

Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on
Tuesday 26 September 2017 at 7.00 pm at the **Conference Chamber,**
West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Deputy Mayor Margaret Marks (in the Chair)

Trevor Beckwith	Diane Hind	Barry Robbins
Simon Brown	Beccy Hopfensperger	Richard Rout
Tony Brown	Ian Houlder	Andrew Smith
Carol Bull	Betty Mclatchy	Andrew Speed
John Burns	Ivor Mclatchy	Clive Springett
Patrick Chung	Jane Midwood	Sarah Stamp
Jason Crooks	Sara Mildmay-White	Peter Stevens
Robert Everitt	David Nettleton	Peter Thompson
Paula Fox	Alaric Pugh	Jim Thorndyke
Susan Glossop	Joanna Rayner	Julia Wakelam
John Griffiths	Karen Richardson	Anthony Williams
Wayne Hailstone	David Roach	

278. **Prayers**

The Mayor's Chaplain, the Venerable Dr David Jenkins, Archdeacon of Sudbury, opened the meeting with prayers.

279. **Remembrance**

A minute's silence was held in remembrance of Sophie Claydon, West Suffolk's HR Business Support colleague, who had died in August 2017.

280. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

281. **Mayor's announcements**

The Deputy Mayor referred to the number of civic engagements and charity activities which the Mayor and Mayoress had attended since the last ordinary meeting of Council on 13 June 2017.

She explained that the Mayor would report on any engagements and activities that he had attended and would specifically like to draw attention to at the next ordinary meeting of Council on 19 December 2017.

282. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sarah Broughton, Terry Clements (Mayor), Bob Cockle, Paul Hopfensperger, Clive Pollington, Frank Warby and Patsy Warby.

283. Declarations of Interests

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

284. Leader's Statement

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, presented his statement as contained in Report No: COU/SE/17/012.

Councillor Griffiths particularly drew attention to the opening of the Eastern Relief Road on Monday 25 September 2017, which in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership would help support the delivery of homes, jobs, leisure and education facilities. He paid tribute to Councillors and staff for the work undertaken to make this happen.

In addition, Councillor Griffiths encouraged Members to attend the West Suffolk Business Festival, which, now in its seventh year, commenced from week beginning 2 October 2017. The Festival was the largest in the eastern region and encompassed a vast range of businesses and organisations from across West Suffolk.

No questions were asked; however, Councillor Julia Wakelam wished to draw Members' attention to the first Bury St Edmunds Literature Festival which was being held between 25 and 29 October 2017. Some Members had supported its organisation with funding from their locality budgets and all were welcome to attend.

285. Public Participation

There were no members of the public in attendance.

286. Referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet

Council received and noted a narrative item, which explained that the referrals emanating from the Cabinet meetings on 27 June and 19 September 2017 would be considered at its extraordinary meeting on 17 October 2017.

287. A Single Council for West Suffolk: Business Case

Council considered Report No: COU/SE/17/013, which sought approval for the business case for establishing a new single district-level council for West Suffolk.

On 13 June 2017, Council considered draft proposals to form a single Council for West Suffolk. Following agreement of the draft proposals, a period of public engagement had been undertaken which had begun with the announcement of the proposals in May 2017 and ended on 31 August 2017. This had concluded strong support from residents and stakeholders towards the proposals.

The final business case was now presented to Council in Report No: COU/SE/17/013, which had been amended in response to public engagement and the work of the Future Governance Steering Group. This Group had been tasked with considering detailed, technical aspects related to the single council proposal, as set out in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 of the report.

The report summarised progress made since approval of the draft business case in June 2017; the work undertaken by the Future Governance Steering Group over the summer 2017; the development of the business case; the outcomes of the public engagement exercise and the proposed next steps. In addition, the following Appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1: Summary of the proposal

Appendix 2: Final Business Case for a single council for West Suffolk, incorporating separate Appendices A to F, as follows:

Appendix A: Future form of local government in West Suffolk – options appraisal

Appendix B: Council Tax harmonisation options

Appendix C: Risk management appraisal

Appendix D: Stakeholder engagement

Appendix E: Responses to online feedback

Appendix F: Equalities Impact Assessment – screening assessment

Appendix 3: Summary of outcome of opinion poll

Appendix 4: Summary data tables from opinion poll (ComRes (independent polling company))

Appendix 5: ComRes opinion polling – frequently asked questions

Appendix 6: Letters received

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that both St Edmundsbury Borough (SEBC) and Forest Heath District Councils (FHDC) had been at the forefront of transforming local government to ensure the delivery of high quality services, providing support and working with communities; and also the management of growth and investment to help encourage jobs, skills and prosperity.

Councillor Griffiths added that whilst the Councils had been sharing services, staff and policies for several years which had produced savings of £4 million every year; in order to continue to meet the challenges ahead, work more closely with communities and deliver services, then becoming a single council was the next step.

Councillor Griffiths highlighted how the business case clearly demonstrated how a new single council for West Suffolk would put both SEBC and FHDC in a more financially robust position to meet future challenges and deliver services, whilst creating a stronger position to attract investment.

Members noted the support shown from stakeholders and the outcome of the public engagement exercise in the form of the independent, robust ComRes Poll. This had indicated 70% of adults across West Suffolk supported a single council, as opposed to 22% that found the proposal unfavourable. In addition, a proposed reduction in the number of councillors had not caused concern for the majority.

Councillor Griffiths moved the recommendation, as set out in the report, which was duly seconded by Councillor Carol Bull, Vice-Chairman of the Future Governance Steering Group.

