

# Cabinet



**Forest Heath**  
District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on  
**Tuesday 12 December 2017** at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District**  
**Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

**Chairman** James Waters  
**Vice Chairman** Robin Millar

David Bowman  
Andy Drummond

Stephen Edwards  
Lance Stanbury

**By Invitation:**

Simon Cole

(Chairman of the Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee)

**In Attendance:**

Colin Noble (*joined meeting at 6.40 pm*)

**380. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**381. Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 October 2017 and 24 October 2017 were unanimously confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**382. Open Forum**

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak under this item.

**383. Public Participation**

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

**384. West Suffolk Operational Hub (Report No: CAB/FH/17/057)**

Councillor David Bowman, Portfolio Holder for Operations, presented this report which sought approval for additional funding and associated matters in order to progress the West Suffolk Operational Hub project to the construction phase.

Recent progress with the project was noted, including that, subject to the Secretary of State (upon consultation) confirming that he did not intend to call-in the detailed planning application for his own determination, the

Development Control Committee granted planning consent for the West Suffolk Operational Hub to be built at Hollow Road Farm, Fornham St Martin. 38 separate planning conditions had been applied to this consent.

The reasons for the request for additional capital funding required were provided in the report, including that although costs had increased, these were shared with St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Suffolk County Council and, taking the cost of borrowing into account, the known benefits of the scheme would still break even with the status quo financial position, whilst providing modern facilities and capacity for significant future growth. The scheme would also enable the relocation of the current St Edmundsbury depot, allowing the delivery of further development at Western Way.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** (20 December 2017)

That:-

1. Report No: CAB/FH/17/057 and its Appendices, be noted.
2. The allocation of an additional £589,000 to the Council's Capital Programme, funded in line with paragraphs 5.14 - 5.17 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/057, be approved.
3. Subject to receiving a planning consent:-
  - a) the Council's option to procure land at Hollow Road Farm be exercised;
  - b) With Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council, a contract be entered into for the construction of the West Suffolk Operational Hub at Hollow Road Farm; and
4. It be agreed for the Council's Section 151 Officer to make the necessary changes to the Council's 2017/18 prudential indicators as a result of recommendation 2. above.

**385. Report of the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group: 31 October 2017 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/058)**

Councillor Lance Stanbury, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, presented this report which informed the Cabinet of the following substantive items discussed by the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group on 31 October 2017:

- (1) DCLG Consultation: 'Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places'.
- (2) Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan.
- (3) Work Programme 2017/2018.
- (4) Future Housing Delivery Options.

Councillor Stanbury also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of Report No: CAB/FH/17/058, being the report of the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group, be noted.

**386. Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2017 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/059)**

Councillor Simon Cole, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented this report which informed the Cabinet of the following substantive items discussed by the Committee on 9 November 2017:

- (1) Draft West Suffolk Strategic Framework.
- (2) West Suffolk Growth Outcomes and Investment.
- (3) Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Operations.
- (4) Decisions Plan: November 2017 to May 2018.
- (5) Work Programme Update and Suggestion for Scrutiny.

Councillor Cole drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that a separate report in connection with Item (1) above, was also included on this Cabinet agenda and that the Committee's recommendations relating to Item 2. above, had been considered and approved by the Cabinet on 14 November 2017, during a joint meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of Report No: CAB/FH/17/059, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

**387. Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 29 November 2017 - Mid Year Treasury Management Report 2017/2018 and Investment Activity (1 April to 30 September 2017) (Report No: CAB/FH/17/060)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for the Mid-Year Treasury Management Performance Report 2017/2018 and received an update on investment activity covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2017.

Councillor Edwards drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including an explanation of the Mid-Year Treasury Management Performance Report 2017/2018 and a summary of the investment activities for the first six months of 2017/2018.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** (20 December 2017)

That the Mid-Year Treasury Management Report 2017-2018, attached at Appendix 1 to Report No: PAS/FH/17/039, be approved.

**388. Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 29 November 2017 - Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2018/2019 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/061)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for proposals for securing a balanced budget for 2018/2019 and a sustainable budget in the medium term.

Councillor Edwards drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet and also wished to express his thanks to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for their input with the budget process.

The budget gap for years 2018/2019 to 2020/2021 were projected in Table 1 of the report, along with the current budget assumptions and for the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, detailed in Appendix A. In order to address this and progress securing a balanced budget for 2018/2019 and a sustainable budget in the medium term, a number of budget proposals had been scrutinised by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, as contained in Table 2 of paragraph 5.1 of Report No: PAS/FH/17/038, which were now presented to Cabinet for inclusion in the budget setting process.

In addition, the impact of the potential implementation of 100% business rates retention was acknowledged, which presently created significant uncertainty to the Council's medium term financial planning assumptions. The situation would be monitored and reviewed as information became available, including ensuring the Council continued to lobby and respond to consultations of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in order to make its position clear.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That:-

1. The budget assumptions (outlined in Appendix A to Report No: PAS/FH/17/038) and timetable (at paragraph 6.1), along with the progress made to date on delivering a balanced budget for 2018-2019 and sustainable budget in the medium term, be noted.
2. The proposals, as detailed in Section 5 and Table 2 at paragraph 5.1 of Report No: PAS/FH/17/038, be included in securing a balanced budget for 2018-2019.

