

- (1) the non attendance of Members at training events;
- (2) the training needs analysis form to include those subjects that Councillors thought would support them in their role as a Councillor; and
- (3) the timing of Member training events.

- (f) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Planning and Transport Portfolio: Councillor Clements (Report C377)

Councillor Clements reminded the Council of his recent letter that provided the timetable for the launch events associated with Vision 2031.

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

- (1) the apparent relocation of £500,000 from a strategic traffic management initiative to the eastern and central junctions of the A14 to proposed pedestrian enhancements and traffic management to Bury St Edmunds Town Centre;
- (2) the cost for customers using the RingGo cashless parking service; and
- (3) robust procedures to respond to the comments received during the public consultation on the Vision 2031 documents.

- (g) Report from the Cabinet Member for the Tourism and Community Services Portfolio: Councillor Everitt (Report C378)

Councillor Everitt informed the Council that there had been a recent incident of an item being thrown off a bridge onto a major road since he had written his report.

- (h) Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Nettleton (Report C379)

No questions were asked.

- (i) Report from the Chairman of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Hale (Report C380)

No questions were asked.

- (j) Questions to the Chairmen of Other Committees

No questions were asked.

97. **Thanks**

The Mayor informed the Council that this would probably be the last meeting of full Council that Geoff Rivers, the Chief Executive, would be attending before the new Joint Chief Executive took up his post.

Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council hoped that there would be many opportunities to say farewell to the Chief Executive but paid a brief tribute to him for his enormous contribution to the Borough and distinguished career in local government in general. He personally was grateful for all that Geoff Rivers had done, and recognised that he was immensely popular with the staff. Finally he wished him the very best for the continuation of his successful career.

Councillor Nettleton endorsed the comments made by the Leader of the Council, and added that one of the greatest assets of the Chief Executive was his sense of humour.

The Mayor then informed the Council that this would be the last 'normal' meeting at which he would act as Chairman of full Council, and wished to thank those immediate staff who had helped him in this role, including the Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Committee Services Manager. In addition, he wished to thank all staff for their co-operation during the year. He then also thanked his Chaplain, Reverend Katherine Valentine, for her help and co-operation during the year.

98. **Conclusion of Business**

The meeting concluded at 9.24 pm.

MAYOR