
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on
Tuesday 18 December 2018 at 7.08 pm at the **Conference Chamber,**
West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Mayor Margaret Marks
Deputy Mayor Patrick Chung

Terry Clements	Susan Glossop	Karen Richardson
Trevor Beckwith	John Griffiths	Barry Robbins
Sarah Broughton	Wayne Hailstone	Richard Rout
Simon Brown	Diane Hind	Andrew Smith
Tony Brown	Paul Hopfensperger	Andrew Speed
Carol Bull	Jane Midwood	Clive Springett
John Burns	Sara Mildmay-White	Sarah Stamp
Mike Chester	David Nettleton	Peter Stevens
Max Clarke	Robin Pilley	Jim Thorndyke
Mary Evans	Clive Pollington	Julia Wakelam
Robert Everitt	Alaric Pugh	Patricia Warby
Paula Fox	Joanna Rayner	

406. **Prayers**

The Mayor's Chaplain, The Reverend Canon, Ian Finn, Rector of St Mary's Church, Haverhill opened the meeting with prayers.

407. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the addition of a minor amendment to include Councillor Sarah Broughton in the list of Members present.

408. **Mayor's announcements**

The Mayor reported on the civic engagements and charity activities, which she and the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress had attended since the last ordinary meeting of Council on 30 October 2018.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Patrick Chung, Deputy Mayor, to the meeting following his recovery from recent ill health, and paid tribute to Councillor

David Roach who was presently recuperating following his own recent spell of ill health.

Councillor Chung expressed his gratitude for the support he had received from fellow Members, officers and members of the public while he had been unwell.

409. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Crooks, Beccy Hopfensperger, Ian Houlder, Elaine McManus, David Roach and Frank Warby.

Councillor Peter Thompson was also unable to attend the meeting.

410. **Declarations of Interests**

Members declaration of interests are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

411. **Leader's Statement (Paper No: COU/SE/18/024)**

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, presented his Leader's Statement as outlined in Paper No: COU/SE/18/024.

The Leader responded to a range of questions relating to:

- (a) **Recycled Christmas Art Project:** Members paid tribute to the recycled Christmas art project that had been taken up by various bodies including 23 schools as outlined in paragraphs 3. to 6. of the Statement.
- (b) **Support for a 'People's Vote' on Brexit Deal:** Councillor Julia Wakelam, supported by Councillor Diane Hind, sought support from the Leader and his Cabinet to urge the Government to enable a so-called 'People's Vote' on the proposed Brexit Deal as they expressed concerns regarding the potential impact a 'hard' Brexit would have on (in the main):
 - provision of adult and social care services in west Suffolk;
 - provision of NHS services in west Suffolk;
 - local businesses;
 - the economy in west Suffolk; and
 - its effect on young people, and as the future generation, how it would affect their lives in the medium to longer term.

In response, Councillor Griffiths admired the passion and research that had been shown on this issue by Councillors Wakelam and Hind, and by those that were present in the public gallery. He explained that St Edmundsbury Borough Council and the new West Suffolk Council were in a good position for the future in terms of trying to secure prosperity for the people of West Suffolk. Focus was very much on what the Council could do using its own powers and decision making and through working with partners, to make things happen and serve

residents of all parts of the urban and rural communities. Whilst the West Suffolk Councils used their influence where possible, to improve infrastructure and promote growth for example, this particular issue was a matter for the local MPs (for Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk and South Suffolk) to take forward. All councillors and members of the public had the opportunity to lobby MPs and this was considered by the Leader as the most appropriate action to take regarding this matter.

- (c) **Social Prescribing in Haverhill:** Commendation was given to securing extra funding for the social prescribing pilot scheme in Haverhill, as detailed further in paragraphs 11. to 18. of the Statement.
- (d) **Community Chest Grant Funding:** Acknowledgement was given to the range of projects that had received more than £400,000 in total from Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils' Community Chest funding allocations. Councillor Griffiths stated it was hoped the scheme would continue in some form in the future; however, it would be for the new West Suffolk Council to decide its future and any proposed eligibility criteria.
- (e) **'High Street', Bury St Edmunds:** whether retailers and businesses in the town centre were feeling the impact of the change in people's shopping habits. In response, Councillor Griffiths considered that retailers in Bury St Edmunds were performing particularly well when compared with national trends. With the integration of the historical and modern core of Bury St Edmunds, including its range of independent shops and businesses, the town centre was currently faring extremely well in the face of such challenges.

