

West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group** held on **Tuesday 6 June 2017** at **10.00 am** in the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Forest Heath District Council

Chris Barker
David Bowman
Rona Burt
David Palmer
Reg Silvester
Lance Stanbury

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

John Burns
Alaric Pugh
David Roach
Jim Thorndyke

In attendance:

Peter Stevens

58. **Election of Chairman 2017/2018**

Within the Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) Constitutions, the Terms of Reference for the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group stated that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would rotate annually between the two Councils.

Therefore, as the Chairman for 2016/2017 had been drawn from FHDC, the Chairman for 2017/2018 should be drawn from SEBC.

With there being no other nominations, it was proposed and seconded

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Alaric Pugh (SEBC) be elected as Chairman for 2017/2018.

59. **Election of Vice Chairman 2017/2018**

In line with Minute No. 58. above, the Vice Chairman should be drawn from SEBC.

With there being no other nominations, it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Lance Stanbury (FHDC) be elected as Vice Chairman for 2017/2018.

60. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Peter Thompson (SEBC) was unable to attend the meeting.

61. Substitutes

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

62. One Minute Silence

The Chairman explained that following the recent terrorist incidents which had occurred in London over the weekend, the Council would be joining other local and national Government organisations across the UK and holding a minute's silence at 11.00 am. This silence would be observed during this meeting.

63. Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 28 March 2017 were received and confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64. Road and Rail Infrastructure/Transport Infrastructure for West Suffolk (Presentation)

(The Chairman agreed for Minute Nos. 64. and 65. to be considered together)

Peter Grimm, Strategic Traffic Manager, Suffolk County Council was also in attendance for this item, where the Steering Group were provided with an update on the following road and rail infrastructure:

- The projects which had been included in Suffolk County Council's Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) funding bid for the period 2020 to 2025, this being:

- A14/A142 Junction 37 (Exning)

The lack of capacity at this Junction led to extensive queueing, particularly on the A142 from Cambridgeshire. These conditions were likely to get worse following the opening of the Ely Bypass in 2017. Improvements were required to address the existing problems and to support growth in East Cambridgeshire and in Newmarket.

The recommended option proposed a reduction in accident rates due to new compliant grade separated junctions. Better flow of traffic and additional capacity as the new design complied with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) standards. Total cost £17.6m.

- A14 Junctions 43 (St Saviours) and 44 (Moreton Hall), Bury St Edmunds

Poor layout, short slip roads and lack of capacity at these Junctions led to significant congestion and queueing, which extended back onto the A14 main carriageway. Improvements were required to support growth in Bury St Edmunds.

The recommended maximum option for Junction 43 proposed a reduction in accident rates due to improving the size of the junctions and introducing three lanes roundabout with segregated left turns. Better flow of traffic and additional capacity as the new design complied with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Standards. Total cost: £4.3m. Local Network Improvements: £0.5m.

The recommended maximum option for Junction 44 proposed a reduction in accident rates due to wider lane with segregated left turns. Better flow of traffic and additional capacity as the new design complied with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Standards. The increased use of Junction 44 would facilitate the economic growth in the area. Total cost: £7.3m.

- A11 Mildenhall (Fiveways Grade Separation; Tuddenham Road at Grade Crossing; Herringswell Road at Grade Crossing)

There was evidence of increasing congestion at the A11 Fiveways junction and the risk of accidents/incidents at the existing grade crossings with openings in the central reserve. The A11 had been identified as a growth corridor and improvements were required to support growth in Forest Heath and, in particular, growth linked to the potential development of Mildenhall Airbase.

The recommended maximum option proposed a bypass incorporating an overbridge at Park Farm Drive and proposed compact grade separated junctions. Total cost £86.6m.

- The activity which was underway for projects linked to the strategic road network, but which were not in the scope for RIS2 (A14/A11 Junction 38; A1307 campaign).
- A review of rail priorities from a West Suffolk perspective, including:
 - responsibility for the rail network infrastructure (Network Rail) and the rail services (Abellio Greater Anglia Franchise)
 - the key rail service improvements:
 - Ipswich to Peterborough hourly service
 - Ipswich to Cambridge half hourly service (which would also provide opportunities for Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket)
 - Great Eastern Main Line (GEML) – speed and quality of trains
 - Norwich to Cambridge half hourly service (Brandon and Lakenheath were along this line)
 - Freight growth from Felixstowe
 - East/West rail route
- The West Suffolk rail issues, including infrastructure priorities:
 - Ely area capacity enhancements

- Haughley Junction doubling
 - Ely to Soham track doubling
 - Felixstowe branch line improvements
 - Bury St Edmunds headways and signalling
 - Level crossing upgrade/closure programme
- East/West rail route (Western, Central and Eastern)

