
Extraordinary Informal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

**Notes of Informal Discussions held on Tuesday 4 October 2016 at
6.00pm in the Conference Chamber West, West Suffolk House,
Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

Councillors Tony Brown, John Burns, Patrick Chung, Jeremy Farthing, Paula Fox, Susan Glossop, Diane Hind, Paul Hopfensperger, Richard Rout, Angela Rushen, Clive Springett and Patricia Warby.

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

Councillor Simon Cole
(Chairman for the informal discussions)

Councillors Chris Barker, John Bloodworth, Ruth Bowman, Rona Burt, Brian Harvey, Christine Mason and David Palmer.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Gallin, Chief Executive of Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils

SEBC – Councillor John Griffiths, Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Devolution

SEBC – Councillor Ian Houlder, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance

FHDC – Councillor James Waters, Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Devolution

Prior to the formal meeting, at 6.00pm informal joint discussions took place on the following item:

(1) What Will Devolution Mean for West Suffolk?

OAS.FH.04.10.2016

All Members of Forest Heath District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds to enable informal joint discussions on the above report to take place between the two authorities.

The Chairman of St Edmundsbury's Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed all those present to West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds and advised on the format of the proceedings for the informal joint discussions and subsequent separate meetings of each authority, prior to handing over to the Chairman of Forest Heath's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who would be chairing the informal joint discussions.

Members noted that each Council permitted public participation at their Overview and Scrutiny meetings. Therefore, for the purpose of facilitating these Constitutional requirements, it was proposed that public speaking should be permitted prior to the start of the informal joint discussions to enable any questions/statements to be considered by both Overview and Scrutiny Committees on item 1 above.

On this occasion however, there were no questions/statements from members of the public.

The report was then considered in the order listed on each authorities agenda.

1. **What Will Devolution Mean for West Suffolk?**

Councillor Diane Hind introduced Report No: OAS/SE/16/026 and OAS/FH/16/027, which provided Members with a summary of the key issues identified following a workshop session held on 8 September 2016.

In examining the issue of Devolution, and how Overview and Scrutiny could influence or have an input, a workshop was initiated by Councillor Diane Hind, Chairman of St Edmundsbury's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Simon Cole, Chairman of Forest Heath's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to help inform, focus and drive the agenda for the Informal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 October 2016.

The aim of the workshop was to identify any points of concern members had on Devolution, and covered the following areas:

- Overall principle of Devolution and its ever changing environment;
- Content of the Norfolk/Suffolk Devolution deals;
- Summary of consultation results;
- Double Devolution and Subsidiarity; and
- The role of scrutiny in a devolved structure.

Five areas were identified during the workshop, which it was felt scrutiny would benefit from more information on:

- 1) Running costs of the Combined Authority;
- 2) Statutory bodies and their duties/powers in relation to the role of the Combined Authority and the arrangements proposed for voting;
- 3) The Combined Authority Board and Co-opted persons;
- 4) Governance and exit arrangements;
- 5) Double Devolution and Subsidiarity.

Section 3 of Report No: OAS/SE/16/026 and OAS/FH/16/027 provided additional information on the five areas identified, as set out above.

The Committee was asked to discuss the key issues as set out in Section 3 of the report, and to formulate any findings, as appropriate.

The Committee scrutinised the report and asked a number of questions to which responses were provided.

In response to a number of questions raised, the Chief Executive and the Leader's advised the Committee:

Update on Devolution Process

- 1) MORI would be running through the consultation results with Members across Suffolk on 11 October 2016 (11am and 1.30pm). The event was also being videoed for members who could not attend.
- 2) The timetable for Council to consider giving consent to an Order establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk had been delayed by the Government. Council was now being asked to consider the Draft Order on the following dates:
 - SEBC – Monday 21 November 2016, 6.30pm (SEBC Conference Chamber)
 - FHDC – Tuesday 22 November 2016, 6pm (FHDC Council Chamber)
- 3) In the last couple of days the Prime Minister, Theresa May had stated "no mayor, no devolution deal". This had been welcomed by many, as the clarity was needed.
- 4) All constituent councils in the Norfolk and Suffolk Devolution Deal would be asked by 24 November 2016 to vote for a Combined Authority. If one of the remaining constituent councils voted against a Combined Authority, then the deal would collapse.
- 5) A Suffolk only devolution deal had not been ruled out. There were a number of potential future options if any of the constituent councils did not vote for the Combined Authority. However, it would be a new deal from scratch and any future options would need careful consideration.

Running costs of a Combined Authority

- 1) Within the Norfolk and Suffolk Deal, £25 million a year of new money would be provided for the next 30 years to support economic growth; development of local infrastructures and jobs.
- 2) The Government had proposed gateway reviews to be carried out every five years between the Combined Authority and the Government in relation to the £25 million funding per year.
- 3) All Constituent Councils within a Combined Authority would be equal partners and would have one vote, except where the members had a statutory role.

- 4) A Shadow Combined Authority would be created and would be made up of existing staff to carry out the roles of the three statutory posts. Once the Elected Mayor was in place, they would then decide on staffing.

Combined Authority Board and Co-opted persons

Members expressed concerns regarding the Mayor and their ability to vote against a majority decision or proposal by right of veto.

Double devolution and subsidiarity

Double devolution and subsidiarity was not about structural change, but wanting to see more engagement and delivery locally; making accountability more local and the need to deliver what was contained with the devolution deal.

The Chairman summed up the informal joint discussions by thanking the Leaders and the Chief Executive for attending the meeting. The session had served its purpose in allowing Overview and Scrutiny members in making the Leaders aware of their concerns, in particular the Mayor and their veto vote.

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 7.34pm, the Chairman then formally opened the Forest Heath District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Conference Chamber West at 7.35pm.

Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 4 October 2016** at **7.35 pm** in **Conference Chamber West, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Simon Cole

Vice Chairman Ruth Bowman

Chris Barker
John Bloodworth
Rona Burt

Brian Harvey
Christine Mason
David Palmer

108. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes declared.

109. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Reg Silvester and Nigel Roman.

110. **Public Participation**

Public participation had been included within the previous informal joint discussions and there had been no questions/statements from members of the public.

111. **What will Devolution Mean for West Suffolk?**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Committee formally considered Report No: OAS/FH/16/027.

Members had scrutinised the report in detail and had asked questions to which responses were provided.

Councillor Ruth Bowman moved the recommendation, this was duly seconded by Councillor Rona Burt and with the vote being unanimous, it was

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RECOMMENDED: That

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee wished to express its concerns to Cabinet regarding the veto vote of the Mayor.

The Meeting concluded at 7.36 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
