

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 15 March 2017** at **4.00 pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Diane Hind

Simon Brown
Tony Brown
John Burns
Patrick Chung
Paula Fox
Susan Glossop
Paul Hopfensperger

Richard Rout
Angela Rushen
Clive Springett
Sarah Stamp
Jim Thorndyke
Frank Warby

Substitutes attending:

Margaret Marks

By Invitation:

Ian Houlder, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance
Alaric Pugh, Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth

138. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeremy Farthing and Andrew Speed.

139. Substitutes

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Margaret Marks for Councillor Jeremy Farthing.

140. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

141. Public Participation

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

142. **Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance**

[Councillor Richard Rout arrived at 4.04pm, during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Paul Hopfensperger arrived at 4.05pm, during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Angela Rushen arrived at 4.08pm, during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Clive Springett arrived at 4.43pm, during the consideration of this item]

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 Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, who had been invited to the meeting.

The Committee was reminded that on 9 March 2016, the Committee received a presentation from Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, setting out responsibilities covered under the portfolio.

At this meeting, the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance had been invited to the meeting to provide a follow-up presentation on his portfolio. Report No: OAS/SE/17/008 set the areas of responsibility and the focus of the follow-up presentation, which was to:

- Outline the main challenges faced during the first year;
- Outline some key successes and any failures during the first year and any lessons learned; and
- Set out the vision for the Portfolio through to 2019, and whether on target to meet that vision.

Councillor Ian Houlder opened his verbal update by thanking the Committee for the invitation and introduced two new members of staff under his portfolio areas, Leah Mickleborough, Service Manager (Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer) and Kevin Taylor, Service Manager (ICT). He then provided a number of examples, outlining challenges faced; successes and lessons learnt; and the vision through to 2019, such as:

- Staffing: attracting high calibre people to the organisations; recruitment of key technical staff; and staff turnover - 8.74% (challenge);
- Member Development: 54 members out of 72, across St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council had attended events

since April 2016. 25% of all members had not attended any training (challenge);

- Loss of the four year financial settlement grant from Government (challenge);
- ICT Strategy (challenge);
- Balancing the budget (success);
- Appointed Service Manager for ICT (success);
- New Shared Legal Service (success);
- Continue to deliver a self-sustaining Medium Term Financial Strategy (vision);
- New and extended income streams (vision);
- Internal Audit providing ongoing assurances (vision).

Members discussed the update and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided. Discussions were held on the difficulties around recruitment; the welfare of staff and the percentage of illness related to stress at work; and the new shared legal services arrangements.

In particular the Committee discussed the importance of member development as it was the duty of all members to keep their training up to date, and questioned what was being done to encourage members to attend training events/development sessions. It was reported that the Joint Member Development Group would be sending an email to all members to complete an online questionnaire to capture information on their knowledge base. The Group wanted a 100% response from members and Group Leaders needed to encourage their members to complete the questionnaire. Once information was received, each member would receive their training plan.

The Committee questioned whether consideration had been given to holding webinars and whether the West Suffolk Information Strategy could help deliver this. It was also suggested the timings of training sessions and the possibility of holding four days a year for intensive training should be reviewed.

It was suggested by the Assistant Director (HR, Legal and Democratic Services), that this could be a future piece of work for scrutiny as more detailed work was needed in re-energising member development.

In response to particular questions raised:

- i) The Cabinet Member agreed to feedback comments made relating to ARP and the unacceptable time members of the Committee had experienced in keeping people hanging on the phone and not responding to emails.

- ii) Officers agreed to feedback to ARP the possibility of paperless billing for council tax.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the follow-up update on his portfolio.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update.

143. Update on Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan and North West Relief Road, Haverhill

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth introduced Report No: OAS/SE/17/009, which updated Members on the Haverhill Masterplan and the North West Relief Road, Haverhill. The report provided members with detailed information on:

- The role of The One Haverhill Partnership in the Haverhill Town Centre Masterplanning process;
- The Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan process in the production of the masterplan document;
- The Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan process in implementing the adopted masterplan;
- Key issues and challenges;
- Lessons to be learnt for the other West Suffolk masterplans; and
- The North West Relief Road, Haverhill.