**389. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/2019 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/062)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, following its annual review.

Since 1 April 2013, Forest Heath District Council had operated a Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) to replace the previous, centrally administered Council Tax Benefit. The scheme was aimed at:

- Making provision to protect vulnerable people.
- Supporting work incentives for claimants created by the Government's wider welfare reform.

Councillor Edwards, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that each year the Council was required to review its LCTRS. As a result of the review, as detailed in the report and following the consideration and rejection of other options for the 2018/2019 LCTRS, amendments had been proposed, as detailed in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3 inclusive, as outlined.

As amendments to the LCTRS for 2018/2019 had been proposed, the Council was required to consult/engage with preceptors and stakeholders in order to inform final scheme design by 28 February of the preceding year. Details of the engagement exercise undertaken was outlined in Section 7 of the report. Overall, the results of the consultation had shown a lack of concern for the changes being proposed.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** (20 December 2017)

That taking into consideration the consultation and engagement feedback detailed in Section 7 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/062, the following changes to the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme be agreed to take effect from 1 April 2018:

- (a) Update the "applicable amounts" to 2015 prices as detailed in paragraph 5.1 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/062;
- (b) Incorporating changes that have occurred as a result of the Government's welfare reforms, as detailed in paragraph 5.2 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/062, regarding family premiums; dependence allowances where there are two or more children; and eligibility of foreign nationals; and
- (c) Modernise the scheme, as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/062, so that claimants in receipt of Universal Credit don't need to make a separate application to qualify for Council Tax Discount.

390. **Council Tax Base for Council Tax Setting Purposes 2018/2019 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/063)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for the Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2018/2019.

Councillor Edwards drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the tax base formed the basis for the formal calculation of Council Tax for 2018/2019.

The Council Tax Base of the Council was the total taxable value at a point in time of all the domestic properties in its area, projected changes in the property base and the estimated collection rate.

The total taxable value referred to above, was arrived at by each dwelling being placed in an appropriate valuation band determined by the Valuation Office, with a fraction as set by statute being applied in order to convert it to a Band 'D' equivalent figure. These Band 'D' equivalent number were then aggregated at a district wide level and were also sub-totalled for parishes. This had to be done by the Council responsible for sending the bills out and collecting the council tax ('the billing authority'). In two tier areas, district councils fulfilled this function.

Each authority divided its total Council Tax required to meet its budget requirements by the Tax Base of its area to arrive at a Band 'D' Council Tax. The Tax Base for Council Tax collection purposes had been calculated as 17,964.44, which was an increase of 389.11 on the previous year. The calculations applied to reach this figure, were also detailed within the report.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** (20 December 2017)

That:-

1. The tax base for 2018/2019, for the whole of Forest Heath is 17,964.44 equivalent Band D dwellings, as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/063.
2. The tax base for 2018/2019 for the different parts of its area, as defined by parish or special expense area boundaries, are as shown in Appendix 2 to Report No: CAB/FH/17/063.

**391. Draft West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2018-2020 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/064)**

Councillor James Waters, Leader of the Council, presented this report which sought approval for the draft West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2018-2020 to be adopted by Council.

The most recent Strategic Plan for West Suffolk covered the period 2014-2016. It had previously been agreed to extend the vision and priorities in that Plan until the outcome of the devolution process in Norfolk and Suffolk was clear. It was now considered timely for a new strategic framework document to be developed and adopted, especially given that both Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) had now agreed to proceed with proposals for creating a single council for West Suffolk.

The report also outlined the work which had been undertaken by FHDC and SEBC Portfolio Holders since Summer 2017 on the revised Strategic Framework for 2018-202 and had been presented to both FHDC and SEBC Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their suggestions and comments, which had contributed towards its development, as detailed within the report.

In summary, the draft document, which was attached as Appendix A to the report, contained the proposed:

- (a) **West Suffolk Councils' Vision:** *Supporting and investing in our west Suffolk Communities and businesses to encourage and manage ambitious growth in prosperity and quality of life for all.*
- (b) **Strategic priorities:**
  - *Growth in West Suffolk's economy for the benefit of all our residents and UK plc*
  - *Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active.*
  - *Increased and improved provision of appropriate housing in West Suffolk in both our towns and rural areas.*
- (c) **Projects and actions to support the priorities:** *projects and actions already underway as well as those that had been agreed but not yet started.*
- (d) **Ways of working:** *how the West Suffolk Councils would work together in taking forward and delivering the ambitious set of projects and activities, in order to support improvements in the quality of life in West Suffolk.*

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** (20 December 2017)

That the draft West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2018-2020, as contained in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/17/064, be adopted.

**392. Allocation of Community Chest Funding 2018/2019 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/065)**

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillor Robin Millar, Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities, declared a local non-pecuniary interest as he was a member of the Abundant Life Church (Project 7: EPIC Dads) and was also a friend of one of the applicants (Project 1: Our Special Friends). Councillor Millar did not participate in the discussion or voting on these two particular applications and left the meeting during the discussion and voting by the Cabinet.

