

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on **Tuesday 14 June 2022** at **7.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present

Councillors

Chair Mike Chester

Vice Chair

John Augustine

Richard Alecock

Michael Anderson

Mick Bradshaw

Tony Brown

Carol Bull

Patrick Chung

Nick Clarke

Dawn Dicker

Roger Dicker

Robert Everitt

Stephen Frost

Susan Glossop

John Griffiths

Pat Hanlon

Brian Harvey

Diane Hind

Ian Houlder

Paul Hopfensperger

James Lay

Aaron Luccarini

Birgitte Mager

Margaret Marks

Joe Mason

Elaine McManus

Sara Mildmay-White

Andy Neal

Robert Nobbs

Colin Noble

David Palmer

Sarah Pugh

Joanna Rayner

Karen Richardson

David Roach

Marion Rushbrook

Ian Shipp

Andrew Smith

Karen Soons

Clive Springett

Sarah Stamp

Lance Stanbury

Peter Stevens

Don Waldron

219. Remembrance

Before commencing business, the Chair reminded those present that it was exactly 40 years since the Falklands War came to an end when Argentine forces surrendered to the British. All attendees were asked to stand and observe a minute's silence to remember the service and sacrifice of the British Armed Forces, their families, and the civilian communities who contributed.

In addition, the Chair asked that attendees remember former Forest Heath District Councillor Chris Barker, who had sadly died recently. The Chair made a statement of condolence, reflecting on Councillor Barker's contribution during his time on Forest Heath District Council.

220. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 March 2022, 17 May 2022 (Annual Meeting) and 17 May 2022 (extraordinary meeting) were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

221. **Chair's announcements**

The Chair reported on the civic engagements and charity activities which he and the Vice-Chair had attended since their election at the Annual Meeting on 17 May 2022.

222. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Trevor Beckwith, Sarah Broughton, Simon Brown, John Burns, Simon Cole, Andy Drummond, Rachel Hood, Beccy Hopfensperger, Victor Lukaniuk, David Nettleton, Richard Rout, David Smith, Julia Wakelam, Cliff Waterman, Nick Wiseman and Phil Wittam.

Councillor Max Clarke was also unable to attend the meeting.

223. **Declarations of interests**

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

224. **Leader's statement (Paper number: COU/WS/22/011)**

Councillor Griffiths, Leader of the Council, presented his Leader's Statement as outlined in paper number: COU/WS/22/011.

Members confirmed that they had received copies of the statement, which had been circulated following the distribution of the agenda for the meeting.

In his introductory remarks, Councillor Griffiths:

- a. **Personal remarks:** expressed his condolences to the family and friends of former Forest Heath District Councillor Chris Barker.
- b. **Platinum Jubilee events and celebrations:** congratulated Her Majesty The Queen on her Platinum Jubilee and paid tribute to those supporting celebratory public events being held in and by local communities. He also acknowledged the people and organisations of West Suffolk that had been formally recognised in HM The Queen's Jubilee Birthday Honours List.
- c. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund:** outlined details of the Council's opportunity to obtain a sizeable amount of new Government funding for investment through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The deadline for submitting the Council's investment plan to Government was 1 August 2022, therefore, to ensure all members had the opportunity to consider the proposed investment plan allocations following Cabinet's planned consideration on 19 July 2022, Councillor Griffiths announced that with the agreement of the Chair, an extraordinary meeting of Council would be formally called to consider this matter on 26 July 2022.

The Leader responded to a range of questions relating to:

- a. **Support for small businesses:** that the Council was supporting the growth of small businesses not only in Haverhill but throughout West Suffolk. Examples included working in partnership with MENTA in Brandon and Haverhill, together with its recent investment in incubation units at Suffolk Business Park, Bury St Edmunds. Should any specific opportunities arise where the Council might be able to provide support to small businesses, the Economic Growth team would welcome suggestions.
- b. **Social rented properties:** that the four new properties available for social rent in Brandon, as referred to in paragraph 26. of the Leader's Statement had not been built by Barley Homes. Any social rented property required a significant grant from Government and Barley Homes did not qualify for that. Where possible, the housing associations that worked in partnership with the Council were actively encouraged to apply for Government grants to try and fund more social rented properties within the district. The topic of 'Right to Buy' and the implications associated with that was acknowledged as being significant and the Council, with partners, was lobbying Government on a variety of measures to try and help people in need, which included those faced with housing challenges and the impact of the rising cost of living.
- c. **Grass cutting schedule:** in respect of whether the current grass cutting schedule was providing an effective delivery of service, Councillor Griffiths gave recognition to the Operations team that provided the grass and grounds maintenance service. Working with partners such as town and parish councils, housing associations and Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk Council made every effort to meet the challenges of delivering this service in a timely manner, much of which was weather dependent, and some areas being purposely left uncut to encourage greater biodiversity. Ward members and town / parish councils should be receiving grass cutting updates to keep them abreast of the Council's current schedule.
- d. **Recycling and Waste Strategy (RAWS):** recognising the excellent work of the Waste and Street Scene team during the pandemic, as highlighted in paragraph 7. of the Leader's Statement, Councillor Griffiths agreed that the expected forthcoming introduction of RAWS and the implications associated with this was complex and would be looked at in detail by the Council. Support would be provided to the service where appropriate.
- e. **Members and officers:** that councillors led the strategic direction of the Council, setting the policy framework and budget, and made decisions on a variety of matters in order to get things done. That under the excellent leadership of the organisation's Chief Executive and his Leadership Team, officers provided support to councillors in carrying out the work set out in the strategies, policies and specific budgets in place.

225. Public participation

No members of the public in attendance had registered to speak.

226. Referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet

Council noted that the last meeting of Cabinet arranged for 24 May 2022 was cancelled, therefore on this occasion there were no referrals emanating from Cabinet to Council.

227. Review of political balance and appointment to committees 2022 to 2023 (Report number: COU/WS/22/012)

Council considered this report, which sought approval for the political balance and the allocation of seats to committees for 2022 to 2023.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that he had requested that a full review of the political balance and the proposed allocation of seats and substitute seats on committees. This was due to a relatively significant change in political composition of the Council since the last review was undertaken and presented to the Annual Meeting of Council on 17 May 2022.

The changes to the composition of Council were summarised in the table at paragraph 1.1 of the report, with the allocations of seats and substitute seats that had been proposed in accordance with the political balance rules (section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) set out in section 2.

Subject to the approval of the revised political balance, and the allocation of seats and substitute seats on the relevant committees, the Group Leaders were asked to notify the Monitoring Officer with their nominations for which members from their groups would be appointed to which seats within 14 days of the day of the meeting. Thereafter, the Monitoring Officer would confirm the appointments.

One of the non-grouped independent members, Councillor Paul Hopfensperger, stated that he would not be taking one of the places offered on either the Officer Appeals Committee or Officer Appointments Committee. In accordance with the political balance rules, non-grouped members were not automatically entitled to seats on committees, however, the aforementioned had been proposed to promote member inclusivity across the Council. If approved, the opportunity for the two non-grouped members to sit on either of these committees would remain and membership would be addressed should the occasion arise for either committee to meet.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, duly seconded by Councillor Carol Bull, it was put to the vote and with the vote being xxx for the motion, none against and one abstention, it was

Resolved: That

1. The revised political balance and allocation of seats and substitutes on committees as per Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/22/012, be approved.

2. A return to the membership of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to a total of 12 members in accordance with the terms of reference at Part 3b, section 2 of the Council's Constitution, be approved.
3. The appointment of the non-grouped independent members to 1 seat on the Officer Appeals Committee and 1 seat on the Officer Appointments Committee, be approved.
4. Delegation be given for Group Leaders to nominate members from their Groups to seats and as substitutes on committees.

228. **West Suffolk Annual Scrutiny Report 2021 to 2022 (Report number: COU/WS/22/013)**

Council received and noted the West Suffolk Annual Scrutiny Report for 2021 to 2022.

Article 7 of the Council's Constitution required that 'the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee must report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.'

Councillor Ian Shipp, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee drew relevant issues to the attention of Council. He placed his thanks on record to the Committee, its partners and to Cabinet, and acknowledged the work of officers that had supported him and the Committee.

Councillor Ian Houlder, Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, drew attention to the specific work of that Committee and its two sub-committees. He placed his thanks on record to the Committee and to the teams in Finance and Internal Audit for their continuing support.

No questions were asked.

229. **Any other urgent business**

There were no matters of urgent business considered on this occasion.

The meeting concluded at 7.39 pm

Signed by:

Chair
