

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 13 June 2023** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Room, Mildenhall Hub**, Sheldrick Way, Mildenhall, IP28 7JX

Present

Councillors

Chair Cliff Waterman (Leader of the Council)

Vice Chair Victor Lukaniuk (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Donna Higgins

Diane Hind

Gerald Kelly

Richard O'Driscoll

Ian Shipp

David Taylor

Jim Thorndyke

Indy Wijenayaka

By invitation

Ian Houlder

('Outgoing' Chair of the
Performance and Audit Scrutiny
Committee)

In attendance

Carol Bull

Nick Clarke

Roger Dicker

Susan Glossop

Joe Mason

Andy Neal

Observers

Andrew Smith

Kevin Yarrow

471. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

472. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

473. **Declarations of interest**

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

474. **Open forum**

The following non-Cabinet members spoke under this item:

1. Councillor Andy Neal (Ward Member for Mildenhall Queensway)

Councillor Andy Neal addressed the Cabinet and wished to raise the following for their future consideration:

- Delivery of the West Suffolk Local Plan.
- In-house management of the Council's commercial property portfolio.
- Funding of the provision of future leisure facilities.
- Quality of grounds maintenance/grass cutting contract.
- Implementation of the outcomes from the markets review, undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the previous Council administration.
- Upgrading of street lighting to LED and associated costs.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the areas raised and responded by stating that:

- On the Cabinet agenda this evening was the proposed re-constitution of the West Suffolk Local Plan Working Group (Report number CAB/WS/23/025).
- In terms of leisure provision, a review would be undertaken of the Western Way development.
- A review would also be undertaken on the Council's grounds maintenance contract.

2. Councillor Roger Dicker (Ward Member for Kentford and Moulton)

Councillor Roger Dicker wished to refer to the poor state of the grass cutting within the District, particularly within his Ward and the complaints which he was receiving from his residents. Councillor Dicker welcomed the undertaking of a review on the grounds maintenance contract and asked in addition, for a review to also be undertaken on the Council's stance to not spray round trees and in other public areas during the spring and autumn of this year. Councillor Dicker also asked whether it would be possible for a larger budget to be provided within this particular service area.

3. Councillor Joe Mason (Ward Member for Haverhill North)

Councillor Joe Mason addressed the Cabinet and asked what new initiatives or priorities had been identified for the Families and Communities portfolio, along with clarity as to what the Cabinet intended to change or prioritise for the benefit of communities across the District.

The Leader of the Council responded by explaining that the Cabinet would be developing their future priorities, which would be mainly centred around helping its residents with the cost of living crisis; the housing crisis and the development of the local economy. The Cabinet would also be looking to especially focus the Council towards the growth area within Cambridge.

4. Councillor Carol Bull (Ward Member for Barningham)

Councillor Carol Bull addressed the Cabinet and wished to express her personal disappointment and sadness on the lack of diversity of the new Cabinet, in that there were only two women who had been appointed.

The Leader of the Council responded and thanked Councillor Bull for her very important question. The Leader also agreed that he would have liked to have had a more diverse make-up of the Cabinet. However, some of the members who had been asked to join the Cabinet, had considered that they did not have the time or resources to be able to participate in this role. However, opportunities around the potential for job sharing roles within the Cabinet was being considered.

5. Councillor Susan Glossop (Ward Member for Risby)

Councillor Susan Glossop addressed the Cabinet and expressed her concerns around the future policies and strategies for the Council. Being the 'outgoing' Portfolio Holder for Growth, Councillor Glossop was also particularly interested in the growth projects and asked whether they would be continuing in the new administration.

The Leader of the Council, responded by confirming that the growth projects would be continuing into the new administration.

6. Councillor Nick Clarke (Ward Member for Clare, Hundon and Kedington and Leader of the Conservative Group)

Councillor Nick Clarke wished to congratulate Councillor Cliff Waterman on his appointment as Leader of the Council and on his appointment of his Cabinet. Councillor Clarke also wished to raise his concerns around the current gender imbalance on the Cabinet.

Councillor Clarke also expressed his concerns regarding the delay in the Council's audit process, which was being caused by the Council's external auditors. The Leader of the Council, responded to these concerns raised and explained that the audit delays were not due to the Council. However, this situation would continue to be followed through. The Leader also wished to thank Officers for ensuring that the audit deadlines imposed on the Council continued to be met.

Councillor Clarke also explained that residents did not appear to understand the political groupings on the Council, particularly with regards to the establishment of the West Suffolk Working Partnership (WSWP). Councillor Clarke referred to the information on the Council's website, which listed the political groups and asked whether this could be reviewed for clarity. Councillor Waterman apologised for any confusion around the political groupings within the Council and for clarity purposes, confirmed that the three political groups which had been formed on the Council were:

- The West Suffolk Progressive Alliance Grouping (which consisted of Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties)
- The Independents
- The Conservatives

In addition, a partnership had also been formed between the West Suffolk Progressive Alliance Grouping and the Independents to work together, under the title of West Suffolk Working Partnership (WSWP), to form the new Council administration. The Leader agreed to review the information which was currently on the Council's website to ensure clarity around this.

