

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Notes of informal discussions of the **SEBC/FHDC Cabinets** held on
Tuesday 27 February 2018 at 6.00 pm in the **Conference Chamber West,**
West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU

Present:

Councillors

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

Sara Mildmay-White (*in the Chair for the informal discussions*)

Carol Bull
Ian Houlder
Alaric Pugh

Joanna Rayner
Peter Stevens

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

James Waters

David Bowman
Stephen Edwards

Robin Millar

In attendance:

(SEBC)

Mike Chester
Mary Evans
Paula Fox
Susan Glossop
David Roach
Clive Pollington

(FHDC)

Ruth Bowman
Brian Harvey

(Immediately prior to the informal discussions at 6pm, the Cabinets received a briefing from representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on the current position regarding the creation of a single council for West Suffolk. Non-Cabinet Members were also invited to attend this briefing, which provided the opportunity for Members to ask questions of the representatives of MHCLG on the legislative process and current progress.)

Prior to the formal meeting, informal discussions took place on the following substantive items:

- (1) Referrals Report of Recommendations from Council to Cabinet: Single Council for West Suffolk: Legislative Process;
- (2) Fair Funding Review – Response to Government Consultation; and
- (3) Gender Pay Gap Report.

All Members of Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet had been invited to attend St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Offices at West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds to enable joint informal discussions on the reports to take place between the two authorities, prior to seeking formal approval at their respective separate Cabinet meetings, immediately following the informal discussions.

The Chairman/Deputy Leader of St Edmundsbury Borough Council, welcomed all those present to West Suffolk House. The Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer firstly advised on the format of the proceedings for the informal discussions and subsequent separate meetings of each authority.

Under their Constitutions, both Cabinets listed as standing agenda items: an 'Open Forum', which provided the opportunity for non-Cabinet Members to discuss issues with Cabinet and also 'Public Participation', which provided the opportunity for members of the public to speak. Therefore, as any matters arising from the discussions held during these agenda items may have some bearing on the decisions taking during the separate formal meetings, non-Cabinet Members and members of the public were invited to put their questions/statements prior to the start of the joint informal discussions.

1. **Open Forum**

A brief discussion was held on the format for delivering the single council briefing that had been provided immediately prior to this meeting by representatives of the MHCLG.

2. **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

3. **Referrals Report of Recommendations to Cabinet: Single Council for West Suffolk: Legislative Process (Report Nos: CAB/SE/18/014 and CAB/FH/18/016, and Addendums to CAB/SE/18/014 and CAB/FH/18/016)**

The Cabinets considered the above report, which sought approval for the draft Orders to create West Suffolk Council. The report contained a referral from both FHDC and SEBC Councils, following their endorsement of the policy requirements and next steps set out in the respective Council Report Nos: COU/SE/18/003 and COU/FH/18/005 (and Addendums), to create a single council for West Suffolk.

Following the publication of the agenda and papers for this meeting, the legislative process for moving towards creating a single council for West Suffolk had progressed more quickly than anticipated, which meant that rather than seeking approval for appropriate delegations to be put in place to authorise the relevant Orders on the condition they remained in line with the policy requirements within Report Nos: COU/SE/18/003 and COU/FH/18/005 (and Addendums), the draft Orders were now ready for approval by both Cabinets so they could then be submitted to the Houses of Parliament for consideration.

A revised recommendation was therefore considered by both Cabinets, which had been previously circulated as an Addendum to Report Nos: CAB/SE/18/014 and CAB/FH/18/016 respectively setting out the updated position, which was:

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

Approves the draft orders to create West Suffolk Council, as attached as Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No: CAB/SE/18/014 (Addendum) [CAB/FH/18/016 (Addendum)], and authorises the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leaders of Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Future Governance Steering Group, to agree (where required to do so) any subsequent minor amendments arising during the legislative process.

To accord with the above, the draft Orders were attached to the addendum as Appendices 1 and 2 for approval.

Councillor Carol Bull, SEBC's Portfolio Holder for Future Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinets, including expressing her thanks to the Service Manager (Democratic Services) and the single council project team, and to the representatives of MHCLG for the extensive work that had been undertaken to support Members' decisions in reaching this point in the process. Councillor Bull reiterated that approval of the draft Orders was an executive decision, hence the referral being recommended to the Cabinets for a decision by both Councils following their endorsement of the policy requirements and next steps.

The Cabinets fully supported approval of the draft Orders, as proposed in the revised recommendation.

4. **Fair Funding Review – Response to Government Consultation (Report Nos: CAB/SE/18/015 and CAB/FH/18/017)**

The Cabinets considered the above report, which sought agreement to a draft response to the Government's Fair Funding Review consultation, which was attached as Appendix A.

Councillor Ian Houlder, SEBC's Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinets, including the background to the review and the set of principles by which the Government was being guided by as part of the work, as summarised in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of the report.

Councillor Houlder added that consideration of this paper would provide the Cabinets with an opportunity to ensure the specific challenges facing West Suffolk were fed into this process and the potential impact on the funding allocation that would be received following the review. It was noted however, that given the timing of the review, any changes that were implemented would only relate to the new West Suffolk Council and not to FHDC and SEBC.

A detailed discussion was held on the proposed response, particularly regarding issues in respect of the baseline funding allocation provided did not take into account the impact of the council tax-exempt American Service personnel living within the area, which had been emphasised within the response at Appendix A.

Recognition was also given to incorporating the following into the response:

- (a) taking into account the sustainability of rural communities and their rural economies; and
- (b) looking at the areas where the Councils were required by the Government to provide services compared to the grant which was actually provided, ie Internal Drainage Boards (IDB).

The Cabinets also recognised the importance of lobbying MPs regarding issues associated with local government finance, particularly around the need to factor in the impact of the US Visiting Forces and rurality.

The Fair Funding Review consultation response, would be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 12 March 2018, subject to the incorporation of, or greater emphasis placed upon, as appropriate, the additional comments summarised in (a) and (b) above, the final wording of which would be determined by the Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) under delegated authority.

5. **Gender Pay Gap Report (Report Nos: CAB/SE/18/016 and CAB/FH/18/018)**

The Cabinets received and noted the above report, which presented gender pay gap data for the West Suffolk organisation.

Under the Equalities Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils were each required to publish gender pay gap information by 31 March 2018.

Councillor Stephen Edwards, FHDC's Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinets, including that the data, which was attached as Appendix A to the report, was only meaningful when analysing the shared workforce of the entire West Suffolk organisation (FHDC and SEBC), however each Council, as employers, was required to report and publish its data separately. The Gender Pay Gap data for West Suffolk showed no disadvantage for women in the workforce.

A discussion was held on how the data was gathered and the median and mean average figures calculated, as detailed in Appendix A.

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 6.41 pm, the Chairman then formally opened the meeting of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet at 6.41 pm in the Conference Chamber West, which upon conclusion at 6.45 pm, was immediately followed by Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet, also in the Conference Chamber West.

Cabinet



Forest Heath

District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 27 February 2018 at 6.45 pm at the **Council Chamber, District
Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY**

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman James Waters
Vice Chairman Robin Millar

David Bowman

Stephen Edwards

In attendance:

Ruth Bowman

(Vice Chairman of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee)

Brian Harvey

418. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Drummond and Lance Stanbury.

419. **Open Forum**

This item had already been considered during the informal discussions in relation to Items 4. to 6. on the agenda (Item 1. above within the notes of the informal discussions refers).

420. **Public Participation**

This item had already been considered during the informal discussions in relation to Items 4. to 6. on the agenda (Item 2. above within the notes of the informal discussions refers).

421. **Referrals Report of Recommendations from Council to Cabinet: Single Council for West Suffolk: Legislative Process (Report No: CAB/FH/18/016) and (Addendum)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/FH/18/016 and its addendum, it was proposed, seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The draft Orders to create West Suffolk Council, as attached as Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No: CAB/FH/18/016 (Addendum), be approved.
2. The Chief Executive be authorised, in conjunction with the Leaders of Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Future Governance Steering Group, to agree (where required to do so) any subsequent minor amendments arising during the legislative process.

422. **Fair Funding Review - Response to Government Consultation (Report No: CAB/FH/18/017)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/FH/18/017, it was proposed, seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The Fair Funding Review consultation response attached as Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/18/017, be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 12 March 2018, subject to the incorporation of, or greater emphasis placed upon, as appropriate the following additional comments (*briefly – final wording to be determined by the Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) under delegated authority*):
 - (a) The sustainability of rural communities and their rural economies to be taken into account.
 - (b) To look at the areas where the Councils are required by the Government to provide services compared to the grant which is actually provided, ie, in addition to the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) reference.
2. Proposals for wider influencing associated with local government finance, including the Leaders lobbying MPs, be agreed.

423. **Gender Pay Gap Report (Report No: CAB/FH/18/018)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CB/FH/18/018), it was agreed that the contents of the Gender Pay Gap information, as set out in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/18/018 for Forest Heath District Council, be **noted**, prior to publication by 31 March 2018.

The Meeting concluded at 6.46 pm

Signed by:

Chairman