Haverhill Masterplan

The Cabinet Member provided the Committee with a brief overview of the Haverhill Masterplan, for those members who were unfamiliar with the scheme. He explained that the methodology used in producing the Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan was now being used for the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplanning process.

The Committee considered the update on the Masterplan, and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth and the Council's Chief Executive and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on the marketing and promotion of the Masterplan and the need for regular updates for residents. In response to these discussions, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth explained that a number of communication channels were available, such as the PR service to One Haverhill and regular Portfolio Holder briefings to Haverhill councillors. Additional communications could be done through the introduction of a Haverhill Town wide newsletter and display boards. It was further explained that the main way of disseminating information was via the

One Haverhill Partnership Board process, who should be reporting back to their organisations including Haverhill Town Council on a regular basis.

Discussions were also held on the current consultation being carried out for the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan and it was questioned why most of the consultation sessions were being held during the working day and very few in the evenings or weekends. The Cabinet Member agreed to take on board the comments made regarding the timings for future consultation events. He further explained that all comments received through the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan consultation events would be responded to, and the final document would explain where the Council disagreed with comments received.

Haverhill Relief Road

The Cabinet Member provided a brief overview on the delivery of the Haverhill Relief Road, the planning permission and the Bond, which covered the figure for Suffolk County Council to deliver the road, if it was called upon. He then explained the commitment which was in place across the public sector in Suffolk in delivering economic growth.

The Committee considered the update on the Haverhill Relief Road, and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on the wording of the Section 106; the Bond which had been secured to ensure that the road was delivered within the five year timescale; and health contributions from the Section 106.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth and officers for attending the meeting, and there being no decision required, the Committee:

- 1) **Noted** the update on the Haverhill Masterplan;
- 2) **Noted** the update on the North West Relief Road.

144. **Decisions Plan: March 2017 to May 2017**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/17/010, which requested that Members peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period March 2017 May 2017, and identify where it would like further information or the item might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Cabinet Decisions Plan and noted that the "North East Bury St Edmunds Masterplan: Transport Assessment" had been removed from the current publication, and questioned the reasoning for this. The Chairman agreed to contact the Lead Officer and would circulate a written response to the Committee in due course.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the Cabinet's Decisions Plan.

145. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/17/011, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2017-2018 (Appendix 1). The Chairman reminded all members of the Committee, to complete the member work programme suggestion form if they had any ideas on what the Committee might wish to look at over the coming months. She then suggested topics such as homelessness and the Suffolk County Council Transport Strategy. The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) informed the Committee that it was a requirement of the Councils Constitution to complete the form, which was in place to ensure the Committee had all the information it needed to decide whether to take an issue forward, or not.

The Committee then considered its work programme, and noted that the report on the West Suffolk Information Strategy scheduled for 19 April 2017 had been deferred until November 2017. The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) informed the Committee that Kevin Taylor, Service Manager (ICT) had recently been appointed and would be progressing this piece of work shortly. The Chairman questioned whether the Committee would be able to be involved in the development of the Strategy at an early stage, which the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) agreed to raise with officers.

The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) reminded Members that the Portfolio Holder for Housing would be presenting the West Suffolk Housing Strategy to the Committee on 19 April 2017, and stated this would be the ideal opportunity for the Committee to ask the Portfolio Holder if there were any housing related issues, such as homelessness, which she would like the Committee to look at in more detail, subject to the completion of the relevant form.

The Committee also noted earlier discussions held under the Annual Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presentation regarding the possibility of working with the Joint Member Development Group on a future detailed piece of work on Member Development.

Finally, a brief discussion took place on how members should be addressed when chairing meetings, e.g. chairman; chairperson, chair as some people could perceive this to be sexist. Councillor Diane Hind, chairman of the Committee felt that it should be up to the individual person as to how they wished to be addressed. It was agreed that although gender equality was an important issue, resolution of this specific aspect could require significant resources and as such this should not be progressed at this stage.

There being no decision required **noted** the contents of the work programme update report.

The Meeting concluded at 6.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman