

# Shadow Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Shadow Council** held on  
**Tuesday 20 November 2018** at **6.30 pm** at the **Conference Chamber,**  
**West Suffolk House,** Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

**Chair** Sarah Stamp  
**Vice Chair** Brian Harvey

Ruth Allen	John Griffiths	Alaric Pugh
John Bloodworth	Diane Hind	Joanna Rayner
David Bowman	Beccy Hopfensperger	Karen Richardson
Ruth Bowman J.P.	Paul Hopfensperger	David Roach
Sarah Broughton	Ian Houlder	Barry Robbins
Carol Bull	Victor Lukaniuk	Nigel Roman
John Burns	Margaret Marks	Richard Rout
Rona Burt	Louise Marston	Reg Silvester
Louis Busuttil	Christine Mason	Andrew Smith
Mike Chester	Elaine McManus	Andrew Speed
Max Clarke	Jane Midwood	Clive Springett
Terry Clements	Sara Mildmay-White	Lance Stanbury
Simon Cole	Robin Millar	Peter Stevens
Roger Dicker	David Nettleton	Peter Thompson
Andy Drummond	Robert Nobbs	Jim Thorndyke
Stephen Edwards	Colin Noble	Julia Wakelam
Mary Evans	David Palmer	Frank Warby
Robert Everitt	Robin Pilley	Patricia Warby
Susan Glossop	Clive Pollington	James Waters

## 40. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 41. **Chairman's Announcements**

No announcements were made by the Chair on this occasion.

## 42. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anderson, Barker, Beckwith, Simon Brown, Tony Brown, Chung, Fox and Ridgwell.

Councillors Appleby, Crooks, Hailstone, Lynch and Williams were also unable to attend the meeting.

43. **Declarations of Interests**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

44. **Leader's Statement (Paper No: COU/SA/18/012)**

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Shadow Council, presented his Statement, as contained in Paper No: COU/SA/18/012.

In his introductory remarks, Councillor Griffiths stated that it had been an honour and privilege to have been elected Leader of the Shadow Council since its inception in May 2018 and that it was his intention to nominate in the near future the current Deputy Leader, Councillor James Waters to lead the Shadow Council for the remainder of the 2018/2019 year.

Councillor Griffiths reiterated that through working with central and other government organisations, partners and potential investors, he was proud of the ambitions and aspirations the existing Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils were currently achieving and aiming to achieve, whilst continuing to deliver excellent services for West Suffolk's residents.

Although challenges needed to be overcome, Councillor Griffiths was confident that the Councils were in an excellent position as they headed towards the creation of West Suffolk Council in fewer than 150 days.

In response to a question regarding the proposed introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, Members were informed that the Consequential Orders enabled provision of these impending powers to be transferred to the new West Suffolk Council.

45. **Public Participation**

The following question was put and answered during this item:

**Mr Martyn Taylor**, Chairman of the Bury Society in Bury St Edmunds, asked a question in connection with Agenda Item 7, *Civic Leadership Review*. He expressed concern that the formation of West Suffolk Council would deprive Bury St Edmunds of its mayor and whether the newly created Council would ask Haverhill and Newmarket to cease having town mayors if it opted to have a mayor. Should these two towns continue to have mayors, Mr Taylor felt it was appropriate for Bury St Edmunds Town Council to also have a mayor, which had ceased in 2006 when it reverted to having a chairman, due, in his view, to confusion with the Mayor of St Edmundsbury.

In response, Councillor Ruth Bowman, one of the Shadow Executive Members responsible for Future Governance, stated that the Civic Leadership Review report (the main attachment to Report No: COU/SA/18/013) had identified

that many residents had been confused, and often believed that the Mayor of St Edmundsbury was Mayor of Bury St Edmunds town. The second recommendation shown in Report No: COU/SA/18/013, and as read out by Councillor Bowman, sought to address the concern that had been raised by Mr Taylor and this would be considered by Members for approval later in the meeting.

In order to meet people's expectations regarding civic leadership, there remained the option for Bury St Edmunds Town Council to have a mayor regardless of the option West Suffolk Council chose to continue. Subject to approval, the Shadow/West Suffolk Council would actively work with towns and parishes to support local arrangements within the district. It was not however, in the gift of the Shadow/West Suffolk Council to request a town (such as Haverhill or Newmarket as specifically mentioned by Mr Taylor) to cease having a mayor; each location had the right and responsibility to set up arrangements that their residents most valued.

Mr Taylor was asked whether he would like to ask a supplementary question arising directly from the reply. He made a statement asking Council not to lose sight of the historical borough status of Bury St Edmunds and that the town should have a mayor, either from West Suffolk Council or Bury St Edmunds Town Council.

#### **46. Civic Leadership Review (Report No: COU/SA/18/013)**

The Shadow Council considered Report No: COU/SA/18/013, which presented the outcome of the review of civic leadership across St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) and Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) in preparation for the introduction of West Suffolk Council in April 2019.

The Chair firstly thanked the Civic Leadership Working Group and officers for their work on the civic leadership review, which had culminated in the production of the comprehensive Civic Leadership Review Report that was attached to Report No: COU/SA/18/013, together with its 15 appendices.

Currently the civic leadership function for FHDC was carried out by a chairman and for SEBC, it was undertaken by a mayor. With the creation of the new West Suffolk Council on 1 April 2019, there was an opportunity to redefine the arrangements for civic leadership in order to support West Suffolk Council's ambitions to drive growth and prosperity in local communities. The new arrangements needed to look to the future while recognising and building on the traditions of the past.