Whilst discussing this item, Members also identified the following proposed **actions**:

- (a) Whether there was also a plan for the improvement/upgrade of railway stations. Officers replied that the railway stations were separate to the rail track and rail service network, but would consider as to whether this could be accommodated within the development of the new West Suffolk Local Plan.
- (b) Future agenda items for the Steering Group could include New Anglia LEP's Integrated Transport Strategy to understand how public transport integrated together. It was also considered that the Steering Group could also act as a Forum to bring all forms of public transport together which could be held as a Rural Transport Summit. It was also suggested that further discussions could include invitations to present to the Group for Suffolk County Council regarding bus services and operations, Network Rail, Abellio Greater Anglia and Highways England on their future transport planning processes.
- (c) A further item be provided to the next meeting of the Steering Group on how the FHDC/SEBC Cabinets could be best supported when lobbying for road/rail infrastructure improvements.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation, along with the proposed actions.

65. Transport Infrastructure for West Suffolk (Presentation)

(This item was considered under Minute No. 64. above).

66. Assistant Director (Growth) (Presentation)

The new Assistant Director (Growth) provided a presentation to the Steering Group which set out the future issues and challenges for growth. Members were provided with background information on population, skills and wages and housing choices and affordability.

West Suffolk also needed to consider where it could get ahead and take opportunities and turning its challenges into opportunities, for example:

- Artificial intelligence
- Medical science
- New models of health and care
- Social entrepreneurialism
- Further innovations in digital technologies

- Climate change adaptation
- New patterns of work/home/community life
- Supporting wellbeing (both mental and physical)

In terms of starting the discussion on where the specific focus should be for West Suffolk, the following areas were highlighted:

- *Prevention* – building the solutions into growth (eg healthy communities, with social, as well as, physical infrastructure)
- *Continued focus on education and skills*
- *Housing delivery* – variety and affordability
- *Balancing the economy* – how could larger companies/higher skills work complement West Suffolk's strong SME sector
- *Strengthening rural economy*
- *Inclusive growth* – sharing the opportunities and benefits.

The Group were then asked on how they would see the response to these challenges and opportunities based on what was known in relation to:-

- the location of West Suffolk and its existing places
- the people who live here/or want to live here, their history, culture and aspirations
- the national resources we have
- the challenges and opportunities we face

and were asked for their initial ideas/topics about what should be the 'right kind of growth' for West Suffolk. The initial ideas/topics from the Group centred around:

- the provision of improved housing for Brandon
- the provision of better designed industrial units in Brandon
- promoting potential tourism in Brandon
- strengthening of the rural economy/tourism
- to take advantage of the increased usage of mobile phones/internet
- any potential impact of Brexit on the local area (ie migration)
- quick solutions to the housing shortage (ie self build)
- continued sustainability of smaller settlements/communities, recognising the contribution which they make to the area

To allow Members further opportunity to consider this, they were asked to inform the Assistant Director (Growth), outside of the meeting, of any further ideas/topics.

The Group also agreed that it would be useful for the Assistant Director (Growth) to be able to provide an update on these issues/challenges at each meeting of the Steering Group.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation, along with the initial ideas/topics on the 'right kind of growth' for West Suffolk.

67. Destination Management Organisation (DMO) (Presentation)

The Group received a presentation on the Bury St Edmunds Destination Management Organisation (DMO). A DMO was a coalition of local businesses and organisations which represented a particular destination. A DMO drove and co-ordinated tourism activities, bringing together resources and expertise within the destination and provided a long-term strategic direction.

The Group were provided with the background to the development of the Bury St Edmunds DMO, of which its overall aim was to increase the economic impact of tourism to the local economy by encouraging visitors encouraged to increase the duration of their stay.

In 2015, AECOM had been commissioned by St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Bury St Edmunds Town Council and OurBuryStEdmunds BID, to produce a Visitor Destination Plan for Bury St Edmunds. This report was produced by partnership with Ipswich Central BID and Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils. The report produced an action plan which focussed on the following key target outcomes:

- A stronger core offer of Bury St Edmunds as a destination.
- More visitors to the town who also engage with different elements of Suffolk's countryside and vice versa.
- Attracting different market audiences to the town, including younger groups and family groups.
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer within the town and, therefore, maximise the contribution of all types of visitors to the local economy.

In early 2017, a Brand and Marketing Manager had also been recruited, whose role was to develop the brand of the new Bury St Edmunds DMO entitled '*Visiting Bury St Edmunds and Beyond*', which was hoped to be completed by September 2017.