412. **Public Participation**

The following questions were put and answered during this item:

1. **Dr Ian Chapman**, of Bury St Edmunds, asked a question in connection with whether the Borough Council had assessed the potential impact on businesses that employed nurses and health care assistants/carers from the rest of Europe following Brexit, and the potential impact on the ability of people in the Borough to access affordable residential care if the process of recruiting and retaining European staff in these roles became more difficult.

In response, Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, stated that Suffolk public sector organisations were working closely together to look at all aspects of Brexit in a co-ordinated fashion, liaising with Central Government and preparing the necessary contingency plans for as many eventualities as possible. Whilst Dr Chapman had concerns regarding the potential impact on residential care, this was not a service area under the Borough Council's direct control, however, it was known that partners within Suffolk County Council and the NHS were looking into the issues raised in Dr Chapman's question. The Borough Council was supporting such work, for example, through the social prescribing schemes, further details of which were contained in the Leader's Statement (Paper No: COU/SE/18/024).

No supplementary question was asked.

2. **Christina Birt**, of Bury St Edmunds, asked a question in connection with seeking support for those residents of the Borough that wished to ask for a so-called 'People's Vote' on the proposed Brexit Deal and in particular, the potential effect Brexit would have on the younger generation.

In response, Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, admired Ms Birt's enthusiasm for the subject and agreed with her concerns that the country needed a clear direction on what was an extremely complex issue. Councillor Griffiths was delighted that Ms Birt felt that Bury St Edmunds was an attractive place to live and work, expanding that this remained a priority of the Council for the whole of St Edmundsbury and the rest of West Suffolk for people of all ages.

Councillor Griffiths stated that the local MPs (Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk and South Suffolk) had been elected to represent the views of their constituents. Discussions were regularly held between the West Suffolk Councils and the local MPs and whilst faced with numerous challenges, the proposed Brexit Deal being a significant one with many sides to the argument, the West Suffolk Councils remained focussed on maintaining an influence on the future prosperity of their communities, where possible.

Focus would remain on this whatever the outcome on Brexit and Councillor Griffiths gave reassurance that the local MPs were very aware of the West Suffolk Councils' position on seeking to strengthen the local economy, promoting growth and supporting their residents. Whilst not a decision for the Borough Council to support a 'People's Vote', it had as much influence to lobby MPs to achieve the best possible outcome which supported the future prosperity of St Edmundsbury and West Suffolk.

No supplementary question was asked.

413. **Referrals report of recommendations from Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee (Report No: COU/SE/18/025)**

Council considered the Referrals Report of Recommendations from the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee contained within Report No: COU/SE/18/025.

(A) Referrals from Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee: 6 November 2018

Council noted that there were no referrals emanating from the meeting of the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee held on 6 November 2018.

(B) Referrals from Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee: 11 December 2018

1. West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2018-2023

(Councillor Sarah Broughton declared a local non-pecuniary interest in this item as her husband is a landholder in the area, which may have an impact as a result of the adoption of the West Suffolk Housing Strategy. Councillor Broughton remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

Approval was sought for the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2018–2023, which was attached as Appendix 1 to Report No: CAB/JT/18/051.

The draft Strategy had been subject to consultation and was considered by the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of the consultation process. A number of themes had emerged during the consultation and some suggestions for amendment had been made, which were incorporated into the document ahead of its consideration by the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee, as summarised in the Referrals report (COU/SE/18/025).

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Housing, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that:

- (a) an Implementation Plan (Appendix C), which accompanied the Housing Strategy had been developed (and further refined following comments received during the consultation) to support the West Suffolk Councils' delivery of the priorities and actions set out in the Strategy;
- (b) a new revised West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy had also been developed alongside the Housing Strategy, which was approved by the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee on 11 December 2018; however as that Strategy did not form part of the policy framework, it did not require Council approval;
- (c) the proposed Housing Delivery Plan had been commissioned, as referred to in Section 1.3 of the Housing Strategy. This included actions the West Suffolk Councils could take through working with key partners and developers to expedite the rate of future housing delivery, and this was expected to be presented to the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee in spring 2019 for approval; and
- (d) a minor amendment had been made to the figures on Page 8 of the Housing Strategy's Evidence Base (Appendix B). This amendment had been previously circulated to Members and had not required an amendment to the recommendation from the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee.

