

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 9 June 2016** at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Simon Cole

Chris Barker
John Bloodworth
Ruth Bowman
Christine Mason

Reg Silvester
Brian Harvey
David Palmer

78. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

79. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence received.

Councillor Bill Sadler was unable to attend the meeting.

80. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2016, were accepted by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

81. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/Statements from members of the public.

82. **Transport Links for Rural Villages in Forest Heath**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/16/013, which reminded members that in January 2016, it resolved to include in its forward work programme a member suggestion on transport links for rural villages in Forest Heath. The Committee had acknowledged that the District Council was not the responsible authority for transport and suggested before contacting various bus and rail operators that Suffolk County Council be invited to a

future meeting of the Committee to listen to its concerns regarding transport issues in Red Lodge and to answer questions from the Committee.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Phill Magill (Passenger and Transport Operations Manager) from Suffolk County Council (SCC) who was in attendance to answer questions. He advised that the Suffolk County Council Portfolio Holder for Roads and Transport (Councillor James Finch) had sent his apologies and was unable to attend due to personal matters.

Councillor Lance Stanbury, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth informed the Committee and Mr Magill that Red Lodge was an expanding area and transport (buses and trains) had not kept up with the development of the area. He then asked questions on SCC's transport policies and strategies; the need for synchronising the buses and trains to improve the economic development of the area; and what surveys SCC carried out to monitor the transport market.

In response, Mr Magill advised that SCC had a duty to assess the need for transport, but there was no duty to provide. SCC held regular liaison meetings with various bus companies across and outside of Suffolk. It was currently working towards a Quality Bus Partnership with certain standards set, such as better co-ordinated timings and multi-use tickets. SCC monitored transport provision and looked at the unmet need, which could be brought to the attention of transport providers at the liaison meetings. However, bus timings were set by the schools and where the peak demand was. In between these times, buses were expected to connect with other service providers. He also explained the developer contributions from Section 106 monies and the percentage allocated towards pump priming transport provision.

The Committee noted there was clearly dialogue taking place between SCC and the various buses providers. However, there were still gaps, and questioned whether there was anything that SCC could do differently, or what processes could change.

In response Mr Magill stated that the bus companies dictated the services, but SCC could influence routes through "homes to schools" transport. He further explained that Stephensons Buses was a key player in Suffolk.

The Committee asked a number of questions of Mr Magill, to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular, discussions were held on the changes in social needs; ticket machines and real-time information; connecting communities; public transport apps and the possibility of creating a website to enable users to discuss their public transport requirements.

The Cabinet Member questioned what influence the District Council could bring to bear, with SCC in understanding and improving rural transport.

The Committee considered the next steps and suggested inviting Stephensons Coach Company and Abellio Greater Anglia to a future meeting of the Committee.

With the vote being unanimous it was:

RESOLVED

That:

- 1) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee works in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth in improving, where possible, transport links in Forest Heath; and
- 2) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee invites Stephenson's coach company and Abellio Greater Anglia to a future meeting of the Committee so as to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by each service around public transport connectivity.

83. Draft West Suffolk Annual Report (2015-2016)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor James Waters presented Report No: OAS/FH/16/014 which outlined the draft West Suffolk Annual Report (2015-2016), which had been written as a joint West Suffolk document and was before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

The draft West Suffolk Annual Report (Appendix A) highlighted the key activities and developments which had been achieved over the financial year 2015-2016, with regard to the priorities set out in the West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-2016. The draft report contained a number of case studies and examples from West Suffolk to illustrate the achievements described. The final version of the report would be designed and would include photographs to help illustrate the progress during the year.

The Leader highlighted relevant issues for the attention of the Committee, in particular the continued success of the locality budget scheme.

Members examined the document in detail and asked a number of questions of the Leader and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular, comments were held on the following areas of the draft Annual Report:

- (1) Page 6: New apprentices box: suggest rewording so the figure reflected new apprentices across West Suffolk securing full employment, and not just with both councils.
- (2) Page 6: Small businesses box: suggest rewording to also include benefits gained.
- (3) Page 9: Solar for business: suggest rewording the third paragraph by including some context.
- (4) Page 11: Change photograph as current photograph was out of date.
- (5) Page 16: Organic waste: suggest rewording "remove the free service".

- (6) Page 17: Apex ticket sales box: the achievement in ticket sales was acknowledge but it was felt the statement would add more value as a commercial achievement rather than being evidenced under "resilient families and communities".

The Leader wished to thank the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments on the draft Annual Report. He also wished to thank officers and councillors working together across West Suffolk.

With the vote being unanimous, it was:

RECOMMENDED

That the Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2015-2016, as contained in Appendix A to Report No: OAS/FH/16/014 be approved, subject to comments made during the meeting.

84. Presentation by the Leader of the Council

As set out in the Council's Constitution, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member would be invited to attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee. Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, members were asked to consider the responsibilities of the Leader of the Council, who had been invited to the meeting.

Report OAS/FH/16/015, set out the overall responsibilities of the Leader of the Council, which were:

- Leadership and strategic direction of the Council
- External relations and communication
- East Anglia devolution deal.

Councillor James Waters, Leader of the Council opened his presentation by thanking the Committee for the invitation. He then set out the broad areas of responsibility in more detail on delivering against the Council's priorities; external relations with the wider world and devolution. The presentation also included priorities for the future, such as developing a new strategic plan; RAF Mildenhall; the Mildenhall Hub; the A11/A14 link road and better collaboration and joint working with East Cambridgeshire and road and rail improvements and infrastructure.

Members discussed the presentation in detail and asked a number of questions of the Leader of the Council, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on the two devolution deals/ proposed mayor(s) / Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP); and supporting members.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council for his informative presentation. There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the presentation by the Leader of the Council.

85. Newmarket Vision

In September 2015, the Committee received an initial report which summarised the future work the groups intended to undertake.

The Cabinet Member for Families and Communities presented Report No: OAS/FH/16/016, which updated members on the progress made by the Newmarket Vision delivery groups since September 2015.

It was reported that the partners in the Vision Group met on 21 April 2016 to reflect on the progress that had been made since the Vision was launched and what the groups should be focusing on moving forward. The structure of the group as attached as Appendix 1 to the report, and was set up not as a decision making traditional hierarchy but rather as an enabling structure.

The Cabinet member circulated a one page document which highlighted the success which came out of the Newmarket Vision Workshop on 21 April 2016.

Members discussed the report and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on the work being undertaken by the Traffic/Highways Delivery Group; ongoing parking issues in Newmarket; and how the Newmarket Vision was established.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

86. New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group - Update

The Committee was advised that since the last meeting of the Joint Task and Finish Group in December 2015, the Service Manager for Planning-Development had been working with Suffolk authorities to come to an agreement on the wording of highways conditions designed to address the adoptions issues which often arise on new housing developments/estates.

The Committee was advised that the Service manager had not been able to finalise the work with Suffolk Highways due to recent staff changes, but was actively pursuing the finalisation of this work and planned to report back to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2016.

The Committee **noted** the contents of the update.

87. Decisions Plan: June 2016 to May 2017

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/16/017, which requested that Members peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the Period June 2016 to May 2017, for which it would like further information on or might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan, and was pleased to note that Cabinet would be considering a report at its meeting on 14 June 2016 on the "introduction of charging for a pre-application advice planning service".

There being no decision required, **noted** the contents of the Decisions Plan.

88. **Work Programme and Re-appointments to Task Groups / Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/16/018, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2016 (Appendix 1).

The report also sought the re-appointment of members to the New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group with St Edmundsbury Borough Council and also the District Council's nominated representative and substitute member on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

Re-appointments to Task and Finish Groups

The Committee considered the re-appointments to the existing Task and Finish Group for 2016-2017:

- (a) **New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group:** Councillors Ruth Bowman and Bill Sadler.

With the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED

That for 2016-2017 Councillors Ruth Bowman and Bill Sadler be re-appointed to the New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group.

Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny

As in previous years, Suffolk County Council wished a representative to be appointed to its Health Scrutiny Committee from each of the County's District and Borough Councils. It was recommended that the Members should ideally be from the District's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, although it was not essential as the necessary training would be provided by the County.

The Committee considered the report and nominated Councillor Christine Mason as the District's nominated representative and Councillor John Bloodworth as substitute Member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for 2016-2017.

With the vote being unanimous, it was:

RECOMMENDED

That full Council be asked to confirm the appointment of Councillor Christine Mason as the District Council's nominated representative and

Councillor John Bloodworth as the substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for 2016-2017.

The Meeting concluded at 8.25 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