Whilst discussing this item, Members also identified the following proposed **actions**:

- The newly appointed Brand and Marketing Manager of the Bury St Edmunds DMO, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Steering Group, to have a wider debate on the role of tourism in West Suffolk.
- During the presentation, Members were provided with information (as at 2015) on the current trends on day/overnight trips for Bury St Edmunds. Officers explained that this trend information was also available for Brandon, Claire, Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket. Members requested for this trend information to be circulated to them, as they would find this useful as background information. Officers also confirmed that the trend information for 2016, would be available in September 2017 and this would also be made available to Members accordingly.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation, along with the proposed actions.

68. **West Suffolk Community Energy Plan - Update (Report No: JGG/JT/17/002)**

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) presented this report (which was also supported by a presentation) which provided an update to the Steering Group on progress, both strategically and operationally, towards delivering the West Suffolk Community Energy Plan, as approved by the West Suffolk Councils in December 2014 (and as amended in Spring 2016).

The progress of the strategic delivery was set out in Section 2 of the report, as summarised below:

- Ensuring that UK Power Networks (UKPN) were part of key stakeholder discussions during strategic planning proposals and more generally, as part of planning strategic growth for the long term.
- In discussion with those with an interest in energy supply, distribution and use in the area to explore opportunities where strategic growth could help to address some of the existing constraints on the grid.
- Taking into consideration emerging Central Government policy, in particular, the Housing White Paper, "Fixing the Broken Housing Market" and the consultation on the Green Paper, "Building our Industrial Strategy".
- Working to develop ambitious new facilities as part of the approach to asset management, linked to the Government's One Public Estate Programme, to rationalise and improve the public estate in West Suffolk for the benefit of local people (ie the Mildenhall Hub, Western Way Masterplan and the West Suffolk Operational Hub).
- Built relationships with both the energy regulator Ofgem and the Government department responsible for energy policy, BEIS, to be better placed to provide them with local, practical knowledge and experience about the challenge that local authorities, communities and businesses face with respect to energy pricing and local supply.

The progress on operational delivery was set out in Section 3 of the report, as summarised below:

- Continue to work to enable households, communities and businesses to help themselves to improve energy efficiency and develop renewable energy generation to their benefit.
- It is estimated that through the energy efficiency work, participating households, businesses and communities, are likely to save in excess of £199,000 annually off their energy bills.
- The energy generation initiatives during the year included investment in solar photovoltaics (PV) and biomass heating which generated £203,000 of income and offset 432 tonnes of the greenhouse gas, Carbon Dioxide (CO₂).

- Toggam Solar Farm (purchased by Forest Heath District Council in July 2016) had generated around 11 million kWh, which was enough energy to power 3,000 homes and offset CO2 emissions from 2,000 cars.
- The expansion of opportunities for investing in energy-related initiatives (ie electric vehicle charging infrastructure in West Suffolk and use of electric vehicles; combining solar and batter storage to increase use of power; renewable heat and power generation).

Whilst discussing this item, Members also identified the following proposed **actions:**

- During the presentation, reference was made with regard to delivery of the Community Energy Plan and to the lobbying of government in the securing of energy improvement. Officers were asked to produce a short lobby sheet for MPs which set out what would be needed to achieve this.
- Within the development of the new West Suffolk Local Plan, consideration be given to the emphasis on the use of energy efficiencies in local developments.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the report and presentation, along with the proposed actions.

69. Work Programme 2017/2018 and Revised Terms of Reference (Report No: JGG/JT/17/003)

The Steering Group received the current version of the Work Programme for 2017/2018. Also circulated with the agenda papers was a revised Terms of Reference for the Steering Group, which had subsequently been approved by FHDC Cabinet on 16 May 2017 and by the SEBC Cabinet on 31 May 2017.

The Chairman explained that it was considered that further development work was required with both the Work Programme and the Terms of Reference and that this would be undertaken by the new Assistant Director (Growth), in consultation with both the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Steering Group and with the West Suffolk Lead/Portfolio Holder for Housing. Once completed, this would be brought back to the Steering Group and both Cabinets for further consideration.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the current status and future development of the Work Programme for 2017/2018 and of the Terms of Reference.

70. Dates of Future Meetings

It was noted that the dates of future meetings had been previously set as follows:

Tuesday 31 October 2017	10.00 am	West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds
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Tuesday 20 February 2018

10.00 am

District Offices,
Mildenhall

Following on from the above discussions under Minute No. 69. on the future development of the Work Programme and the Terms of Reference of the Steering Group, it was **noted** that the future meetings of the Group would also need to be reviewed accordingly, in line with this.

The Meeting concluded at 12.38 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
