

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 14 November 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

Marion Rushbrook

(Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Phil Wittam

(Member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee)

Observers

Roger Dicker

Andy Neal

510. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

511. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

512. **Declarations of interest**

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

513. **Open forum**

No non-Cabinet members in attendance wished to speak under this item.

514. **Public participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance on this occasion.

515. Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 12 September 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/047)

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items considered by the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee on 12 September 2023:

1. Performance report
2. Welfare reform update
3. ARP financial performance
4. Fraud and compliance team target review
5. Forthcoming issues

Councillor Diane Hind, Portfolio Holder for Resources, presented this report and drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet. Councillor Hind also wished to thank the staff working in the Anglia Revenues Partnership who continued to support the residents of West Suffolk.

516. Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 21 September 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/048)

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2023:

1. Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Monitoring Report (April 2022 to March 2023)
2. Modern Slavery Update
3. CCTV at West Suffolk Council
4. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee: 12 July 2023
5. Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel: 14 July 2023
6. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024
7. Work programme update 2023 and Suggestions for Scrutiny

On behalf of Councillor Sarah Broughton, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had been unable to attend the meeting, Councillor Marion Rushbrook, Vice Chair of the Committee, presented this report and drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet.

517. Report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 28 September 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/049)

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items considered by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 28 September 2023:

1. Ernst and Young – Auditors Annual Report 2021 to 2022
2. Annual Governance Statement 2022 to 2023
3. Draft Statement of Accounts 2022 to 2023
4. Complaints and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman: Annual Report 2022 to 2023

5. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 – Annual Report and Review of the RIPA Guidance
6. Work Programme Update 2023 to 2024

On behalf of Councillor Peter Armitage, Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Vice Chair, Councillor Frank Stennett, who had both been unable to attend the meeting, Councillor Phil Wittam, presented this report and drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet.

518. **National Heritage Lottery Bid - Abbey of St Edmunds (Report number CAB/WS/23/050)**

(Councillor Diane Hind wished it noted and recorded that she was the Town Mayor of Bury St Edmunds)

The Cabinet considered this report which explained that the Abbey Gardens was a green flag award winning park which attracted around 1.3million visits per year. Within the gardens stood the ruins of the former Abbey of St Edmund. The current cathedral building was one of the Abbey's churches. The Abbey ruins were English Heritage's most visited 'free to visit' venue in the country. Given its popularity as a visitor destination it played a significant role in helping boost the local economy.

Notwithstanding the above, there were some significant challenges facing the site which included:

- Paths in the Abbey Gardens and routes around the ruins which were not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and were potentially hazardous for visitors to navigate.
- A large proportion of the ruins in the gardens were fenced off because of erosion and English Heritage were financially unable to undertake all of these repairs in a timely fashion.
- Whilst there had been new interpretation panels installed within the Gardens, interpretation of the site as a whole was poor.

The feedback from the NLHF concerning an initial point of entry submission had been positively received. Representatives from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) had visited the site to observe what the key components of a bid would include, these being:

- Conservation of the highly vulnerable Abbey ruins.
- Improving and expanding the footpath network around the former Abbey.
- Strengthening connectivity between the Abbey, River Lark, Cathedral and Town.
- Increase biodiversity in the Abbey area.
- Repurposing of an unused cathedral building into a heritage welcome centre.
- Building of a west cloister which would link the centre to the cathedral.
- Providing space for community activities, exhibitions and art installations.

Working in partnership, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, West Suffolk Council, and English Heritage were proposing to submit a joint stage one NLHF bid for funding to address the challenges outlined above. The Cathedral would be the

lead applicant for this submission as the bulk of the capital spend would be on their land.

In order to make the bid, the NLHF would want to see a partnership agreement between the Cathedral, the Council and English Heritage and this agreement had been drafted and was currently being considered by each partner. The Cathedral had appointed and were funding a consultant to draw together the bid. West Suffolk Council were holding around £250,000 of Section 106 funding ringfenced for the Abbey Gardens which the Council could use as its contributory funding towards the bid.

Councillor Ian Shipp, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet. He particularly wished to thank Officers and Members for all of their work in reaching this stage of the process. This work was also commended by the Leader of the Council.

Resolved:

That:

1. Having considered the merits of the proposed joint National Heritage Lottery bid, with St Edmundsbury Cathedral and English Heritage, the pursuing of the stage one bid submission, be agreed.
2. The Director (Operations) be authorised to agree the final stage one submission documents, in consultation with the other partners to the bid and based on approval from the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Leisure.
3. £250,000 be allocated, in principle, from the Section 106 funding already earmarked for improvements in the Abbey Gardens to the delivery phase of the project as contributory funding, should the bid be successful at stage one development phase.

519. Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024 (Report number CAB/WS/23/051)

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period 1 November 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.

The meeting concluded at 6.25 pm

Signed by:

Chair