

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 6 June 2018** at **4.00pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

**Chairman** Diane Hind  
**Vice Chairman** Susan Glossop

Simon Brown  
John Burns  
Mike Chester  
Patrick Chung  
Paula Fox  
Paul Hopfensperger

Margaret Marks  
Robin Pilley  
Andrew Speed  
Clive Springett  
Frank Warby  
Anthony Williams

**Substitutes attending:**

Peter Thompson

**By Invitation:**

John Griffiths, Leader of the Council  
Sara Mildmay-White, Cabinet Member for Housing  
Peter Stevens, Cabinet Member for Operations

224. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Peter Thompson for Councillor Sarah Stamp.

225. **Welcome**

Prior to the formal meeting taking place, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Robin Pilley who was replacing Councillor Jim Thorndyke as full member on the Committee.

226. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah Stamp.

227. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2018, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

**228. Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

**229. Announcements from the Chairman regarding responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chairman advised that she attended Cabinet on 22 May 2018, and presented the Committee's report on items it considered on 18 April 2018, which was noted.

She also attended a scoping meeting with offices on the vehicle non-idling work programme item.

Finally, with regards to SCC Highways being invited back to a future meeting of the Committee, there had been a recent change in their Cabinet membership. Therefore, she would invite the new Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, Councillor Mary Evans to a meeting to be arranged in October 2018.

**230. Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2017-2018**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor John Griffiths presented Report No: OAS/SE/18/015, which outlined the draft West Suffolk Annual Report (2017-2018) which had been written as a joint West Suffolk document and was before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

The draft West Suffolk Annual Report (Appendix A) highlighted the key activities and developments that had been achieved over the financial year 2017-2018, with regard to the priorities set out in the West Suffolk Strategic Plan. The draft report contained a number of case studies and examples from West Suffolk to illustrate the achievements described. Following a decision by Portfolio Holders, this year's annual report would be designed typeset document and user friendly.

The Leader highlighted relevant issues for the attention of the Committee. In particular he informed the Committee that St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath working together across West Suffolk were at the forefront of transformation change and the envy of other councils. Both councils had also been praised by the Government and the Secretary of State.

The report also included responses to three specific key questions identified by scrutiny members on areas they wished to be appraised on during the Leader's annual presentation to the Committee on the Annual Report.

Members examined the document in detail and comments were made on the following areas of the draft Annual Report:

- (1) Page 29: Historic environment (Corn Exchange in Haverhill): officers agreed to look at rewording this section.

- (2) General comment: It was felt the document was lacking in rural ward emphasis, to which officers agreed to look at rewriting the section on rural issues.
- (3) Annex 1: Community Chest Funding: suggest including "RIGS Funding" to the list of organisations.

Detailed discussions were also held on the following areas of the draft Annual Report to which the Leader of the Council and officers provided comprehensive responses to, as follows:

Right Infrastructure (page 6): No mention of strategic links from Haverhill to Cambridge. In response members were informed that the Annual Report was only a summary of activities carried out over the last year and recorded work the council was actually engaged in. However, the council was continuing talks with various partners over the light rail link.

Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) (page 55): The Leader of the Council shared member's frustration with the lack of parking enforcement. However, the council was still pushing for CPE to be implemented by April 2019, but this was optimistic. He explained the only barrier in implementing CPE was the Parliamentary process. Until legislation was in place, it was still the responsibility of the police to enforce parking.

In response to a question raised regarding the Anglia Revenues Partnership (page 51 – digital transformation) on how much it costs to produce/mail out a single council tax demand including inserts versus emailing, officers agreed to provide a written response.

In response to a question raised regarding the operational criteria for Public Space Protection Orders (dog fouling) (page 18), and a particular dog exclusion exemption at a playing pitch during the non-football playing season, to which officers agreed to provide a written response.

In response to a question raised around better promotion of the Annual Report, members were advised that officers were looking at a number of options using various media outlets.

The Leader wished to thank the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments on the draft Annual Report. He also wished to thank all officers and councillors working together across West Suffolk.