There were three main areas that needed to be considered when defining the new role for civic leadership for West Suffolk Council:

- Requirements of the role;
- The priorities for the civic leader; and
- Format for how the role would be delivered.

The main Civic Leadership Review Report had addressed these elements, utilising a range of information gathering; and interpretation of findings and ascertaining common themes, all of which had been worked through by the

Civic Leadership Working Group and summarised in the covering report (COU/SA/18/013).

Councillor Carol Bull, one of the Shadow Executive Members with the responsibility for Future Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Shadow Council, including providing further detail on the proposed ambassadorial role of the new civic leader for West Suffolk Council and the key considerations required for the new role. This included working more closely with town and parish councils across West Suffolk to develop and support civic leadership at a local level, which may involve the possibility of town councils such as Bury St Edmunds, should they so wish, to create new town mayors. Councillor Bull also explained the significant amount of work that had been undertaken to form the review and how it was carried out; and that:

- legally from 1 April 2019, the status of the new council would be a district with a chairman;
- councillors had the option to change this and could decide to apply for borough status which allowed for a mayor or chairman; and
- should Members resolve to proceed with applying for borough status, the decision to apply to the Privy Council for this purpose would require a two-thirds majority vote in favour at a specially convened Council meeting.

Councillor Bull proceeded to move the recommendations contained within report, but with the following amendment to Recommendation (3) to remove reference to suspend Council Procedure Rules for enabling a two-thirds majority vote to be required on whether to proceed with convening a special meeting for the purpose of deciding whether to apply for borough status:

(3) *takes a vote on whether the Shadow Council should convene a special meeting for the purpose of deciding whether to apply for borough status and to suspend paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules for this vote, so that it may only be passed should a two thirds majority of those present and voting at the meeting wish the Shadow Council to apply for borough status.*

The motion was duly seconded by Councillor Ruth Bowman, the other Shadow Executive Member for Future Governance. Councillor Bowman reiterated the issues highlighted by Councillor Bull and also thanked the Civic Leadership Working Group and officers for their help and support in shaping the comprehensive review, and to members of the public that had engaged in the process, which had helped develop a new civic leadership role for West Suffolk Council.

A detailed discussion was held with some Members supporting the convening of a special meeting to apply for borough status, reasoning that should the West Suffolk town councils wish to create new town mayors (where applicable), this would disadvantage those residents located in the rural wards; the cost to create a new town mayor could be significant to the respective town council; and the amount of money raised for local charities

by the existing SEBC Mayor was historically far higher than that raised by the FHDC Chairman and therefore if West Suffolk Council were to have a chairman, this could impact on fundraising received by local charities and organisations. Several Members reflected on the historical association of Bury St Edmunds with its Mayor.

Other Members considered the existing SEBC Mayor was very Bury St Edmunds-centric and whilst residents in rural and Haverhill wards benefitted from the presence of the Mayor on occasions, visits to these localities were far fewer than attendance at events in Bury St Edmunds. A mayor of Bury St Edmunds Town Council, if the Town Council so wished, was therefore considered by some Members to be more appropriate, with West Suffolk Council creating a new civic leader through the role of chairman.

A discussion was then held on whether the decision should be taken at this meeting on whether to proceed with the Shadow Council convening a special meeting for the purpose of applying to the Privy Council for borough status. Councillor Peter Stevens then proposed the following amendment to Recommendation (3) that:

*The new West Suffolk Council, once created, should convene a special meeting for the purpose of deciding whether to apply for borough status.*

He considered that it should be the decision of the West Suffolk Council, which would comprise newly elected Members, to decide the future status of the Council and not Members of the Shadow Council, which comprised existing Members of FHDC and SEBC, some of whom would not be standing or be re-elected. Therefore, it was not considered appropriate to make such a decision at this time on the future status of the new West Suffolk Council.

This amendment was duly seconded by Councillor Terry Clements, which led to a debate held on the amendment. The majority of Members considered it to be a sensible approach and felt that the new Council would be better qualified to make the decision on its status, should it wish to bring the matter forward for debate. Many Members felt that the Shadow Council should be pragmatic and should not fetter the judgement of West Suffolk Council, with some reasoning that other business of the Shadow Council and the existing FHDC and SEBC councils required far greater and important decision making than this matter.

Other Members considered that should the matter be referred to the new Council to decide, and if the decision making resulted in applying to the Privy Council for borough status, a significant amount of time would have been lost in reaching that point.

A vote was taken on the amendment, which was duly carried, and therefore formed part of the substantive motion.

A discussion was held on the substantive motion, as amended, with several Members calling for Bury St Edmunds Town Council to now consider the possibility of having a town mayor for Bury St Edmunds. Councillor Bull stated that initial discussions had already been held with town clerk regarding this matter.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That:

- (1) the proposed requirements and priorities for the role of the future civic leader be agreed, as set out in section 18.2 and 18.3 of the Civic Leadership Review report attached to Report No: COU/SA/18/013 , and the writing of a new protocol encompassing these elements be delegated to the Assistant Director (HR, Legal and Democratic Services);
- (2) it be agreed to work more closely with town and parish councils by:
  - (a) engaging with all town and parish councils to seek further ways of supporting them with civic leadership at a local level;
  - (b) exploring with Bury St Edmunds Town Council possible options for them to lead on town centred ceremonial duties; and
- (3) the new West Suffolk Council, once created, should convene a special meeting for the purpose of deciding whether to apply for borough status.

**47. Urgent Questions on Notice**

No urgent questions on notice had been received.

The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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