

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Notes of informal discussions of the **SEBC/FHDC Cabinets** held on **Tuesday 24 November 2015** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU

Present: Councillors

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

John Griffiths (in the Chair for the informal discussions)

Robert Everitt	Alaric Pugh
Ian Houlder	Joanne Rayner
Sara Mildmay-White	Peter Stevens

In Attendance:

Susan Glossop

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

David Bowman	Stephen Edwards
Andy Drummond	James Waters

Prior to the formal meeting, informal discussions took place on the following three substantive items:

- (1) Office Accommodation Plan.
- (2) Recommendations of the Licensing Committee – 28 September 2015 (FHDC) / Recommendations of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee – 29 September 2015 (SEBC): West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019.
- (3) Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance.

All Members of Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet had been invited to attend St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Offices to enable joint informal discussions on the reports to take place between the two authorities, prior to seeking formal approval at their respective separate Cabinet meetings, immediately following the informal discussions.

The Leader of St Edmundsbury Borough Council welcomed all those present to West Suffolk House and the Lawyer advised on the format of the proceedings for the informal discussions and subsequent separate meetings of each authority.

Under their Constitutions, both Cabinets listed as standing agenda items: an 'Open Forum', which provided the opportunity for non-Cabinet Members to discuss issues with Cabinet and also 'Public Participation', which provided the opportunity for Members of the public to speak. Therefore, as any matters arising from the discussions held during these agenda items may have some bearing on the decisions taking during the separate formal meetings, non-Cabinet Members and members of the public were invited to put their questions/statements prior to the start of the joint informal discussions.

1. Open Forum

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak under this item in relation to Items 4. to 6. of the agenda.

2. Public Participation

There were no members of the public in attendance.

3. Office Accommodation Plan (Report Nos: CAB/FH/15/056 and CAB/SE/15/071)

The Cabinets were presented with this report which set out the Office Accommodation Plan, which would form the basis of future office accommodation projects, including the Mildenhall Hub.

This report explained that within the next couple of years, both Councils would need to make some key decisions relating to property development/asset management projects which could impact on the delivery of services, choice of new work styles and technologies and the associated need for office accommodation.

This report provided an overarching Office Accommodation Plan which clearly articulated the rationale for such accommodation and the principles that would be adhered to when developing each of these individual development projects.

Councillors Stephen Edwards (FHDC) and Ian Houlder (SEBC), Portfolio Holders for Resources and Performance, also drew relevant issues to the attention of both Cabinets.

Members referred to paragraph 6.2 of the report and raised some concerns that the current technology used by Councillors was not considered to be robust enough and this would need to be further addressed when investigating options for the development of computer and telephony arrangements, to properly allow for Councillors to be able to operate effectively out of different buildings/public spaces.

4. **Recommendations of the Licensing Committee – 28 September 2015 (FHDC)/Recommendations of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee – 30 September 2015 (SEBC): West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019 (Report Nos: CAB/FH/15/057 and CAB/SE/15/072)**

The Cabinet were presented with the recommendations from both Licensing Committees with regard to the West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019.

The current Statement of Policy expired in January 2016 and the Committee had considered the results of the public consultation which had been undertaken on the Policy that would apply for the period 2016 to 2019. The Policy set out how both Councils, in their roles as Licensing Authorities, would carry out functions under the Gambling Act 2005. It also recognised the important of responsible gambling within the entertainment industry, whilst seeking to balance this with the key objectives of the Act.

Replies to the consultation, along with Officer responses, were attached as Appendix 1. The full consultation responses were contained in Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c. In the absence of data to support local risks and the development of a robust gambling area profile, the consultation draft of the Statement required minor revision and the key changes made were listed in paragraph 2.5 of Report No LIC/FH/15/006 and Report No LIC/SE/15/003. Further revision made as a result of the consultation were referred to in the Office Response column of Appendix 1. A final version of the document was included as Appendix 3.

The objective of the Policy was to provide a vision for the local area and a statement of intent that guided practice.

Councillor Alaric Pugh, SEBC Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, also drew relevant issues to the attention of both Cabinets.

5. **Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance (Report Nos: CAB/FH/15/058 and CAB/SE/15/073)**

The Cabinets were presented with the revised West Suffolk Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance (as set out within Appendix A).

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, SEBC Portfolio Holder for Housing, explained that the West Suffolk Housing Strategy recognised the importance of maximising the use of existing housing. Both Councils offered discretionary grant assistance under the Housing Assistance Policy. The Strategy contained an action to review and revised the Policy to ensure that it continued to meet its purpose.

The review had considered that, in the main, the existing Policy helped to ensure decent safe housing for households benefiting from a grant. However, some changes were considered necessary to simplify the Policy and increase uptake. Processes would also be introduced to ensure that as much funding was recovered as possible, so that the Councils could continue to offer grants

and investment in this sector. The key changes to the Policy were set out in paragraph 1.2.1 of both reports.

The new Policy would also be promoted to encourage uptake for these grants, targeting those areas of West Suffolk, in particular, where there was a density of poorer housing and where residents may benefit from a Home Assistance Grant.

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 6.24 pm, the Chairman then formally opened the meeting of Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet at 6.25 pm in the Conference Chamber East.

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 24 November 2015 at **6.25 pm** in the **Conference Chamber East,**
West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU

Present: Councillors

Chairman James Waters (Leader of the Council)

David Bowman
Andy Drummond

Stephen Edwards

131. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robin Millar.

132. **Open Forum**

There were no non-Cabinet Members in attendance.

133. **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

134. **Office Accommodation Plan (Report No CAB/FH/15/056)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No CAB/FH/15/056, with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Office Accommodation Plan, as set out in Report No CAB/FH/15/056, be approved, as the basis for future office accommodation projects, including the Mildenhall Hub.

135. **Recommendation of the Licensing Committee - 28 September 2015: West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019 (Report No CAB/FH/15/057)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No CAB/FH/15/057, with the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: (9 December 2015)

That the Gambling Act 2005: West Suffolk Joint Statement of Policy for the period 2016 to 2019, as contained in Appendix 3 to Report No LIC/FH/15/006, be adopted.

136. **Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance (Report No CAB/FH/15/058)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No CAB/FH/15/058, with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the revised West Suffolk Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance, as contained in Appendix A to Report No CAB/FH/15/058, be approved.

137. **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2016/2017 (Report No CAB/FH/15/059)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presented this report which set out recommendations on the 2016/2017 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) and technical changes from 1 April 2016.

The Portfolio Holder explained that from 1 April 2013, the Government had replaced Council Tax Benefit with a Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS), which meant that the Council had to decide upon a local means tested scheme to replace the Council Tax Benefit.

Based on the overall findings of the second year review, as outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of Report No CAB/Fh15059, it was being recommended to continue the LCTRS in tis current form, including applying the current 2015/2016 level of applicable amounts within the LCTRS for 2016/2017.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: (9 December 2015)

That no change be made to the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme or Council Tax Technical changes levels for 2016/2017.

138. **Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2016/2017 (Report No CAB/FH/15/060)**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which set out the basis of the formal calculation for the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2016/2017.

The Council Tax Base calculations were used to determine the New Homes Bonus received by the Council and the level of Council Tax set. Once approved, the Tax Base for Council Tax collection purposes of 17,207.93 would be included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Head of the Anglia Revenues Partnership also commended the positive work being taken with regard to visits to empty properties to bring them back into use.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: (9 December 2015)

That:-

1. The tax base for 2016/2017, for the whole of Forest Heath be 17,207.93 equivalent Band 'D' dwellings, as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of Report No CAB/FH/15/060.
2. The tax base for 2016/2017 for the different parts of its area, as defined by Parish or special expense area boundaries, be as shown in Appendix 2 to Report No CAB/FH/15/060.

The Meeting concluded at 6.35 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