At the conclusion of this item, Councillor Waterman also encouraged all members to raise any issues which they may have with the relevant Portfolio Holders. In addition, Members attending to address the Cabinet under this Open Forum agenda item were very much welcome. Although this was not a formal requirement, the Leader explained that it would be useful for notice of the content of the question/statement to be provided in advance, which would then assist with the Cabinet being able to provide a substantive response.

475. Public participation

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

476. Report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 30 March 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/024)

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed members of the following substantive items considered by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 30 March 2023:

1. Ernst and Young – 2021 to 2022 Annual Results Report to those Charged with Governance.
2. West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement 2021 to 2022.
3. 2021 to 2022 Statement of Accounts.

Councillor Ian Houlder, the 'outgoing' Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet. Councillor Houlder expressed his thanks to the Director (Resources and Property) and the Finance Team for all of their help and support which had been provided to the Committee, in his time as Chair.

The Leader also wished to thank Councillor Ian Houlder in his role as Chair of the Committee over the last Council administration. The Chair also expressed his thanks to the Director (Resources and Property) and the Finance Team for their help and support to the Committee. The Leader also supported the frustrations and disappointment expressed by the Committee regarding the delay in the auditing of the Council's accounts for 2021 to 2022 by its external auditors and that this would issue would continue to be addressed.

477. Annual Review and Appointment of the Cabinet's Joint Committee, Panel and Other Working Groups (Report number CAB/WS/23/025)

The Cabinet considered this report which was recommending appointments to the Cabinet's Joint Committee, Panel and other Working Groups for the year 2023 to 2024. Upon doing so, the existing Terms of Reference for each had been reviewed, as set out within the Appendices attached to this report.

The Leader also referred to the recommendation for the establishment of a new West Suffolk Environment and Sustainability Working Group (the proposed terms of reference were attached at Appendix D to the report). The purpose of the Working Group would be to review the progress that West Suffolk Council had made in delivering its action plans and move to Net Zero. The Working Group would also be making recommendations to Cabinet on West Suffolk Council's future role in protecting and enhancing the environment, both in the way in which it carried out its operations and through its wider work with West Suffolk's businesses and communities.

The Leader also explained that the terms of reference for the new West Suffolk Environment and Sustainability Working Group would be amended to allow for the appointment of substitutes from each political group. The Leader also confirmed that Councillor Julia Wakelam would be appointed as the Chair and Councillor Frank Stennett would be appointed as the Vice Chair of the new Working Group.

Resolved:

1. That the Leader of the Council appoints:
 - a. Councillor Diane Hind, Portfolio Holder for Resources, as the full member to represent West Suffolk Council on the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee in 2023 to 2024.
 - b. Councillors Victor Lukaniuk, Deputy Leader and David Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Operations, as the substitute members to represent West Suffolk Council on the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee in 2023 to 2024.
 - c. It be noted that, on the nomination of the Leader of the Council, the Monitoring Officer may exercise their delegated authority to appoint appropriate Cabinet membership (full and substitute members) to the above joint committee during 2023 to 2024, as necessary.
2. That:
 - a. The Cabinet continues to operate the Staff Consultative Panel in 2023 to 2024 in accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToR) contained in Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/23/025.
 - b. Periodical meetings of the above Panel be scheduled as and when required but with regard to the discussion outlined in Section 2.2.2 of Report number: CAB/WS/23/025.
3. The Cabinet continues to operate the West Suffolk Grant Working Party in 2023 to 2024 in accordance with the ToR contained in Appendix B to Report number: CAB/WS/23/025.

4. The Cabinet continues to operate the West Suffolk Local Plan Working Group in 2023 to 2024 in accordance with the ToR contained in Appendix C to Report number: CAB/WS/23/025.
5. The ToR for the new West Suffolk Environment and Sustainability Working Group for 2023 to 2024 be approved, as set out in Appendix D to Report number: CAB/WS/23/025, subject to the inclusion of the appointment of substitutes from each political group.
6. It be noted that, should it become necessary and on the nominations of Group Leaders, the Monitoring Officer may exercise their delegated authority to appoint appropriate membership (full and substitute members) to the above Panel, Working Party and Working Groups during 2023 to 2024 in accordance with their Terms of Reference.
7. Provided that resources are available to support them, informal task-and-finish working groups or taskforces can be established by the Leader to consider specific issues as required throughout 2023 to 2024.

478. **Decisions Plan: 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024 (Report number CAB/WS/23/026)**

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024.

Members took the opportunity to review the intended forthcoming decisions of the Cabinet. However, no further information or amendments were requested on this occasion.

479. **Revenues Collection Performance and Write Offs (Report number CAB/WS/23/027)**

The Cabinet considered this report, which provided the collection data in respect of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) and sought approval for the write-off of the amounts contained in the exempt Appendices attached to the report.

Councillor Diane Hind, Portfolio Holder for Resources, also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the write-off of the amounts detailed in the Exempt Appendices to Report number CAB/WS/23/027 be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax totalling £10,165.01
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Housing Benefit Overpayment totalling £21,252.86.

480. **Exclusion of press and public**

See minute number 481. below.

481. **Exempt appendices 1 and 2: Revenues Collection Performance and Write-Offs (paragraphs 1 and 2) (Report number CAB/WS/23/027)**

The Cabinet considered the exempt Appendices to this report. However, no reference was made to specific detail and, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The meeting concluded at 6.35 pm

Signed by:

Chair