A detailed discussion was held and a number of issues were raised, which included:

- (a) that provision of more affordable housing was paramount to ensure the future prosperity and growth of St Edmundsbury and West Suffolk, as businesses were not considered able to invest in the area if their staff were unable to afford to live within the locality;
- (b) the Strategy was generally supported and commended; however some concern was expressed regarding delivery and whether a stronger stance should be taken with developers to ensure the delivery of affordable housing on new developments, as required and in accordance with planning policy;

- (c) that 'affordable' housing was becoming unaffordable in some areas, particularly in Bury St Edmunds, and whether further emphasis should be placed on increased provision of social housing;
- (d) the provision of affordable housing for local residents and whether priority should be given to access this to those already living in the locality;
- (e) the need for promoting the building of new independent community-based developments rather than the vast, Marham Park-style strategic sites, which would encourage local community integration;
- (f) the timing of when new planning policies were developed and approved to when these came into practice to assist the determination of planning applications;
- (g) the role of Barley Homes in the forthcoming Housing Delivery Plan;
- (h) the potential impact on infrastructure and services in Bury St Edmunds following approval of the proposed provision of circa 800 homes in neighbouring Thurston by Mid Suffolk District Council's Development Control Committee; and
- (i) the number of rough sleepers presently in St Edmundsbury and how this was being addressed (details of which was contained in the separate recently approved Homelessness Strategy).

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White provided comprehensive responses to questions raised, including:

- (a) housing provision in St Edmundsbury, particularly in Bury St Edmunds, had largely been dependent on the development of the larger strategic sites, however, the development of smaller sites was encouraged and this was set out in the forthcoming Housing Delivery Plan;
- (b) in accordance with policy, priority for housing local people already living in the area was only given if the site had been identified as an exception site; however, allocations were given to those that had a connection with St Edmundsbury;
- (c) whilst the Government was now allowing social housing to be built, the Council was not a stock-holding authority; however, it would work closely with housing associations such as Havebury Housing Partnership to promote the building of social housing; and
- (d) two of the Barley Homes' initial small sites were expected to come forward for development shortly. Affordable housing provision on these sites would provide affordable rents.

In respect of a specific question raised by Councillor Terry Clements, this would be provided in the form of a written reply and circulated to all Members for their perusal.

On the motion of Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, seconded by Councillor Susan Glossop, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:

That the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2018-2023, attached as Appendix 1 to Report No: CAB/JT/18/051, be adopted.

**2. Mid Year Treasury Management Report and Investment Activity
(1 April to 30 September 2018)**

Approval was sought for the Mid Year Treasury Management Report covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2018.

In the absence of Councillor Ian Houlder, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council.

In respect of a specific question raised by Councillor Diane Hind, this would be provided in the form of a written reply and circulated to all Members for their perusal.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, seconded by Councillor Clive Pollington, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Mid Year Treasury Management Report 2018-2019 and Investment Activity (1 April to 30 September 2018), as set out in Report No: TMS/SE/18/004, be approved.

**3. West Suffolk Local Development Scheme (LDS) December 2018:
Adoption**

(Councillor Sarah Broughton declared a local non-pecuniary interest in this item as her husband is a landholder in the area, which may have an impact as a result of the adoption of the West Suffolk Local Development Scheme. Councillor Broughton remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

Approval was sought for the adoption of the West Suffolk Local Development Scheme. The Scheme outlined the programme for preparing the West Suffolk Local Plan by outlining the development plan documents to be produced, their subject matter and the broad timetable for their preparation including consultation, examination and adoption.

Councillor Susan Glossop, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that a revision to the 2016 joint St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath LDS was now required in order to:

- (a) reflect recent changes to the planning system;
- (b) prioritise plan preparation and progression in order to meet the West Suffolk single council consequential order clause which required West Suffolk Council to prepare a Local Plan across the administrative area within five years of becoming a single council (April 2024);
- (c) to update progress on the development plan documents currently in preparation; and
- (d) to roll the programme forward to 2023 for the preparation of a West Suffolk Local Plan.

