

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 25 October 2016 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District**
Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman James Waters
Vice Chairman Robin Millar

David Bowman
Andy Drummond

Stephen Edwards
Lance Stanbury

By Invitation:

Simon Cole

(Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee)

Ruth Bowman

(Vice Chairman of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee)

Louis Busuttil

(Chairman of the Performance and Audit
Scrutiny Committee)

240. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

241. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 September 2016 and 20 September 2016 were unanimously confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

242. **Open Forum**

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak under this item.

243. **Public Participation**

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

244. **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 15 September 2016**
(Report No: CAB/FH/16/043)

Councillor Simon Cole, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented this report which informed the Cabinet of the following items which had been discussed by the Committee on 15 September 2016 and also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet:

- (1) Annual Presentation by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth.
- (2) Approach to Delivering a Sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020 and Consideration of the Four-Year Settlement Offer from Central Government. (*The recommendations in relation to this item, had been considered at the Cabinet meeting on 20 September 2016*).
- (3) Local Air Quality Strategy Progress Report (2015-2016).
- (4) Final Report of the New Housing Development Sites Joint Task and Finish Group.
- (5) Decisions Plan: September 2016 to May 2017.
- (6) Work Programme Update.

Councillor Cole also reported an error within paragraph 1.3.8 of the report and explained that the recommendation which referred to the 'Head of Operations' should actually read the 'Head of Planning and Growth'.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the contents of Report No CAB/FH/16/043, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

245. Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 20 September 2016 (Report No: CAB/FH/16/044)

The Cabinet received this report which informed them of the following items which had been discussed by the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee on 20 September 2016:

- (1) Performance Report.
- (2) Welfare Reform Update.
- (3) ARP Health and Safety Policy.
- (4) ARP Transformation Programme.
- (5) Forthcoming Issues; and
- (6) Exempt: Commercial and Partnership Update

Councillor Edwards also drew Members attention to paragraph 1.1.5 of the report which explained that the Partnership currently had an underspend of £219,064 against budget and the reasons for the specific variances had been reported to the Joint Committee accordingly.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

246. **Report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 22 September 2016 (Report No: CAB/FH/16/045)**

Councillor Louis Busuttil, Chairman of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, presented this report which informed the Cabinet of the following items which had been discussed by the Committee on 22 September 2016 and also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet:

- (1) Ernst and Young – Presentation of 2015-2016 ISA260 Annual Results Report to those Charged with Governance.
- (2) West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement 2015-2016.
- (3) 2015-2016 Annual Statement of Accounts.
- (4) Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors. *(This item was subject to a separate report on the agenda – Report No CAB/FH/16/046).*
- (5) Work Programme Update.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

247. **Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee - 22 September 2016: Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors (Report No: CAB/FH/16/046)**

Councillor Louis Busuttil, Chairman of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, presented this report which asked the Cabinet to consider the options available for appointing External Auditors in time to make the first appointment by 31 December 2017, following the closure of the Audit Commission and the end of the transitional arrangements.

The Cabinet were informed that it was the Council's statutory responsibility to appoint a local auditor to audit its 2018-2019 accounts by 31 December 2017. In meeting this statutory responsibility, the Council could choose one of the following options:

1. Establish a stand-alone Auditor Panel to make the appointment on behalf of the Council.
2. Commence work on exploring the establishment of local joint procurement arrangements with neighbouring authorities.
3. Use an existing independent panel of the Authority (this would only be applicable where a suitably constituted plan already existed).

The Committee had been provided with the advantages and disadvantages for each of the three options, including risk management and legal/financial implications.

The Council had only to December 2017 to make an appointment, which meant that one of the three options would need to be in place by Spring 2017 in order that the contract negotiation process could be carried out during 2017.

The Committee had been advised that Option 3 would provide for better economies of scale in keeping audit fees down and having a Suffolk Wide auditor.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: (21 December 2016)

That Option 3, to 'opt-in' to the sector led body (Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA)) for the independent appointment of the Council's External Auditor, beginning with responsibilities for the financial year 2018-2019, as set out in Report No PAS/FH/16/023, be approved.

248. Decisions Plan: October 2016 to May 2017 (Report No: CAB/FH/16/047)

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period October 2016 to May 2017.

Members took the opportunity to review the intended forthcoming decisions of the Cabinet. However, no further information or amendments were requested on this occasion.

249. Revenues Collection and Performance Write-Offs (Report No: CAB/FH/16/048)

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for the write-off of uncollectable amounts in respect of Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit overpayments.

The Portfolio Holder referred to paragraph 1.5 of the report which explained that the Council was working with the Local Government Association (LGA) for legislation changes which would support the prevention of businesses building up large amounts of unpaid business rates.

Paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report also set out the collection rates for the National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) and Council Tax as at 30 September 2016.

The Cabinet also considered the exempt Appendices to this report and as reference was to be made to specific detail, these discussions, were held in private session (see Minute Number 251. below).

250. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act.

251. **Exempt Appendices 1, 2 and 3: Revenues Collection Performance and Write-Offs (paras 1 and 2) (Report No: CAB/FH/16/048)**

The Cabinet considered the exempt Appendices to Report No CAB/FH/16/048, where reference was made to the specific detail contained within these Appendices.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the write-off of the amounts detailed in the exempt Appendices to Report No CAB/FH/16/048, be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax totalling £5,709.68
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Business Rates totalling £74,715.96
3. Exempt Appendix 3: Overpayment of Housing Benefit totalling £5,809.18.

The Meeting concluded at 6.15 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
