

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 9 March 2016** at **4.00pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Diane Hind
Vice Chairman Jeremy Farthing

Paula Fox
Paul Hopfensperger
Richard Rout
Angela Rushen

Jim Thorndyke
Frank Warby
John Burns

Substitutes attending:
Sarah Stamp

By Invitation:
Carol Bull
Ian Houlder, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance
Sara Mildmay-White, Cabinet Member for Housing

Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner
Supt. Andrew Mason, Local Policing Commander for the West
Gareth Wilson, Chief Constable

62. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Sarah Stamp for Councillor Susan Glossop.

63. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Brown, Terry Buckle, Susan Glossop, Andrew Speed and Clive Springett.

Councillors Patrick Chung, and Wayne Hailstone were unable to attend.

64. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2016, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. **Public Participation**

Simon Harding, a resident of Church Walks, Bury St Edmunds asked a question in connection with Item 5 on the agenda "Suffolk Local Policing Review".

Would the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend Council to seek from the word go the advice and recommendation of Suffolk Constabulary as regards the upgrading of Suffolk Road Safety Officers deemed necessary to satisfy road safety requirements at the two entrances off Fornham Road into the planned West Suffolk Operational Hub at Hollow Road Farm, Fornham.

In response, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated that as no preferred site had been identified as yet for any West Suffolk Operational Hub, and indeed no decision had been taken following the recent consultation about whether there would be a single shared hub let alone where it would be, this question was not currently relevant. If the council does decide to go ahead with a West Suffolk Operational Hub then I am confident that road safety would be part of the development of any planning application for a specific site.

66. **Presentation by the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Suffolk Local Policing Review**

[Councillor Frank Warby arrived at 4.50pm during the consideration of this item]

The Chairman of the Committee welcomed Tim Passmore (Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)) who had been invited to the meeting to give a presentation to Members on the Suffolk Local Policing Review. He was accompanied by Gareth Wilson (Chief Constable) and Supt Andrew Manson (Local Policing Commander for the West).

The PCC opened his presentation by thanking the Committee for the invitation. The PCC informed the Committee that Suffolk was one of the safety counties to live in, in the UK and he wanted this to continue. He then set out the reasons for the review, which covered the following areas:

- Strategic direction and budget;
- Managing demand;
- Partnership working;
- Protecting victims and vulnerable people;
- Commissioning and grants;
- Innovation;
- Tackling new forms of crime; and
- Preventing and reducing crime.

The policing review was not solely financial. It was about the Constabulary responding to the changing nature of crime, with resources being located according to demand. The revised policing model for the county would be divided into nine localities, each led by an Inspector, who would oversee the work of the 18 Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) across Suffolk and emergency response officers within their area. (5 SNT located in west

Suffolk). Three Superintendents would oversee this work, being responsible for the East, West and South of the County.

As part of the reallocation of resources from urban to rural policing, a rural crime team had been located in Stowmarket to cover the west of Suffolk. Three extra PCSO's had been appointed to carry out a liaison role in schools right across the county. Twenty police officers had been funded to focus on protecting vulnerable people and support the county's cyber-crime investigations and a new motorbike team in Bury St Edmunds.

Working more effectively with partners both locally and regionally was also key in providing efficiencies across the public sector and the Constabulary was committed to furthering joint ways of working in partnership.

The Chief Constable informed the Committee that resources had been increased, which included the launch of a new Road Policing Team on 9 March 2016, to cover the west of the county, based in Bury St Edmunds to deal with speeding. New technology had been introduced such as body worn videos providing clear evidence; automatic number plate recognition and a new website to enable local community interaction.

Supt Andrew Manson (Local Policing Commander for the West), informed Members that a response base would still be located in Bury St Edmunds, with reduced opening hours; and the Haverhill front desk would be closed due to the decrease in footfall, but would still be used by police officers as a response base.

Members discussed the presentation in detail and asked a number of questions of the PCC, Chief Constable and the Local Policing Commander, to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the following:

- (1) Police stations: The PCC reassured members that no police stations were closing. However, some of the front desks would be closed, but the buildings would still be occupied by police staff. Resources were being invested where it could be best spent.
- (2) Police attendance at parish/town council meetings: Members were concerned that the police had stopped attending Parish/Town council meetings or resident association meetings. The Chief Constable reassured members that the police would attend meetings, if there was a problem to solve. He further explained that Parish/Town Councils would receive a police report setting out crime levels in the area; what Parish/Town Councils had asked the police to do; and what had been done, and would include contact details.
- (3) Decriminalisation of parking: Work was underway with district, borough and county councils to transfer responsibility for parking enforcement to the local authority. This would allow Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to spend more time on local problem solving.
- (4) Police direct service: It was acknowledged that the service needed to be improved.

