

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 14 January 2016 at 6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Simon Cole

Andrew Appleby
Chris Barker
John Bloodworth
Ruth Bowman

Christine Mason
Reg Silvester
Lance Stanbury

51. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

52. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Bimson.

Councillor Bill Sadler was unable to attend.

53. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2015 were accepted by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

54. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

55. **Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Cultural Services**

(Councillor Simon Cole declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Red Lodge Football Club and remained in the meeting)

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 Leisure and Cultural Services, who had been invited to the meeting.

Report No: OAS/FH/16/001, set out the overall responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Cultural Services, which were:

- Heritage and tourism
- Parks and open spaces (including trees)
- Sport

Councillor Andy Drummond, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Cultural Services opened his presentation by thanking the Committee for the invitation. He then set out the areas of responsibility; structure; key facts and current major projects. Owing to its diverse nature Operational Services was split into two portfolios:

- Leisure and Cultural Services (Councillor Andy Drummond)
- Property, Waste and Street Scene (Councillor David Bowman)

There were three key areas of responsibility within the leisure and cultural portfolio, these being parks service; sports and tourism and heritage service.

A breakdown of operational costs was provided for the leisure and cultural services in Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and West Suffolk.

A number of key facts and major projects covering Forest Heath were included, such as:

- Newmarket Home of Horse Racing Museum;
- Play area refurbishment / renewal programme;
- Plans to create a combined visitor centre and community centre at Aspal Close Nature Reserve;
- Yellow Brick Road Linear Park – management plan had been prepared for this important green gateway through the centre of Newmarket.
- Sports facilities and playing pitch assessment for current and future needs.

Member discussed the presentation in detail and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the following:

- (1) Income generation – The Council was looking at various avenues to generate income, such as charging commercial users/event organisers a fee to use green spaces.
- (2) Balanced scorecards - Performance and targets to measure the success of the services was presented to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. Officers advised that the service produced an annual business plan and processes were in place to make strategic plans to meet current and future needs for leisure facilities.
- (3) GP Referral – Officers agreed to circulate a breakdown of the 500 GP referrals across West Suffolk and more specifically those in the district.

- (4) Discover Newmarket (tourist destination) – Officers agreed to look at providing more tourist activities to show everything that Forest Heath had to offer to visitors.
- (5) Sports pitches - The Council had commissioned an assessment of all indoor and playing pitch facilities and the findings of this assessment would be considered at the West Suffolk Growth Steering Group on 8 February 2016.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Cultural Services for his informative presentation.

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the presentation.

56. **Presentation on the Mildenhall Hub Project**

The Committee received a presentation from Alex Wilson (Director), which outlined the principles of the Mildenhall Hub Project to get early councillor feedback. The presentation set out:

- Why a Hub was needed;
- What the core business case was;
- What could be included;
- How it would affect Forest Heath services and taxpayers;
- The basic concept of the Hub;
- Where the Hub could be located;
- One Public Estate;
- Changes made since 2014 Business Case;
- Likely tenure model;
- What Forest Heath would need to deliver;
- What investments would be needed for Forest Heath's delivered elements;
- Possible funding sources; and
- Indicative project timeline.

The presentation did not cover planning policy as a separate Development Brief was being prepared with member input. The Director explained that the presentation was a snapshot of the project as of today. A detailed business case was still under preparation for reasons outside of the Council's control.

Member discussed the presentation in detail and asked a number of questions of the Director, to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the following:

- 1) Traffic issues – This had been recognised as a key issue. The Hub scheme itself was only likely to trigger junction improvements at its own site in the town centre, but it may need to be part of a wider highways strategy and masterplan for the town, depending on the outcome of the Local Plan.
- 2) Protection of current amenity area – The Development Brief would take into account the special amenity area by the river, as well as bridal paths and river walks.

- 3) Timescales – The timescales were ambitious but the Hub was deliberately designed to be built in phases.
- 4) Soft play centre/leisure users' crèche – Officers agreed to look into the feasibility of including a soft play area within the Hub.
- 5) Ambulance Service not included in the Hub – The Council had consulted with the ambulance service about the Hub project. Operationally, the site was currently felt to be too far away from A11 for immediate access, which they had at their current location.

The Committee thanked the Director for the presentation. There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the presentation and that a detailed business case would be presented to the Committee for scrutiny in autumn 2016.

57. **Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications (Quarter 3)**

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources) Order 2010 required that Members should scrutinise the authority's use of its surveillance powers on a quarterly basis.

The Monitoring Officer had advised that in Quarter 3, no such surveillance had been authorised. There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, Quarter 3 update.

58. **Work Programme Update and Suggestion for Scrutiny**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/16/002, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2015 (Appendix 1). The Chairman advised the Committee that the Police and Crime Commissioner had been invited to the March meeting to give a presentation on the Suffolk Local Policing Review and to answer any questions. An invitation would be sent to all members inviting them to the Committee meeting on 10 March 2016.

The Scrutiny Officer advised Members of the following amendments to the Committee's meeting on 10 March 2016:

- Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Annual Update to be deferred to 21 April 2016; and
- West Suffolk Housing Strategy Progress Report against Action Points to be included for 10 March 2016.

Also attached at Appendix 2 to the Report was a "suggestion for scrutiny" form, submitted by Councillor Lance Stanbury, suggesting the Committee considers "Investigating the integration of local public transport serving Forest Heath residents".

Councillor Lance Stanbury presented his suggestion to the Committee and advised members that residents in his ward of Red Lodge did not use public transport as it was not convenient. Public transport across the District was

not joined up and he would like to get the various providers together to discuss how transport could be more integrated. He suggested interviewing the various transport group, which would enable the Council to form a view on their efficiency; their integration; their promotion and to what extent they contribute to the economic development of the district. Councillor Stanbury felt this could be rolling item on the Committee's work programme.

The Committee was asked to consider whether the issue presented would be appropriate for scrutiny, including potential outcomes and if added to the work programme to decide on appropriate timescales for future reporting.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked Councillor Lance Stanbury for his suggestion. He suggested that the Committee might want to look at the issue of public transport in Red Lodge only. As transport was the responsibility of Suffolk County Council (SCC) the Chairman suggested before contacting the various bus and rail operators that the Committee considered inviting SCC to a future meeting of the Committee to find out what work SCC had carried out and to answer questions from the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth welcomed the suggestion, and suggested that the Committee invited the SCC Portfolio Holder responsible for transport (Councillor James Finch) and appropriate officers to listen to the Committee's concerns regarding the transport situation at Red Lodge.

A lengthy debate on the issue was held and taking into account information provided by Councillor Lance Stanbury and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, the Committee agreed to include this item in its forward work programme. Members agreed that the first step would be to invite Suffolk County Council to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Lance Stanbury thanked the Committee for their support and welcomed a case study for Red Lodge as a starting point.

The Committee **noted** the update on the current status of its forward work programme, and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED

That:

- 1) The Lack of Integrated Transport affecting Red Lodge be included in the Committee's forward work programme.
- 2) The Suffolk County Council Portfolio Holder responsible for Transport and appropriate officers be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss transport issues affecting Red Lodge.

The Meeting concluded at 7.45 pm

Signed by:

Chairman