It was then proposed by Councillor Diane Hind, seconded by Councillor Frank Warby and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2017-2018, as attached at Appendix A to Report No: OAS/SE/18/015 be approved, subject to comments made during the meeting.

## 231. **West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy**

*[Councillors Diane Hind and Peter Thompson declared non-pecuniary interests as a landlord outside of West Suffolk.*

*Councillors Patrick Chung, Margaret Marks and Robin Pilley declared non-pecuniary interests as a landlord in West Suffolk]*

*[Councillors John Burns and Paula Fox left the meeting at 5.35pm during the consideration and prior to voting taking place on this item].*

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/18/016, which presented the draft West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy (Appendix 1).

The Homelessness Act 2002 required all councils to review and produce a new homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of the West Suffolk's Homelessness Strategy was due in 2018. In addition to this, by producing a new West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy the council was responding to the fundamental changes to legislation and additional duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, West Suffolk councils had conducted a review of homelessness in the area between November 2017 and April 2018. The review took the form of an evidence base that was attached as Appendix A to the West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy (Appendix 1). The depth and scope of the review had contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the key issues facing West Suffolk. It had also enabled the councils to consider where it needed to focus its attention in the future in order to determine which priorities and actions the councils needed to focus on.

The West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy was an important part of what the councils were doing across West Suffolk to prevent and reduce homelessness. However, other activities which supported the reduction of homelessness were outlined in West Suffolk's Housing Strategy and the Strategic Framework 2018-2020.

The delivery plan attached at Appendix B to the report had been developed to deliver on the councils priorities as set out in the strategy and would be resourced through existing budgets and resources and by accessing external funding sources from the government and other partners.

The Committee considered the draft Strategy and the five priorities and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on progress with the Bury Drop-in Centre; the number of rough sleepers in West Suffolk, which varied daily; and the need to communicate and promote more, the excellent work carried out by council officers out on the streets.

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that homeless/rough sleeper figures were higher in Bury St Edmunds due to bed spaces, which were cut by 30% last year, meaning there were less options available at the present time.

However, the council was looking to increase its bed options. Also across Suffolk there was a lack of service for “complex needs”.

The Service Manager (Housing Options and Homelessness) informed members that the council tried to be proactive, particularly during the winter months. It was keen to get the message out there that the council was working with people and statutory partners in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.

In response to a question raised regarding landlords, officers explained that there were a number of landlords who worked with the council, for instance through the rent deposit scheme. Landlords could also go to the council to seek information on renting their properties. However, officers expressed their sadness that people think bad tenants were on benefits. Officers regularly talk with landlords about tenants situations.

In response to a question, officers informed members that the council was not in a position to refuse properties from private landlords. She explained that the only requirement was that properties must meet the Public Health Standards. The council looked at properties in rural areas as well as urban areas for people who the council had a duty to rehouse and other groups in housing need.

Councillor John Burns referred to Appendix 1 (page 23) in relation to Universal Credit, and suggested including a general sentence on how it was working so far, to which officers provided a response.

The Committee wished to congratulate the team on all their hard work, particularly around working with vulnerable people.

It was then proposed by Councillor Margaret Marks, seconded by Councillor Paul Hopfensperger, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

### **RECOMMENDED**

That subject to comments made during the meeting, the Draft West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy, be approved.

#### **232. Review of the Garden Waste Collection Service (GWCS) - Scoping Report**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/18/017, which sought the establishment of a West Suffolk Joint Task and Finish Group to review the Garden Waste Collection Service (GWCS), and make recommendations to the West Suffolk Shadow Executive in Autumn 2018.

During the first two years of operation, around 30,000 households had subscribed each year and the service was generally operating in line with the original assumptions and expectations. However, a review of the GWCS was being proposed for the following reasons:

- i) It was agreed that the subscription charge, and the service itself, would be reviewed after the first three years of operation;

- ii) A new funding arrangement with Suffolk County Council takes effect from April 2019;
- iii) Implementation arrangements for Year 4 of the GWCS would need to commence in October 2018, ready for April 2019;
- iv) IT improvements were required to reflect changes to the corporate CRM, online functionality and the GDPR regulations; and
- v) To consider opportunities to amend the customer “application and pay experience” and the associated service terms and conditions.

