

# Informal Joint Cabinet



**Forest Heath**  
District Council

**Notes** of informal discussions of the SEBC/FHDC **Cabinets** held on **Tuesday 20 September 2016 at 6.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber**, District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

**Present: Councillors**

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

James Waters (in the Chair for the informal discussions)

Andy Drummond	Robin Millar
Stephen Edwards	Lance Stanbury

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

Robert Everitt	Alaric Pugh
John Griffiths	Jo Rayner
Ian Houlder	Peter Stevens
Sara Mildmay-White	

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

- (1) Consideration of: Approach to Delivering a Sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020; Four-Year Settlement Offer from Central Government; and Economic Development and Growth Funding Requests.

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

The Chairman, and Leader of Forest Heath District Council, welcomed all those present to the District Offices and the interim Service Manager (Legal and Democratic Services) 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**

There were no non-Cabinet Members in attendance.

**2. Public Participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

**3. Consideration of: Approach to Delivering a Sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020; Four-Year Settlement Offer from Central Government; and Economic Development and Growth Funding Requests. (Report Nos: CAB/FH/16/041 and CAB/SE/16/045)**

The Cabinets considered the above reports, which sought approval for a number of recommendations relating to:

- (a) seeking support for the Councils' approach to delivering a medium term financial strategy 2016-2020;
- (b) whether the Councils should accept the Government's offer of a four-year finance settlement; and
- (c) whether funding requests should be allocated to projects being worked on by the Economic Development and Growth service.

The following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix 1: Report No: OAS/FH/16/022\* and its appendices:

- Appendix A: DCLG multi-year settlement and efficiency plan letter
- Appendix A Annex 1: Conditions of multi-year settlement
- Appendix B: Visual document for MTFS themes and approach
- Appendix C: MTFS work packages

Appendix 2: Economic Development and Growth area funding requests

*\* or OAS/SE/16/022 as appropriate to each authority*

The Cabinets noted the background which had led to the adoption of the current West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and its six themes, as listed in paragraph 1.4 of the report. Members also noted the financial challenges for 2017/2018 onwards, including the current medium

term budget gaps, and the likelihood of a shift in emphasis from implementing cost reduction initiatives towards behaving more commercially and considering new funding models. Focus should also be given to taking advantage of new forms of local government finance, through business rates, for example. In response to such financial challenges and changes, a proposed approach to delivering a sustainable MTFs for 2017-2020, was set out in Section 2. Whilst it would not remove the need for an annual savings programme, this approach proposed to ensure resources were available at the appropriate time to deliver the range of projects (both operational and those being developed through the behaving more commercially agenda) and therefore West Suffolk's strategic priorities.

Consideration was then given to a proposal to accept the four-year settlement offer from Central Government as this option was expected to be neutral in terms of its impact on existing financial projections and financial strategy. It would also give more certainty for financial planning purposes. Anticipated consequences of rejecting the Government's offer were provided in paragraph 4.3.

Appendix 2 set out funding requirements to progress the Economic Development and Growth (ED&G) projects currently being worked on by FHDC and SEBC. The Cabinets were asked to consider recommending approval to their own Council for its share of the total allocation that was required to fund these projects. Subject to approval, £391,500 would be allocated by FHDC and £250,500 allocated by SEBC, with each sum being met from the respective authority's Strategic Priorities and MTFs Reserves.

Councillor Ian Houlder, SEBC's Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of both Cabinets, including that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had previously considered the topics outlined in (a) and (b) above and subject to the correction of the following typographical error, both Committees had recommended approval of the three recommendations contained in the report under Part (A):

Recommendation (A)(3) be amended to read:

*That the Council's existing Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) document and the approach paper (Report No: OAS/FH/16/022\*) be recognised as the Council's Efficiency Plan, for the purposes of accepting any four-year Finance Settlement under ~~(1)~~ (2) above.*

*\* or OAS/SE/16/022 as appropriate to each authority*

Councillor Stephen Edwards, FHDC's Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew attention to additional matters to the attention of the Cabinets, including providing justification for the proposed funding allocations for the ED&G projects outlined in Appendix 2, with particular emphasis placed on being able to progress FHDC's Local Plan, as highlighted in section 2.4.

Councillor Alaric Pugh, SEBC's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, supported Councillor Edwards' comments and placed emphasis on the importance of investing in the ED&G projects, delivery of which would support West Suffolk's 'increased opportunities for economic growth' strategic priority.

Both Cabinets supported approval of the recommendations set out in (A)(1), (2) and (3) and (B).

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 6.19 pm, the Chairman then formally opened the meeting of Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet at 6.20 pm in the Council Chamber.

Minutes of Cabinet overleaf....

# Cabinet



**Forest Heath**  
District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on  
**Tuesday 20 September 2016** at **6.20pm** in the **Council Chamber, District**  
**Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY**

Present: **Councillors**

**Chairman** James Waters (Leader of the Council)  
**Vice Chairman** Robin Millar (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Andy Drummond                      Lance Stanbury  
Stephen Edwards

232. **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor David Bowman.

233. **Open Forum**

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

234. **Public Participation**

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

235. **Consideration of: Approach to Delivering a Sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-2020; Four Year Settlement Offer from Central Government and Economic Development and Growth Funding Requests**

**(Report No: CAB/FH/16/041)**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/FH/16/041, it was proposed, seconded and

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:**

**That**

- (A) Subject to the correction of a typographical error, as indicated in (A) (3) below, the following recommendations considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2016, as set out in Report No: OAS/FH/16/022, be approved:**
- (1) The approach to delivering a sustainable medium term financial strategy 2016 -2020 as set out in Report No: OAS/FH/16/022, be supported.**
  - (2) Government's offer of a four-year Finance Settlement be accepted, and the Head of Resources and Performance (Chief Financial Officer) be authorised to advise Government of Council's decision.**
  - (3) That the Council's existing Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) document and the approach paper (Report No: OAS/FH/16/022) be recognised as the Council's Efficiency Plan, for the purposes of accepting any four-year Finance Settlement under ~~(1)~~ (2) above.**
- (B) Approval be given to an allocation of £391,500 from its Strategic Priorities and MTFS Reserves, as FHDC's share towards funding the in-year (and in some cases future years) Economic Development and Growth funding requests outlined in Appendix 2 to Report No: CAB/FH/16/041.**

The meeting concluded at 6.21 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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