A detailed discussion was held and the majority of Members supported approval of the business case acknowledging and supporting the views expressed by Councillor Griffiths above, adding that the 'West Suffolk' brand had been embedded for several years and it was the next logical step to create a new single council for West Suffolk in order to establish a fit-for-purpose, resilient and efficient organisation that was ready to address the challenges ahead.

A discussion was also held on the benefits of creating a single council in the context of devolution, and how a new council would establish stronger cross border links with authorities and stakeholders in Cambridgeshire and Essex.

Some reservations were raised however, in respect of the following issues; which had been addressed in the business case and in Councillor Griffiths' right of reply:

- (a) the perceived effect on local democracy and fear of loss of a local voice and accountability;
- (b) the proposed period of seven years for the harmonisation of council tax; and
- (c) the perceived flaws in the engagement process.

Councillor John Burns, leader of the UKIP Group, requested a recorded vote on the substantive motion, which was duly supported by more than five other Members.

On the conclusion of the debate, the substantive motion was then put to the vote. Of 36 Members present, the votes recorded were 29 votes for the motion, 7 against and no abstentions. The names of those Members voting for and against being recorded as follows:

For the motion:

Councillors Simon Brown, Bull, Chung, Everitt, Fox, Glossop, Griffiths, Hailstone, Beccy Hopfensperger, Houlder, Marks, Betty McLatchy, Ivor McLatchy, Midwood, Mildmay-White, Nettleton, Pugh, Rayner, Richardson, Roach, Rout, Smith, Speed, Springett, Stamp, Stevens, Thompson, Thorndyke and Wakelam.

Against the motion:

Councillor Beckwith, Tony Brown, Burns, Crooks, Hind, Robbins and Williams.

(Note: There were presently two vacancies on the Borough Council.)

RESOLVED:

That the final business case for a single Council for West Suffolk, for submission to the Secretary of State for Local Government, be approved.

288. **Review of Political Balance and Appointment to Politically Balanced Bodies**

Council considered Report No: COU/SE/17/014, which presented a review of the political balance and proposed appointments to the politically balanced bodies.

The review had been triggered following the resignation of Councillor Tony Brown as leader, and as a member of, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) Group. Councillor Brown was now therefore an Independent non-grouped member of the Borough Council.

In carrying out the review, the Council was obliged to adopt the principles set out in paragraph 1.1.4 of the report and give effect to them 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

With these principles in mind, Council however, noted that by-elections for the two vacancies on the Borough Council would be held on Thursday 28 September 2017, which would necessitate another review being undertaken should a change in Group composition occur.

Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that the potential subsequent review would be presented to Council at its extraordinary meeting arranged for 17 October 2017. With this in mind, no changes to the existing seat allocations on committees set out in Appendix 1, nor to the West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee and Democratic Renewal Working Party, were presently proposed.

Council agreed this was a sensible approach.

On the motion of Councillor John Griffiths, seconded by Councillor David Nettleton, and duly carried it was

RESOLVED:

That:

- (1) the formula for the allocation of seats to the political groups on those Committees which are required by law to be politically balanced, as set out in paragraph 1.1.1, be approved;
- (2) the allocation of seats on the Committees which are required by law to be politically balanced, as indicated in Appendix 1 to Report No: COU/SE/17/014, be approved;

- (3) the allocation of seats on the West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee, as indicated in Section 1.2.2, be approved. This Committee is not required to be politically balanced;
- (4) whilst the Democratic Renewal Working Party is not required to be politically balanced, the allocation of seats is by custom and practice, undertaken on this basis. Therefore, the allocation of seats to this Working Party, as indicated in Section 1.2.3, be approved; and
- (5) the Service Manager (Democratic Services) be requested to exercise their existing delegated authority to re-appoint or appoint as applicable, Members and substitute Members to those bodies set out in recommendations (2), (3) and (4) above on the basis of nominations from the relevant Group Leaders.

289. Questions to Committee Chairmen

Council considered a narrative item, which sought questions of Committee Chairmen on business transacted since the last ordinary meeting of Council on 13 June 2017, as outlined below:

Committee	Chairman	Dates of meetings
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Diane Hind	19 July 2017 13 September 2017
Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Sarah Broughton	27 July 2017 20 September 2017
Development Control Committee	Cllr Jim Thorndyke	6 July 2017 19 July 2017 (special meeting) 3 August 2017 7 September 2017 21 September 2017 (special meeting)
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Cllr Frank Warby	20 June 2017

No questions were asked of the above Chairmen or their representatives in their absence.

290. Urgent Questions on Notice

No urgent questions on notice had been received.

291. **Reporting of a Cabinet Decision Exempt from Call-in: Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme Following Revaluation - Development of a Local Scheme 2017/2018**

Council received and noted a narrative item, which presented the reporting of an executive decision under the exempt from call-in provisions of the Constitution.

The matter related to a decision taken by Cabinet on 27 June 2017 in respect of '*Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme Following Revaluation – Development of a Local Scheme 2017/2018*' (Report No: CAB/SE/17/037 refers).

Paragraph 14.4 of Part 4, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedural Rules, of the Constitution required decisions taken by Cabinet as a matter of urgency and not subject to call-in, to be reported to the next available meeting of Council, together with the reasons for the urgency.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously agreed that the decision taken was reasonable and warranted being treated as a matter of urgency for the reasons explained in the narrative item, and therefore was not subject to call-in.

292. **Report on Special Urgency**

The Leader reported that no executive decisions had been taken under the Special Urgency provisions of the Constitution.

(The reporting of matters under these Rules differed from the reporting of the matter detailed under minute 291 above.)

The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm

Signed by:

Mayor
