

Council



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on
Wednesday 9 December 2015 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber,**
District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman David Bimson

Vice Chairman Carol Lynch

Michael Anderson	Louise Marston
Andrew Appleby	Christine Mason
Chris Barker	David Palmer
John Bloodworth	Peter Ridgwell
Ruth Bowman	Nigel Roman
Rona Burt	Bill Sadler
Louis Busuttil	Reg Silvester
Simon Cole	Lance Stanbury
Stephen Edwards	James Waters
James Lay	

115. **Minutes**

The minutes of the following meetings were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman:

14 October 2015; and
17 November 2015.

116. **Chairman's Announcements (Report No COU/FH/15/038)**

The report was noted.

The Vice-Chairman asked that the following additional items be added to her itinerary in addition to those listed within Report No COU/FH/15/038:

Tuesday 20 October Mildenhall College Academy Awards Evening
Dome Leisure, Mildenhall

Sunday 1 November East Cambridgeshire District Council Chairman's
Civic Service
St Peter's Church, Fordham

In response to a question from Councillor Bill Sadler, the Leader expanded on his meetings with Unex Group in connection with Queensbury Lodge in Newmarket.

117. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Bowman, Andy Drummond, Brian Harvey, Robin Millar and Colin Noble.

118. **Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

119. **The Leader's Report (Report No COU/FH/15/039)**

The Leader presented his statement to the meeting, as set out in Report No COU/FH/15/039. He made specific reference to the ongoing discussions surrounding devolution.

He also highlighted how he looked forward to welcoming West Suffolk's new Director Jill Korwin in January 2016.

Lastly, he thanked all Members and Officers for their hard work throughout 2015 and wished all a very Merry Christmas.

120. **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

121. **Referrals Report of Recommendations from Cabinet (Report No COU/FH/15/040)**

The Council considered the referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet as set out in Report No COU/FH/15/040:

1. Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2016-2017
(Cabinet: 27 October 2015)

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, was pleased to report to all present that as of the end of November 2015 the budget gap now stood at just £55,000.

He thanked Officers for all their hard work in reducing this from £471,000 (as set out in Report No COU/FH/15/040) and assured Members that work was still ongoing in order to present a balanced budget to the next Council meeting in February 2016.

On the motion of the Cabinet Member, seconded by Councillor Bill Sadler, and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the proposals, as detailed in Section 5 and Table 2 at Paragraph 5.1 of Report No PAS/FH/15/052, be included in securing a balanced budget for 2016-2017.

2. Recommendations of the Licensing Committee – 28 September 2015: West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016-2017
(Cabinet: 24 November 2015)

On the motion of Councillor James Waters, Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth, seconded by Councillor Stephen Edwards and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

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.

3. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2016/2017
(Cabinet: 24 November 2015)

In response to a question from Councillor Simon Cole with regard to the one month exemption for Class C (empty, substantially unfurnished) homes the Head of ARP clarified that the scheme operated by Forest Heath District Council was in fact generous compared to a large number of other authorities.

Following which, on the motion of Councillor Stephen Edwards, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, seconded by Councillor Ruth Bowman and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

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

4. Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2016/2017
(Cabinet: 24 November 2015)

On the motion of Councillor Stephen Edwards, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, seconded by Councillor Ruth Bowman and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The tax base for 2016/2017 for the whole of Forest Heath is 17.207.93 equivalent Band 'D' dwellings, as detailed in Paragraph 1.4 of Report No CAB/FH/15/060; and
2. The tax base for 2016/2017 for the different parts of its area, as defined by Parish or special expense area boundaries, are shown in Appendix 2 of Report No CAB/FH/15/060.

122. **West Suffolk Joint Independent Remuneration Panel - Review of Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council Members' Allowances Scheme**

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, advised the meeting that the West Suffolk Joint Independent Remuneration Panel had circulated a questionnaire to all Members seeking their views on the current Members' Allowances Scheme being extended for a further 12 months and asking to be informed of any urgent items which should be considered before a full review is carried out in 2016.

The Panel would like to thank Members who responded and confirmed that all comments had been considered: the issue of general taxation of mileage allowances was a matter for HM Revenues and Customs and was not within the remit of the Panel; and the perceived discrepancy between rural and town centre Members relating to mileage would be considered as part of the full review in 2016.

On the motion of the Cabinet Member and seconded by Councillor John Bloodworth it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The Forest Heath District Council Members' Allowances Scheme should continue in its current form until 30 November 2016; and
2. A new West Suffolk Joint Independent Remuneration Panel to be appointed from 1 June 2016, to conduct a full review of both Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council Members' Allowances Schemes.

123. **Questions to Chairmen of other Committees**

Questions to Councillor Rona Burt, Chairman of Development Control Committee (4 November and 2 December 2015):

1. Suffolk County Council

Councillor Simon Cole made a number comments with regard to Suffolk County Council and voiced concern at their level of co-operation and delivery in respect of planning applications.

Councillor Burt explained that in view of the comments made in a similar vein at the last meeting of the Committee (2 December 2015) she intended to organise meetings between Committee Members and representatives of the County Council in the New Year.

2. Post-Approval Planning Process

Councillor Bill Sadler voiced displeasure at the amount of time it took from a planning application being granted to the development being commenced onsite.

Councillor Burt explained that Officers had responded to Councillor Sadler's comment at the December Committee meeting, at which they outlined some of the activities that had to be produced following an approval; including the S106, preparation of work to clear 'pre-commencement' conditions, site preparation and construction of the dwellings.

Councillor Burt added that the Service Manager (Planning – Development) had explained that work was ongoing jointly across the county to see how the post-approval process could be sped up.

Councillor James Waters, Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth, also responded and made reference to the way in which the future arrangements of devolution could bring about improvements to the process.

With the indulgence of the Chairman, Councillor Burt also thanked all Members present who sat on the Development Control Committee for their support during 2015.

124. Urgent Questions on Notice

Chairman's Announcements There were no urgent questions on notice.

125. Chairman's Announcements

On conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman thanked all present for their attendance and wished them a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting concluded at 6.25 pm

Signed by:

Chairman

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