The Chairman thanked the PPC and his officers for an informative presentation.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the presentation on the Suffolk Local Policing Review.

67. **Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance**

As set out in the Council's Constitution, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member would be invited to attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee. Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, members were asked to consider the responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, who had been invited to the meeting.

Report No: OAS/SE/16/004, set out the overall responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, which were:

- Business development / commercial
- Cabinet management and support
- Civic office (Mayor)
- Democratic services (including member's support)
- Financial services (including audit)
- Health and safety
- Human resources (including payroll)
- ICT
- Learning and development
- Legal services
- Performance and risk management
- Procurement
- Scrutiny management and support.

Councillor Ian Houlder, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance opened his presentation by thanking the Committee for the invitation. He then set out the overall areas of responsibility (legal and democratic services, finance and performance and human resources); current priorities for human resources, legal and democratic services; ICT Plan; finance and performance challenges; finance and performance plan; Anglia Revenues Partnership Plan; future uncertainties and member development.

Members discussed the presentation in detail and asked questions of the Cabinet Member and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the future uncertainties regarding the Government legislation on the National Living Wage and its impact.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance for his informative presentation.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the presentation by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance.

68. **West Suffolk Housing Strategy: Progress Report against Action Points**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/16/005, which asked Members to review progress made against the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2015-2018.

The draft West Suffolk Housing Strategy was considered in detail at a joint meeting with Forest Heath's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 July 2014 and was approved by St Edmundsbury Council on 23 September 2014 and Forest Heath's Council on 8 October 2014.

The West Suffolk Housing Strategy included a series of ambitious objectives against which key actions and targets had been formulated. These actions and targets were reviewed and, if necessary, amended, deleted or added to on an annual basis. The Housing Service reviewed progress against the Housing Strategy actions on a quarterly basis. The Housing Strategy grouped the objectives under the following headings:

- Planning
- Rural housing
- Developers and providers
- Private sector housing
- Adaptations and improvements
- Community
- Energy efficiency
- Land and resources
- Homelessness
- Efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Care and support.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was a detailed update on progress as at the end of December 2015, against 40 objectives under the above headings. The remainder of the report summarised each of the headings, key achievements to date and work underway and highlighted challenges and external factors impacting on delivery.

Members considered the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Head of Housing provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on the following:

- (1) Rural housing – Members felt that the inclusion of open market housing would destroy rural exception sites. The Cabinet member stated that open market housing would be another tool that could be used to secure the viability of rural exception sites, but would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Officers were also waiting on the outcome from the Housing and Planning Bill, with regards to whether exception site properties would be included in the right to buy.
- (2) Energy efficiency – Members suggested the insulation contractor be encouraged to promote to residents the potential benefits of installing insulation, which officers agreed to look into.

- (3) Land and resources – (Housing Development Company) – Officers advised that the Housing Company would have the first option on land owned by both Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk, unless it had been earmarked for something specific.
- (4) Care and support – (Gypsy and Traveller Transit sites) – Members were advised that the Public Sector Leaders Group would be looking at widening the criteria used to identify potential sites, and communicating to residents where the project had currently got to.

The Cabinet Member for Housing complemented the housing staff on progress made to date on the West Suffolk Housing Strategy.

There being no decision required, the Committee:

- (1) **Noted** the progress made to date against the actions arising from the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2015-2018;
- (2) **Noted** the challenges facing delivery of the West Suffolk Housing Strategy; and
- (3) **Noted** an update would be presented to the Committee in early 2017 in order to monitor delivery in 2016.

69. **Cabinet Decision Plan: March to May 2016**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/16/006, which requested that Members peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period March 2016 to May 2016, for which it would like further information on or which might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the Decisions Pan.

70. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/16/007, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2016 (Appendix 1).

Members noted that an update report would be presented in early 2017 in order to monitor the delivery of the West Suffolk Housing Strategy.

Members considered the report, and there being no decision required **noted** the contents of the report and that

The Meeting concluded at 6.10pm

Signed by:

Chairman