

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 16 May 2017 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

Stephen Edwards
Lance Stanbury

By Invitation:

Simon Cole (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

308. **Councillor Bill Sadler**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Leader asked all those present to observe a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Bill Sadler who had sadly passed away that morning.

309. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Bowman and Andy Drummond.

310. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2017 were unanimously confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

311. **Open Forum**

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

312. **Public Participation**

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

313. **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 20 April 2017 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/020)**

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 20 April 2017 and he also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet:

- (1) Annual Presentation by the Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities.
- (2) Monitoring Community Safety Activities including Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership.
- (3) West Suffolk Housing Strategy: Update on Progress Against Action Points.
- (4) Review and Revision of the Constitution (Quarterly Report).
- (5) Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications (Quarter 4).
- (6) Work Programme Update and Formation of a West Suffolk Information Strategy Joint Task and Finish Group.

Separately, Councillor Cole also referred to the recent announcement by the Leaders of both Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council on plans to create a new single council for West Suffolk to meet future challenges. Councillor Cole asked as to whether there would be an opportunity within this process for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be involved in these discussions. The Service Manager (Democratic Services)/Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Committee would be able to have an involvement in this process.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the contents of Report No: CAB/FH/17/020, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

314. Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 28 March 2017 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/021)

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which provided an outline of the issues discussed by the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee at its meeting on 28 March 2017.

On 28 March 2017, the Joint Committee considered the following substantive items of business:

- (1) Performance Report.
- (2) Welfare Reform Update.
- (3) Transformation Programme Update.
- (4) Forthcoming Issues.
- (5) Exempt Item: Risk Based Verification Policy Review Report – March 2017.
- (6) Partnership Working through Section 101 Agreement.

Councillor Edwards also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of Report No: CAB/FH/17/021, being the report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee, be noted.

315. Restructure Proposal for the Housing Options and Homelessness Team (Report No: CAB/FH/17/022)

Councillor Robin Millar, Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities, presented this report which outlined the proposed restructure of the Housing Options and Homelessness Team, including the requirement for additional posts to meet new statutory requirements.

Councillor Millar explained that this restructure had been prompted by a number of factors, including:

1. A number of staff changes and the urgent requirement to fill vacant posts.
2. The need to have a robust service which could respond to forthcoming significant legislative changes, particularly the Homelessness Reduction Act.
3. Recognition that changes to Universal Credit (UC) would have a real impact on tenants and landlords across West Suffolk.
4. Reduction in the number of Housing Related Support funded beds, anticipated changes to housing support funding from 2018 and continual changes to the welfare system.
5. A review of the Councils' landlord liaison activities.
6. Feedback from the Housing Peer Review.

Paragraph 3 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/022 outlined the funding of the proposed new structure and explained that in March 2017, the DCLG had announced a new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (which replaced the DWP Temporary Accommodation Management Fee from 1 April 2017). This Grant was paid directly to councils and was ring-fenced for an initial two year period and during that time may only be used to prevent or deal with homelessness. Funding allocations had been announced for the next two years, with funding for 2019/2020 being announced later this year.

Paragraph 3.3 of the report set out the funding allocations which had been awarded to both Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils for 2017/2018 and for 2018/2019. Paragraph 3.4 also set out the detail for the proposed use of this Grant to fund the restructure.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The additional statutory duties which will be in place as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act, be noted.
2. The service be restructured and that an additional 6.8 FTE staff be required to meet the new statutory duties.
3. The funding of the additional posts be secured from the Flexible Homelessness Reduction Grant.

316. **Annual Review of Cabinet's Working Groups, Joint Committees/Panels and Other Groups (Report No: CAB/FH/17/023)**

The Cabinet considered this report which presented the annual review and re-appointment of Cabinet's Working Group, Joint Committees/Panels and Other Groups for 2017/2018. It was explained that the Cabinet was required to review the membership and Terms of Reference of these relevant bodies, which were attached as Appendix A to E to Report No: CAB/FH/17/023.

