

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on **Tuesday 18 May 2021** at **6.30 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present

Councillors

Chair Brian Harvey

Vice Chair

Margaret Marks	Susan Glossop	David Palmer
Michael Anderson	John Griffiths	Pugh
John Augustine	Pat Hanlon	Joanna Rayner
Trevor Beckwith	Diane Hind	Karen Richardson
Sarah Broughton	Rachel Hood	David Roach
Tony Brown	Ian Houlder	Richard Rout
Carol Bull	Paul Hopfensperger	Marion Rushbrook
John Burns	Beccy Hopfensperger	Ian Shipp
Mike Chester	James Lay	Andrew Smith
Patrick Chung	Aaron Luccarini	David Smith
Clarke	Victor Lukaniuk	Karen Soons
Terry Clements	Mager	Clive Springett
Simon Cole	Joe Mason	Sarah Stamp
Jason Crooks	Elaine McManus	Peter Stevens
Dawn Dicker	Sara Mildmay-White	Peter Thompson
Roger Dicker	Andy Neal	Jim Thorndyke
Andy Drummond	David Nettleton	Julia Wakelam
Robert Everitt	Robert Nobbs	Cliff Waterman
Stephen Frost	Colin Noble	Phil Wittam

121. **Introduction and meeting facilitation**

The Chair formally opened the meeting and welcomed all persons present including those that were viewing the meeting externally via the live broadcast, to this non-decision making virtual Annual Meeting of Council.

The Chair provided the reasons for holding this virtual meeting ahead of the official Annual Meeting of Council arranged for the next day, 19 May 2021.

Due to the expiry of special legislation on 7 May 2021 which allowed Council meetings to be held virtually, and despite an unsuccessful High Court challenge, the law only allowed publicly accessible decision making meetings to be held in person at a specific geographical location.

To be able to have meetings in person, consideration also needed to be given to Government guidance in relation to the safe use of council buildings and carefully consider the capacity of West Suffolk Council's venues to host meetings. This was challenging as it was difficult to find venues within the district to accommodate 64 councillors under the present social distancing guidelines. From 21 June 2021, restrictions on social contact were expected to ease which would help mitigate the current challenges.

This virtual meeting was therefore being held to enable all members to attend and participate in the discussion on the various agenda items. Matters were voted on a 'minded to' basis, therefore while no formal decisions were made, the outcome of the votes cast would help to inform decision making at the official Annual Meeting of Council. That meeting was being held in person on 19 May 2021 at West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds, where a quorum of members would attend on a politically balanced basis to formally resolve the items discussed at this meeting.

The Chair then specifically welcomed West Suffolk Council's six new members to the meeting, who had recently been elected in by-elections on 6 May 2021, namely, Councillors Nick Clarke, Birgitte Mager, Colin Noble, Sarah Pugh, Sarah Stamp and Julia Wakelam.

122. **Election of Chair elect of the Council for 2021 to 2022**

The outgoing Chair called for nominations for the election of Chair elect for the 2021 to 2022 civic year.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, nominated Councillor Margaret Marks, which was duly seconded by Councillor Joe Mason.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to a 'minded to' vote and it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Margaret Marks be elected Chair elect of West Suffolk Council for the 2021 to 2022 civic year.

Taking into account the nomination received at this meeting, a formal vote on the election of Chair would be taken at the 'in person' Annual Meeting of Council on 19 May 2021.

The retiring Chair removed his Chain of Office and acknowledged his years in office (2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021), before inviting Councillor Margaret Marks to take the Chair.

Councillor Harvey's outgoing remarks included thanking fellow councillors and numerous officers, with special thanks to Ruth Pusterla, Personal Assistant to the Chair of the Council, for their help and support during this time as Chair.

(Councillor Colin Noble joined the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

123. Chair elect's announcements

The Chair elect firstly welcomed members to formally join her in paying tribute to the retiring Chair, Councillor Brian Harvey, for his outstanding contribution and dedicated service to the Council during his two years' in office following the creation of West Suffolk Council on 1 April 2019.

Councillor Harvey was elected the first Chair of West Suffolk Council at its inaugural Annual Meeting on 22 May 2019 and due to there being no Annual Meeting of Council in 2020 as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, had served a much longer term than anticipated.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, together with Councillors Ian Shipp and Diane Hind, Group Leaders of the minority groups, each paid their own tribute to Councillor Harvey.

Although subject to formal resolution, the Chair elect acknowledged her forthcoming year in office, which included graciously thanking fellow councillors for her appointment, numerous officers, with special thanks to Ruth Pusterla, Personal Assistant to the Chair, and announcing the charities she wished to support during 2021 to 2022, namely, Our Special Friends and Suffolk Accident and Rescue Service.

124. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Alecock, Mick Bradshaw, Simon Brown, Max Clarke and Don Waldron.

Councillor Dawn Dicker had indicated that she would need to leave the meeting early due to another commitment.

125. Election of Vice Chair elect of the Council for 2021 to 2022

The Chair elect nominated Councillor Mike Chester for the election of Vice Chair elect for the 2021 to 2022 civic year, which was duly seconded by Councillor Susan Glossop.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to a 'minded to' vote and it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Mike Chester be elected Vice Chair elect of West Suffolk Council for the 2021 to 2022 civic year.

Taking into account the nomination received at this meeting, a formal vote on the election of Vice Chair would be taken at the 'in person' Annual Meeting of Council on 19 May 2021.

Although subject to formal resolution, the Vice Chair elect acknowledged his forthcoming year in office, which included graciously thanking fellow councillors for his appointment.

126. **Appointment of Cabinet members**

The Chair called upon Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council to make his announcements.

These included:

- Formally welcoming the newly elected members to West Suffolk Council and paying tribute to those members who were no longer with the Council, including those that had sadly passed away during 2020 to 2021, namely Councillors David Gathercole and Jim Meikle.
- Acknowledging the sterling work of councillors and staff of West Suffolk Council, particularly with respect to the challenges faced during the past year. He specifically acknowledged their exemplary efforts for supporting businesses and communities during the Covid-19 crisis, while continuing to deliver services.
- Announcing that the Deputy Leader, Cabinet and portfolios presently remained unchanged, which was duly noted by Council.

(Councillor Dawn Dicker left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

127. **Review of political balance and appointment to politically balanced bodies 2021 to 2022 (Report number: AGM/WS/21/001)**

Council considered this report, which sought approval of the political balance and the allocation of seats to politically balanced bodies.

A 'minded to' vote would be taken which would be considered as a recommendation to Council when a formal resolution would be sought at the subsequent 'in person' meeting arranged for 19 May 2021.

Members confirmed that they had received copies of Appendices A, B, and C which had been circulated following the distribution of the agenda and papers for the meeting. Appendix A contained the proposed allocation of seats on committees to the three political groups with proposed substitute allocations contained in Appendix B. These had been developed in consultation with Group Leaders to accord with the political balance of the Council as far as it was reasonably practicable to do so. Appendix C contained the terms of reference for the various committees.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that in order to assist the allocation of committee places to align with the political balance, it had been proposed to increase the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to 13 seats, the principle of which had been agreed by Group Leaders. As a result of the recent by-elections, the Conservative Group had also gained a seat on the Development Control Committee.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, duly seconded by Councillor Carol Bull and upon being put to a 'minded to' vote, it was

Recommended to Council (19 May 2021):

That:

1. The committees and sub-committees for 2021 to 2022 be approved, in accordance with the number of seats and terms of reference, as contained in Appendix C of Report number: AGM/WS/21/001.
2. The political balance and allocation of seats on committees as contained in Appendix A to Report number: AGM/WS/21/001, be approved.
3. The political balance and allocation of substitutes on Committees as contained in Appendix B to Report number: AGM/WS/21/001, be approved.
4. Based on the agreed allocations, it be agreed that Group Leaders have up to 14 days in which to notify the Monitoring Officer of their nominations to committee places, on which the Monitoring Officer will appoint members and substitute members to committees and sub-committees.

128. Appointment of Chair elects and Vice Chair elects of committees

The next item of business was the appointment of the Chair elects and Vice-Chair elects of the Overview and Scrutiny and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committees.

Members were reminded that the 'minded to' votes taken on each of the nominations received at this meeting for the four roles would be taken into account at the 'in person' Annual Meeting on 19 May 2021 where a vote would be taken to formally elect nominees to the respective role.

a. Appointment of Chair elect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor John Griffiths nominated Councillor Ian Shipp as Chair elect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which was duly seconded by Councillor Brian Harvey.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to the 'minded to' vote, and it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Ian Shipp be elected Chair elect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

b. Appointment of Vice Chair elect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor John Griffiths nominated Councillor Stephen Frost as Vice Chair elect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which was duly seconded by Councillor Ian Shipp.

Both Councillors Griffiths and Shipp expressed their thanks to Councillor Simon Cole, former Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (subject to formal resolution) for his work and contribution to West Suffolk Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee since its inception in May 2019, and for the years he had served as Chair of the former Forest Heath District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to the 'minded to' vote, and it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Stephen Frost be elected Vice Chair elect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

c. Appointment of Chair elect of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Councillor John Griffiths nominated Councillor Ian Houlder as Chair elect of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, which was duly seconded by Councillor Sarah Broughton.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to the 'minded to' vote, and it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Ian Houlder be elected Chair elect of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

d. Appointment of Vice Chair elect of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Councillor John Griffiths nominated Councillor Karen Richardson as Vice Chair elect of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, which was duly seconded by Councillor Mike Chester.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to the 'minded to' vote, and it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Karen Richardson be elected Vice Chair elect of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

129. **Representation on outside bodies 2021 to 2022 (Report number: AGM/WS/21/002)**

Council considered this report, which sought approval for various member appointments to represent the Council on outside bodies.

A 'minded to' vote would be taken which would be considered as a recommendation to Council when a formal resolution would be sought at the subsequent 'in person' meeting arranged for 19 May 2021.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that attached as Appendix A to the report was the list of outside bodies where the Council was currently represented and by whom. Following the 'in person' Annual Meeting of Council on 19 May 2021, the Monitoring Officer would work with Group Leaders to identify where members may wish to change their appointments and to fill the small number of vacancies currently held.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, duly seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White and upon being put to a 'minded to' vote, it was

Recommended to Council (19 May 2021):

That:

1. The Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to appoint the Council's representatives on outside bodies, in accordance with the nominations put forward by relevant Group Leaders, or the nominated body, or the individual listed, as detailed in Appendix A to Report number: AGM/WS/21/002.
2. Where no representative is nominated, the Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to seek nominations from other bodies and individuals, to be approved by Council in due course.
3. It be noted that where the outside organisation is discharging executive functions, or the Council is an observer on an organisation, these appointments will be made by Cabinet.
4. It be noted that it is intended to continue to review representation on outside bodies to ensure that it remains beneficial for the organisation and for the Council.
5. It be noted that the nominations to the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee, be proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for subsequent confirmation by Council.

130. **Conclusion**

On conclusion of the meeting, the Chair elect thanked all present for their attendance at this non-decision making virtual Annual Meeting of Council. The live broadcast subsequently ended at this point.

The meeting concluded at 7.32 pm

Signed by:

Chair