Councillor Millar also remained in the meeting for the discussion on the remaining applications, but abstained from voting.

This report explained that applications for Community Chest Funding for 2018/2019 had closed on 29 September 2017. A total of 19 applications had been received from a wide variety of organisations.

The total budget for the Community Chest in 2018/2019 was £110,181.31 which included £29,300.64 which had been carried over as unallocated funds from 2017/2018. Applicants could apply for a maximum of two years, but this was subject to budget setting each year and satisfactory monitoring and review of each project.

In determining this year's allocation, each application was assessed against the Scheme's criteria. Following consideration by the Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities, it was considered that a number of the applications received were either not appropriate for Community Chest funding or that although the value of their work was recognised, other applications better met the Families and Communities priorities for this over-subscribed fund. Those not recommended were listed in paragraph 1.4 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/065.

Whilst discussing this report, Members requested that in the interests of probity, governance and visibility, further detail should be provided within future Cabinet reports. They would wish to see listed the Company/Organisation/Charity Number (where applicable) and also under the summary contained within the 'Project Details', further detail explaining how the funding was to be utilised. Councillor Millar acknowledged this request and stated that this would be considered in future reporting.

The Leader then stated that he wished to adjourn the meeting to allow the Cabinet Members to have a further private discussion in relation to the allocation of funding for 'Our Special Friends' and also for 'EPIC Dads'. Therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 6.30 pm and was reconvened at 6.40 pm.

At the reconvening of the meeting, the Leader explained that the Cabinet Members had supported the funding allocation in relation to 'Our Special Friends'. However, in relation to the funding for 'EPIC Dads', the Cabinet Members had proposed that this should be deferred to allow for further information to be circulated relating to the governance of the organisation and on how the funding was to be utilised. It was also proposed, that subject to the Cabinet Members being satisfied with the further information provided, the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, be given delegated authority to allocate the proposed funding, unless it was considered that it needed to be referred back to the Cabinet collectively for a decision.

Councillor Stephen Edwards also referred to those organisations who had also requested funding for 2019/2020 and asked for these to be informed that the receipt of this funding would be subject to the budget setting process for that year.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with 5 voting for the motion and with 1 abstention (Councillor Robin Millar), it was



**RESOLVED:**

That:-

- (1) The allocation of funding from the Community Chest 2018/2019 be noted as follows:

Project 2: Suffolk Mind  
2018/2019 £5,000

Project 3: Anglia Care Trust  
2018/2019 £3,434  
2019/2020 £3,434

Project 4: Suffolk West Citizens Advice (MoneySmart)  
2018/2019 £27,167

Project 5: The Restoration Trust  
2018/2019 £3,542  
2019/2020 £3,611

Project 6: St Nicholas Hospice Care (Brandon)  
2018/2019 £2,233

Project 8: HomeStart Mid and West Suffolk  
2018/2019 £9,600

Project 9: Sharing Parenting (Parenting Map)  
2018/2019 £14,000

Project 10: Brandon Community Association  
2018/2019 £7,000

It was also proposed, duly seconded and with 4 voting for the motion and with 1 abstention, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That:-

- (2) The following allocation of funding be approved:

Project 1: Our Special Friends  
2018/2019 £3,000

- (3) In relation to the allocation of funding for:

Project 7: EPIC Dads  
2018/2019 £30,000

this be deferred to allow for further information to be circulated to the Cabinet relating to the governance of the organisation and on how the funding would be utilised.

Subject to the Cabinet being satisfied with the further information provided, the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance be given delegated authority to allocate the proposed funding, unless it is considered that it needs to be referred back to the Cabinet collectively for a decision.

- (4) Those organisations who have requested funding for 2019/2020 be informed that the confirmation of this funding would be subject to the budget setting process for 2019/2020.

**393. Decisions Plan: December 2017 to May 2018 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/066)**

The Cabinet considered Report No: CAB/FH/17/066, which was the Cabinet's Decisions Plan covering the period December 2017 to May 2018.

Members took the opportunity to review the intended forthcoming decisions of the Cabinet. However, no further information or amendments were requested on this occasion.

**394. Revenues Collection and Performance Write-Offs (Report No: CAB/FH/17/067)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for the write-off of uncollectable amounts in respect of Council Tax and the overpayment of Housing Benefit.

Councillor Edwards also referred to paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report which set out the collection rates for the National Non Domestic Rates (NDR) and Council Tax as at 31 October 2017.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the write-off of the amounts detailed in the exempt Appendices to Report No: CAB/FH/17/067 be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax totalling £7,821.12
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Overpayment of Housing Benefit totalling £15,164.45

**395. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

See Minute Number 396. below.

**396. Exempt Appendices 1 and 2: Revenues Collection and Performance Write-Offs (paras 1 and 2) (Report No: CAB/FH/17/067)**

The Cabinet considered Exempt Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No: CAB/FH/17/067. However, no reference was made to specific detail and, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The Meeting concluded at 6.48 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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