

# West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

**West Suffolk**  
working together

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group** held on **Monday 9 October 2017** at **1.30 pm** in the **Conference Chamber (East), West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU**

Present: **Councillors**

**Chairman** Alaric Pugh

**Vice Chairman** Lance Stanbury

Forest Heath District Council

Chris Barker  
David Bowman  
Rona Burt  
David Palmer

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

David Roach  
Peter Stevens  
Peter Thompson  
Jim Thorndyke

71. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Burns (SEBC) and Reg Silvester (FHDC).

72. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

73. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 6 June 2017 were received and confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

74. **Growth Priorities - Evidence Base (Presentation)**

The Assistant Director (Growth) gave a presentation to the Steering Group which provided an update on the evidence base to the growth priorities and also set out the proposed elements for the forthcoming West Suffolk Growth and Investment Strategy. The presentation, particularly centred on the following areas:

- The focusing of energies and resources to achieve good growth in West Suffolk
- The Councils' role as an 'Investor'.
- The proposed investment principles.
- The understanding of private sector investment and how to attract this.
- The assessment criteria for investment.
- Development of an Expert Developer/Investor Forum

The Assistant Director also confirmed the approval process for the Strategy and explained that the proposed investment principles would also be considered by both Overview and Scrutiny Committees/Cabinets in November 2017, with the overarching Strategy then being considered by both Cabinets/Councils in December 2017

Whilst discussing this item, Members expressed their support for the development of the proposed framework for growth and investment and also made the following comments/observations:

- Ensuring that there were sufficient internal resources to be able to deliver the principles of the Strategy.
- Ensuring that collaborations with the public/private/third sector were structured to allow for the principles of the Strategy to be delivered.
- Ensuring that internal processes were also in place to allow for the accelerated delivery of appropriate development and growth, where appropriate.
- Ensuring that there were the right kind of commercial buildings available to attract businesses to the area. One of the ways to achieve this, could be the development of a local adaptability fund which could be used for the updating of commercial buildings.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation.

*(Councillor Lance Stanbury left the meeting at 2.30 pm, during the discussion of this item)*

#### 75. **Future Housing Delivery Options (Presentation)**

*(Councillor Peter Thompson declared a local non-pecuniary interest in this item, being a private landlord in the North West of England)*

Dale Gagen, Corporate Project Officer, Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, was in attendance for this item and gave the Steering Group a presentation which explained how the Borough Council was addressing the provision of housing within the Borough, particularly with five sites which had been challenging to develop.

The Steering Group asked questions of the Officer, which centred around:

- The percentage levels which the Borough Council set for the provision of affordable housing and any challenges which they may have experienced around developer viability.
- The development of working arrangements with other partner organisations (ie highways, utilities providers, developers) to allow for this type of scheme to be successfully delivered.

There being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the presentation.

76. **Planning Technical Guidance Note: Minimum Space Standards (Verbal)**

The Service Manager (Strategic Housing) informed the Steering Group that, following on from concerns which had previously been raised by Members with regard to the size of new houses being built, an interim Technical Guidance Note had now been produced, which set out the minimum space standards that the West Suffolk Councils' would seek on all new planning applications for the development of new housing, which was also based on the Government's National Space Standards.

The Service Manager clarified to the Steering Group that, at this stage, it should be noted that this was an interim Technical Guidance Note, and could not be classed as a material consideration for planning applications, but regard to the Guidance would be sought. However, it was the intention for this to become a policy within the new West Suffolk Local Plan, once adopted.

This Technical Guidance Note would also be considered by both Cabinets in November 2017. It was agreed for a copy of this interim Guidance Note to also be circulated to the Steering Group for their information.

The Steering Group commended the development of this interim Technical Guidance Note and with there being no decision required, the Steering Group **noted** the verbal update.

77. **Response to Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan: Pre-Submission Version 2017 - 2031 (Report No: JGG/JT/17/004)**

The Planning Officer presented this report which explained that a Neighbourhood Plan was a community-led framework for guiding the future development and growth of an area. Hargrave Parish Council had identified a neighbourhood area that reflected the parish boundary and this had been approved by the Council.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council had a duty to support the Parish Council in the development of their Neighbourhood Plan Council and were required to consider whether the Plan met the requirements of the Localism Act.

There was a legal requirement that the proposed Neighbourhood Plan was publicised before it was submitted to the Local Planning Authority and Hargrave Parish Council were at this Pre-submission (Regulation 14) stage and was available via the following link: <http://hargrave-suffolk.co.uk/>.

