

MINUTES OF ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 1 August 2012 at 7.00pm in the Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds.

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor T G Marks) (in the Chair),
Councillors Ager, Beckwith, Ms Byrne, Chung, Cox, Everitt, Farthing,
Mrs Gower, Griffiths, Hale, Hind, P J Hopfensperger,
Mrs R V Hopfensperger, Hordern, Houlder, Marks, McManus, Oliver, Pugh,
Ray, Redhead, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Rushbrook, Mrs Rushen, Simner,
Spicer, Mrs Stamp, Stevens, Thorndyke, F J Warby, Mrs P A Warby,
A Whittaker and Mrs D A Whittaker.

34. Prayers

The Reverend Canon Ian Finn, Rural Dean of Clare and Rector of Haverhill, opened the meeting with prayers.

35. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Broughton, Buckle, Clements, Clifton-Brown, Cockle, Farmer, French, Mrs Levack, Mrs Mildmay-White, Nettleton, Rout and Springett.

36. Declarations of Interest

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

37. Shared Services: Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council Joint Senior Management Team Restructure Proposals

The Council considered Report D101 (previously circulated) which sought approval for a proposed Joint Corporate Leadership Team structure, and associated recommendations.

The report was introduced by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Griffiths, who advised Members that it had taken a lot of work to get to this point, which marked another milestone in the Council's shared services journey, which was aimed at giving the best possible service to those we served in West Suffolk. That journey had started 10 years ago, with successful joint working on recycling initiatives, and had gone on through the "Best for the West" concept as a response to Central Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation, and on to a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Councils which set the parameters for joint working.

The next important step was the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive in April 2012, and this would now be followed by a joint Corporate Leadership Team. Councillor Griffiths acknowledged that things may be difficult for a while, particularly for staff, but that staff at all levels understood the need for change in response to the realities of delivering services with fewer resources. Councillor Griffiths thanked the Chief Executive for the presentations and briefings with Members which had taken place, and both sets of Management Teams for their support to Councillors, and asked the Chief Executive, Ian Gallin, to take Councillors through his proposals for a Joint Corporate Leadership Team to serve

both Councils. The proposed structure detailed both Directors and Heads of Service posts.

Mr Gallin outlined the context and drivers which underlined the proposals in his report, advising Members that with the financial challenges faced by both Councils, the evolution of shared services and wider partnership working opportunities, a senior management structure was needed which was fit to deal with the changing expectations of local government. Alongside this, it was necessary to be able to respond to the expectations of two separate political entities, and ensure fitness to deliver both Councils' political priorities by converging service delivery as much as possible, whilst at the same time recognising that some priorities would be different.

The drivers for the new structure were financial (responding to significant reductions in funding and increased uncertainty and variance on the level of funding); increased demand for services requiring new means to communicate with the community and enable access to services; and a strong focus on economic development, delivering sustainable growth, jobs and balanced communities.

Mr Gallin advised that the restructure had been shaped to make it understandable and relevant for staff, Councillors, partners and the public, with the joining up of two management and officer structures into a single leadership team with sensible groupings of services and expertise. The proposed structure was provided at the Appendix to Report D101, and Mr Gallin took Members through some of the main differences to the structure and service groupings they were currently familiar with at St Edmundsbury.

Another important change was that the two proposed Director posts would have no direct line reporting to the Heads of Service. Their role would be to provide leadership upwards and outwards to support Councillors and the delivery of key projects. They were not a layer of management, although they would support the Heads of Service to address key issues, and it would be for the Heads of Service to provide the leadership and management of service areas.

Councillors acknowledged that this was going to be a difficult time for staff, and particularly challenging for senior managers, but hoped they would be reassured that internal recruitment would be the first preference, and also that they would be able to see the opportunities that could arise in difficult times. Members could see that the changes to local pay determination and reduction in pay protection to one year was also necessary, in order to realise the savings needed, and were pleased to see that this was to be the subject of full consultation with Unison. Members were also pleased to hear that support was being put in place for managers in advance of the assessment centres, as well as for those who may want to consider other opportunities, or who were not ultimately successful and faced redundancy.

Councillors could also see that the role of Members would have to change, and that officers may not necessarily be so visible around the offices, but that Members would need to trust that staff were getting on with the job, and were on the end of a phone if needed. There may also be a short term reduction in performance seen, but this would improve once the shared services were working efficiently and effectively together. There was evidence that combined services paid dividends, for example the shared Waste Service, where excellent services had been maintained alongside increased savings.

In response to a question as to whether staff in a shared service would be able to specialise, for example could it be expected that one member of staff would

be as familiar with issues in the north of Forest Heath as the south of St Edmundsbury, Members were advised that yes, specialist knowledge would be maintained, but that this would allow the two Councils to work more closely together, as well as with Parish and Town Councils.

In response to a question as to whether the ultimate goal was one fully merged Council, the Chief Executive advised that the brief of both Councils was to achieve a shared Joint Leadership Team, and the staff structure to support that, whilst delivering the necessary financial savings. However, at this point the intention was for the identities and budgets of the two Councils to remain independent of each other.

Howard Cook, Chairman of West Suffolk Unison, advised Members that this was not the first time St Edmundsbury was facing major change, and that staff and the organisation had always coped well, although this was a particularly major change. Staff acknowledged that the two Councils were not making such budget reductions by choice, but by necessity, and the Councils were in continued consultation with Unison. Communication would be the key to success, and it would therefore be important to keep staff informed throughout the process.

Finally, Mr Gallin reminded Council that the proposals in the report, together with an additional recommendation concerning amendments to Forest Heath District Council's Constitution, would be considered by the full Council of Forest Heath District Council on the following evening, Thursday 2 August 2012.

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

RESOLVED:- That, subject to the passing of these resolutions by Forest Heath District Council at its meeting on 2 August 2012,

- (1) the Joint Corporate Leadership Team Structure as set out in the Appendix to Report D101 be approved;
- (2) the Joint Chief Executive be given delegated authority to revise the proposals, in consultation with both Leaders, following formal one-to-one consultation with those affected;
- (3) a Joint Appointments Committee be established for the purpose of making appointments to the Director posts and any consequential dismissals by redundancy of Directors, subject to no well-founded objection being made by any Member of either Cabinet;
- (4) the Joint Appointments Committee, which shall be politically balanced, comprise three full Members and one Substitute Member of each authority, including at least one Member of each Cabinet, to be appointed by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services upon the nomination of the Leader of the Council;
- (5) the Joint Appointments Committee have the following Terms of Reference:
 - (i) to carry out the process of appointing joint Directors, including conducting interviews of applicants; and

(ii) to recommend any consequential dismissals by redundancy of existing Directors; and

(6) a change to local pay determination, and a reduction in pay protection to one year, for the leadership posts, be approved, subject to ongoing consultation with Unison.

38. Chief Executive's Urgency Powers: Appointment of Members to Village of the Year Judging Panel

The Council considered a narrative item which informed the Council that on 12 June 2012 the Chief Executive had exercised his urgency powers in accordance with Part 3, Responsibility for Functions, of the Council's Constitution, and the urgency powers detailed in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers Section C(a), to appoint Councillors Cockle, Redhead, Mrs Rushen and Thorndyke to the Village of the Year Judging Panel. The urgent decision was necessary in order that the judging panel could take place within the necessary timescales.

39. Conclusion of Business

The meeting concluded at 8.30pm.

MAYOR