No changes were being recommended to the majority of the existing arrangements, with the following exceptions:

- To disband the West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel as relevant updates would be provided to all Councillors on emergency planning matters via the intranet and e-mail as required and to use normal Cabinet or scrutiny mechanisms to input to, and adopt, any work by the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel.
- The Terms of Reference for the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group had been revised to reflect the future significance of this Steering Group with the Council's growth agenda and development of common West Suffolk planning policies. The amended Terms of Reference also reflected the proposed disbanding of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Sustainable Development Working Party and Forest Heath District Council's Local Plan Working Group (once the Council's Local Plan had been adopted).

Together with the other recommendations contained in the report, the Cabinet supported these proposals and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

Current Cabinet Working Group: Forest Heath District Council Membership only

1. That:-
 - (a) The Local Plan Working Group continues to operate at the present time in accordance with its current Terms of

Reference, as detailed in Appendix A to Report No CAB/FH/17/023.

- (b) The future direction of the Local Plan Working Group, as outlined in Section 1.2.2 of Report No CAB/FH/17/023, be noted.

Current Joint Panels and Steering Group: Joint Membership with St Edmundsbury Borough Council

- 2. That the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group continues to operate in accordance with its amended Terms of Reference contained in Appendix B to Report No: CAB/FH/17/023.
- 3. That:-
 - (a) The West Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Panel be disbanded.
 - (b) Relevant updates be provided to all councillors on emergency planning matters via the intranet and e-mail as required, and to use normal Cabinet or scrutiny mechanisms to input to, and adopt, any work by the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel.
- 4. That:-
 - (a) The West Suffolk Joint Health and Safety Panel and the West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel continue to operate in accordance with their current Terms of Reference contained in Appendices D and E to Report No: CAB/FH/17/023 respectively.
 - (b) Periodical meetings of the Joint Panels continue to be scheduled as and when required, but with regard to the discussion outlined in Section 1.3.16.

Political Balance

- 5. That:-
 - (a) The Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer be requested to exercise their existing delegated authority to re-appoint or appoint as applicable, Members and Substitute Members to the Local Plan Working Group, West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group, West Suffolk Joint Health and Safety Panel and the West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel for 2017/2018, on the nominations of the Group Leaders.
 - (b) Such re-appointments/appointments be made on the basis of political balance requirements, where applicable and identified in Report No CAB/FH/17/023.

Joint Committees: Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee

6. That the Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer be requested to exercise their existing delegated authority to re-appoint or appoint as applicable, one full Cabinet Member and two Substitute Cabinet Members to the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee for 2017/2018, on the nomination of the Leader of the Council.

Other Informal Working Groups

7. That:-
 - (a) The Cabinet's existing informal Working Groups be retained as indicated in Section 1.6.2 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/023.
 - (b) Provided that resources are available to support them, further informal task-and-finish working groups continue to be established to consider specific issues as required throughout 2017/2018.

Re-appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies

8. The Members stated in Section 1.7.2 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/023 be re-appointed as 'Observers' to the respective outside bodies listed and that the Leader or ex-officio appointments to the project or partnership groups listed in Section 1.7.3, be noted.

317. Decisions Plan: May 2017 to May 2018 (Report No: CAB/FH/17/024)

The Cabinet considered Report No: CAB/FH/17/024, which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period May 2017 to May 2018.

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

318. Revenues Collection and Performance Write-Offs (Report No: CAB/FH/17/025)

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 Business Rates.

The Portfolio Holder also referred to paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report which set out the collection rates for the National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) and for the Council Tax as at 31 March 2017. The Portfolio Holder also wished to express his thanks to the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP), as the collection rates achieved as at 31 March 2017, had been in line with the profiled targets.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the write-offs of the amount detailed in the exempt Appendix 1 to Report No: CAB/FH/17/025, be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Business Rates totalling £21,477.32.

319. Exclusion of the Press and Public

See Minute Number 320. below.

320. Exempt Appendix 1: Revenues Collection Performance and Write-Offs (paras 1 and 2) (Report No: CAB/FH/17/025)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Appendix 1 to Report No: CAB/FH/17/025. However, no reference was made to specific detail and, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The Meeting concluded at 6.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