The Parish Council had asked St Edmundsbury Borough Council for feedback on their draft Plan by the consultation deadline of 31 October 2017.

Officers had reviewed the Plan (as set out in Appendix A to Report No: JGG/JT/17/004) and, overall, found it broadly in accordance with the strategic policies within the Local Plan and the requirements of the Localism Act and also addressed the standards set out within the Service Level Agreement between St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Hargrave Parish Council.

Paragraph 2. of Report No: JGG/JT/17/004 explained that the Neighbourhood Plan's consultation posed a series of questions and this report had set out

proposed responses for Members' consideration. Members were being recommended to endorse these comments which would then form the basis of a formal response to the Pre-submission version of the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan, which would then be referred to Cabinet for approval.

In discussing the Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Group wished to commend the Parish Council on the production of this document. Having then considered the questions and responses as set out in paragraph 2. of Report No: JGG/JT/17/004, the Steering Group also wished to raise the following comments/observations for feeding back to the Parish Council:

- It was acknowledged that the Plan had been produced by the community and was designed to allow for the village to be able to expand gradually/naturally, but it was questioned as to whether some of the aspirational elements of the Plan would actually be deliverable.
- For clarity, it was considered that there could be a separate distinction from the 'aspirational' and 'policy' elements of the Plan. Members suggested that the community actions could be appended as a supplement to the Plan, rather than being embedded amongst the policy text.
- Members discussed whether the Plan was too long, therefore, possibly making it unwieldy. They suggested that perhaps concepts could be explored more graphically rather than through text.
- The Parish Council should be informed that St Edmundsbury Borough Council was due to produce a new Local Plan in the near future. This would be a West Suffolk Local Plan, in conjunction with Forest Heath District Council. West Suffolk would welcome the Parish Council's involvement in the preparation and consultation of that Plan.
- Members recognised the need for a "vibrant countryside", allowing modest growth within the village to enable a sustainable settlement.
- Members suggested that the settlement boundary could be more ambitious, subject to ensuring consistency with the countryside protection and settlement hierarchy strategic policies of the Local Plan and St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Vision 2031, in addition to national planning policies.
- The Parish Council were asked to note that '*dormer*' should be spelt generically, rather than referring to the brand '*dorma*' within paragraph 10.18 of the Plan. The proposals map also contained a typographical error where it read '*Locally*' instead of '*Local Heritage Asset*'.
- Members recognised that the Plan was the result of hard work, the policies were well worded and the Parish Council Working Group should be applauded.

Within Report No: JGG/JT/17/004, the following typographical errors were also reported:

- Paragraph 2.4 - (Hargrave Housing Settlement Boundary. Do you agree with Policy HAR2 (Section 7.5)?)  
In the third sentence, the following words be reversed to read "that accords".
- Paragraph 2.6 (Communications Technology. Do you agree with Policy HAR4 (Section 9.4)?)  
Section 9.4 should be amended to read 'Section 7.14'.

Therefore, the Steering Group **RECOMMENDED:** (to SEBC Cabinet on 17 October 2017)

**That:-**

- 1. The comments contained within Report No: JGG/JT/17/004 be endorsed to form the basis of a formal response to the Pre-submission Version of the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2031, subject to the inclusion of the further comments/typographical errors, as set out in paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9 of Report No: CAB/SE/17/053.**
- 2. To agree that the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan accords with the strategic policies of the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Local Plan, in addition to meeting the requirements of the Service Level Agreement between Hargrave Parish Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.**

#### **78. Work Programme 2017/2018 and Terms of Reference (Verbal)**

The Assistant Director (Growth) presented this item where the Steering Group received proposed draft Terms of Reference for the Group to become a 'Growth and Innovation Group', who would assist the Cabinet with forming strategy and policy on key issues that would influence the growth agenda within West Suffolk. If these draft Terms of Reference were supported by the Steering Group, then these would then be considered by both Cabinets accordingly.

The Steering Group unanimously **supported** these draft Terms of Reference for the establishment of a 'Growth and Innovation Group', for consideration by both Cabinets in due course.

#### **79. Dates of Future Meetings (Verbal)**

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
Tuesday 20 February 2018	10.00 am	District Offices, Mildenhall

Following on from the above discussions held under Minute No. 78. above on the establishment of a 'Growth and Innovation Group', it was **noted** that the future meeting dates and their format may also need to be reviewed, in line with its proposed Terms of Reference.

The Meeting concluded at 4.15 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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