

Informal Joint Cabinet



Notes of informal discussions of the SEBC/FHDC **Cabinets** held on **Tuesday 24 November 2015** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber West**, 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	Peter Stevens
Sara Mildmay-White	

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 importance 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 revise 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 St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet at 6.25 pm in the Conference Chamber West.

Cabinet



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman John Griffiths (Leader of the Council) (in the Chair)
Vice Chairman Sara Mildmay-White (Deputy Leader)

Robert Everitt
Ian Houlder
Alaric Pugh

Joanna Rayner
Peter Stevens

In attendance:
Susan Glossop

144. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

145. **Open Forum**

This item had already been considered during the informal discussions in relation to Items 4 to 6 on the agenda (Item 1 above refers.)

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak on Items 7 or 8.

146. **Public Participation**

This item had already been considered during the informal discussions in relation to Items 4 to 6 on the agenda (Item 2 above refers.)

No members of the public were in attendance to speak on Items 7 or 8.

147. **Office Accommodation Plan**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/SE/15/071, *Office Accommodation Plan*, it was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

That the Office Accommodation Plan, as set out in Report No: CAB/SE/15/071, as the basis for future office accommodation projects including the Mildenhall Hub, be approved.

148. **Recommendation of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee: 29 September 2015: West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/SE/15/072, *Recommendation of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee: 29 September 2015: West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy 2016 to 2019*, it was proposed, seconded and,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

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/SE/15/003, be adopted.

149. **Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/SE/15/073, *Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance*, it was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

That the revised West Suffolk Housing Assistance Policy and Application Guidance, as contained in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/SE/15/073, be approved.

150. **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2016/2017**

The Cabinet considered Report No: CAB/SE/15/074, which sought approval for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Technical Changes 2016/2017.

Councillor Ian Houlder, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including background to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) which was introduced from 1 April 2013, together with a summary of the second year review (2014/2015) in respect of the behavioural, administrative and financial impacts of the LCTRS and council tax technical changes levels.

The recommended continuation of the current schemes covered in the report, was intended to continue to deliver a 'cost neutral scheme' against the original 10% Government grant reduction. This was in order to maintain collection rates and avoid additional administrative costs. The impact of the

2016/2017 24% reduction in Central Government grant was therefore required to be addressed elsewhere and would form part of the Council's wider Medium Term Financial Strategy review and 2016/2017 budget setting process.

Based on the overall findings of the second year review outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of the report, the Cabinet supported the recommendation to continue the LCTRS in its current form. In respect of the technical changes, based on the overall findings of the second year review outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of the report, the Cabinet also supported the recommendation to continue with the 2015/2016 levels, as shown below in Table 2 of Section 6 of the report.

Discussion was held on the relatively low demand for Exceptional Hardship payments; and the timings of the collection of payments.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That no change be made to the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme or Council Tax Technical changes levels for 2016/2017, as detailed in Sections 5 and 6 of Report No: CAB/SE/15/074.

151. Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2016/2017

The Cabinet considered Report No: CAB/SE/15/075, which sought approval for Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2016/2017.

Councillor Ian Houlder, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet including that the tax base formed the basis for the formal calculation of Council Tax for 2016/2017.

The CTB1 Tax Base Return form was attached at Appendix 1, which had been updated as at 5 November 2015 to allow for:

- (a) technical changes outlined in Report No: CAB/SE/15/074; and
- (b) potential growth in the property base during 2016/2017 taken from an average of the housing delivery numbers for those sites within the local plan and those that had planning permission, adjusted for an assumed level of discounts/exemptions within that growth of property base.

An allowance was then made for losses on collection, which assumed that overall collection rates would be maintained at approximately 98%. In addition to this collection rate change, an adjustment had been made to allow for the collectability of the Council Tax arising from the Local Council Tax Support scheme, which had been assessed at 90%. The resulting Tax Base for Council Tax collection purposes had been calculated as 35,737.08 which was an increase of 679 on the previous year.

The tax base figures provided within Appendix 2 of the report had been communicated to town and parish councils so they could start to factor these into their budget setting process.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That:

- (1) the tax base for 2016/2017, for the whole of St Edmundsbury be 35,737.08 equivalent Band 'D' dwellings, as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of Report No: CAB/SE/15/075; and**
- (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/SE/15/075.**

The meeting concluded at 6.39 pm.

Signed by:

Chairman