It was proposed that the Joint Task and Finish Group comprises of eight Members; four from each council with at least one from each council being a member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. The Group would be supported by officers and the Portfolio Holders. The review will be carried out between July and October 2018, in order to feed into final reports for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in November, and a report to the Shadow Executive. This would allow time for recommendations to be taken account of before the arrangements for 2019 needed to commence as there were system and communications arrangements that needed to be undertaken ahead of the annual soft launch for payments in February.

Councillor Andrew Speed felt the scheme had been a great success, and hoped the Joint Task and Finish Group would minimise any “tinkering” with the scheme as it was working well.

Councillor Hind then informed members that Councillor Sarah Broughton, Chairman of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee was happy to sit on the Group.

The Committee considered the report and nominated Councillors John Burns, Mike Chester and Diane Hind as the Overview and Scrutiny representatives.

It was then proposed by Councillor Diane Hind, seconded by Councillor Andrew Speed, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillors John Burns, Mike Chester, Diane Hind from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Sarah Broughton from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee be appointed to sit on the West Suffolk Garden Waste Collection Service Joint Task and Finish Group to carry out a review of the Garden Waste Collection Service and to make recommendations for 2019.

**233. Shadow Scrutiny Committee Nominations**

*[Councillor Frank Warby left the meeting at 5.55pm and Councillor Andrew Speed left at 6pm during the discussion and prior to voting taking place]*

On 30 May 2018, the Shadow Council agreed to appoint a Shadow Scrutiny Committee of up to 13 members, consisting of up to 8 existing members from the St Edmundsbury Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and up to 5 existing members from the Forest Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the Chairman from each Committee being automatically appointed as one of the representatives.

The Committee considered the request to appoint up to 7 members, of which 4 members had put their names forward prior to the meeting taking place (Councillors John Burns, Mike Chester, Susan Glossop and Paula Fox) to sit on the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman of the Committee then asked whether there was anyone else who wished to be considered, of which a further 2 members put their names forward (Councillors Patrick Chung and Paul Hopfensperger), making a total of 6 members wishing to sit on the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

It was then proposed by Councillor Diane Hind, seconded by Councillor Margaret Marks, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillors John Burns, Mike Chester, Patrick Chung, Paula Fox, Susan Glossop, Paul Hopfensperger and Councillor Diane Hind as the Chairman of the St Edmundsbury Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be appointed to sit on the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

**234. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/18/018, which asked Members to peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019, on items it would like further information on or might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not request any further information on items contained in the Plan.

There being no decision required the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019 Decisions Plan.

**235. Work Programme Update and Re-appointments to Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/18/019, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2018-2019 (Appendix 1).

The report also requested that Members identify questions they would like the Cabinet Member for Housing to cover in her annual report to the Committee on 11 July 2018.

The Committee considered Appendix 1, and at the time of the meeting had not identified any questions they wished to put to the Cabinet Member for

Housing, but would submit any questions following this meeting to the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) by Wednesday 13 June 2018.

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the current status of its work programme.

The report also sought the Borough Council's nominated representative and substitute member on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

#### Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny

As in previous years, Suffolk County Council (SCC) wished a representative to be appointed to its Health Scrutiny Committee from each of the County's District and Borough Councils. It was recommended that the members should ideally be from the Borough's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, although it was not essential.

The current members on this joint body were:

- Councillor Paul Hopfensperger as the nominated representative; and
- Councillor Margaret Marks as the nominated substitute.

Attached at Appendix 2, to the report was a brief summary provided by Councillor Paul Hopfensperger on issues which had been considered by the SCC Health Scrutiny Committee during 2017-2018).

The Committee considered the report and re-nominated Councillor Paul Hopfensperger as the Borough's nominated representative and Councillor Margaret Marks as the substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for 2018-2019.

It was then proposed by Councillor Patrick Chung, seconded by Councillor Diane Hind, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

#### **RECOMMENDED**

That full Council be asked to confirm the appointment of Councillor Paul Hopfensperger as the Borough Council's nominated representative and Councillor Margaret Marks as the substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for 2018-2019.

The Meeting concluded at 6.15pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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