

Extraordinary Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 13 March 2018 at 5.00 pm in the **Training Centre, District
Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman James Waters
Vice Chairman Robin Millar

David Bowman
Stephen Edwards

Lance Stanbury

By Invitation:

Simon Cole

Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

Ruth Bowman

Vice-Chairman of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Sara Mildmay-White

West Suffolk's Lead Member for Housing

424. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andy Drummond.

425. **Open Forum**

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak under this item; however, the Chairman considered it appropriate for the non-Cabinet Members in attendance to speak on Item 5, *Investing in our Commercial Asset Portfolio*, once the item was reached in private session.

426. **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

427. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

As the next item on the agenda was exempt, it was proposed, seconded and

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 items, 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.

(Councillors Stephen Edwards and Robin Millar joined the meeting during the consideration of this item. With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillors Ruth Bowman, Simon Cole and St Edmundsbury Borough Councillor Sara Mildmay-White were invited to partake in the discussions on the next agenda item in private session.)

428. Investing in Our Commercial Asset Portfolio (para 3) (Exempt Report No: CAB/FH/18/019) (Special Urgency Notice published 9 March 2018)

Councillor James Waters, Chairman/Leader of the Council, presented this report which sought endorsement of the use of the Chief Executive's urgency powers to purchase a property in Newmarket at auction.

An opportunity had arisen for the Council to purchase the freehold of 113 High Street and 3 The Avenue in Newmarket, which was due to be auctioned on 14 March 2018. If purchased, this was considered to offer an opportunity for the Council to increase the number of temporary accommodation units available as well as providing a rental income to the Council. It also supported the West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2018-2020 and the Overarching West Suffolk Growth Investment Strategy in that it was considered to provide much needed housing, future revenue and capital income as well as supporting business with retail accommodation.

The Chairman, and Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, West Suffolk's Portfolio Lead for Housing drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet, including placing emphasis on the potential benefits of investing in this property.

Questions were asked regarding the suitability of the property as temporary accommodation and those expected to occupy the premises. Members felt reassured however, that two floors of the property had been licensed as a House of Multiple Occupation and therefore already met a number of public safety standards.

The ground floor of the property comprised two separate retail units which were currently leased and occupied. This led to a discussion on rental agreements presently in place and income currently achieved by the occupiers of the retail units, and the potential income from a Registered Provider that would manage the accommodation units. These details were summarised in the report.

Councillors Simon Cole and Ruth Bowman, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to speak and they both demonstrated their support for the proposal.

Having sought clarification on further matters such as the structural soundness of the property and the due diligence measures that would be undertaken by officers, the Cabinet unanimously supported the proposal and

as recommended, endorsed the use of the Chief Executive's urgency powers to authorise a bid of up to a maximum of £810,000 for the purchase, plus fees, thus allowing a maximum budget of £850,000.

It was proposed, seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

- (1) The intention for the Chief Executive to use his powers of urgency to negotiate at auction, the purchase of the identified property at 113 High Street/3 The Avenue, Newmarket, be endorsed;
- (2) It be noted that having obtained this endorsement, the Chief Executive will authorise a budget up to a maximum of £850,000, to be made available to facilitate the purchase, including fees and Stamp Duty Land Tax, to be funded from the Investing in the Growth Agenda fund; and
- (3) It be noted that should the purchase be made, the Council's Section 151 Officer will make the necessary changes to the Council's prudential indicators as a result of Recommendation 2.

The Meeting concluded at 5.36 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