Councillor Glossop provided an outline of the broad timetable for the preparation of the West Suffolk Local Plan, which was provided in Annex 1 of the LDS, which culminated in the final key milestone being the adoption of the new Local Plan in May 2023.

A discussion was held on ensuring Ward Members became involved in the development of the new Local Plan to take advantage of local knowledge. Encouragement was given for getting involved with the public consultation on the emerging Local Plan. Some Members felt that training was required to ensure Members sufficiently engaged with parish/town councils and communities within their wards through meaningful discussion to support the consultation process and to gain appropriate outcomes for building into the new Local Plan for the relevant area. This led to a discussion on means of encouraging young people to become involved with the consultation process and to engage in meaningful discussion to help shape the Local Plan.

Councillor Glossop responded accordingly and assured Members that a full consultation programme, as set in the Statement of Community Involvement, would be rolled out at the appropriate time, which would include many platforms to encourage better engagement with Ward Members, parish/town councils and the public in general, such as through face-to-face exhibitions, workshops, social media etc (*a list of proposed engagement platforms was contained in Table 1 of Working Paper 1 to Report No: CAB/JT/18/055 (proposed Statement of Community Involvement)*).

On the motion of Councillor Glossop, seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:

That the West Suffolk Local Development Scheme (LDS), as set out in Working Paper 1 to Report No: CAB/JT/18/054, be adopted.

4. West Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) December 2018: Adoption

(Councillor Sarah Broughton declared a local non-pecuniary interest in this item as her husband is a landholder in the area, which may have an impact as a result of the adoption of the West Suffolk Statement of Community

Involvement. Councillor Broughton remained in the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

Approval was sought for the adoption of the West Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement. This document detailed how the Council would:

- (a) consult and engage on planning applications;
- (b) produce and engage on the West Suffolk Local Plan; and
- (c) support the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

Before commencing with the development of the West Suffolk Local Plan, the West Suffolk Councils were required to produce a SCI, which explained how they would engage local communities and other interested parties in producing their Local Plan and determining planning applications.

Councillor Susan Glossop, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that a revision to the 2014 joint St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath SCI was now required in order to make legislative amendments and to reflect changes in the Councils' working practices and procedures.

In response to a question which had emanated following the discussion on the previous item (Local Development Scheme), Council was informed that 'social media', would be added to the list of proposed engagement platforms contained in Table 1 of Working Paper 1 to Report No: CAB/JT/18/055.

On the motion of Councillor Glossop, seconded by Councillor Carol Bull, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:

That the West Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as set out in Working Paper 1 to Report No: CAB/JT/18/055, be adopted.

5. Exempt: Investing in our Commercial Asset Portfolio

As this item was exempt, Council would consider this item later in the meeting in private session under Agenda Item 12.

414. Questions to Committee Chairmen

Two questions were asked by Councillor Paul Hopfensperger to Councillor Diane Hind, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to which Councillor Hind duly responded.

415. Urgent Questions on Notice

No urgent questions on notice had been received.

416. **Report on Special Urgency**

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

417. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

As the next item on the agenda was exempt, on the motion of Councillor John Griffiths, seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, and duly carried, it was

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the following item because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt categories of information as prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and indicated against the item and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Councillor Paul Hopfensperger left the meeting at 9.08 pm.)

418. **Exempt Appendix: Referrals report of recommendations from Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee (Report No: COU/SE/18/025) (para 3)**

(B) Exempt Referral from Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee: 11 December 2018

5. Exempt Appendix 4 to Report No: COU/SE/18/025: Investing in our Commercial Asset Portfolio (para 3)

Approval was sought in private session for an addition to the Council's commercial asset portfolio, together with associated funding required.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including providing the potential benefits of making the purchase, together with the potential risks, which were considered to be effectively mitigated.

An exempt addendum to this Exempt Appendix 4 (Exempt Report No: CAB/JT/18/058) had been previously circulated to Council. This provided further information on the financial considerations contained in the report.

A detailed discussion was held and support was given to the proposed acquisition, particularly given its location which provided a place-shaping opportunity and was expected to promote economic growth in the area. Council did however, wish to ensure that engagement with local Ward Members on the proposed plans for this site was maintained with subsequent engagement with the general public encouraged as the plans progressed.

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

RESOLVED:

That:

The resolution will be published in due course following the lifting of the exemption.

The meeting concluded at 9.17 pm

Signed by:

Mayor
