

Extraordinary (Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Notes of informal discussions of the FHDC/SEBC **Cabinets** held on **Tuesday 30 May 2017 at 4.38 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)

David Bowman	Stephen Edwards
Andy Drummond	Robin Millar

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

John Griffiths

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

In attendance: Ruth Bowman (FHDC) Carol Bull (SEBC)

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

(1) The Future of Local Government in West Suffolk

All Members of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet had been invited to attend Forest Heath District Council's Offices at College Heath Road, Mildenhall 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/Leader of Forest Heath District Council, welcomed all those present to the District Offices. He firstly requested that a minute's silence be observed in remembrance of those affected by the tragic events in Manchester as a result of an atrocious act of terrorism. The Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer subsequently 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

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak.

2. Public Participation

There were no members of the public in attendance.

3. The Future of Local Government in West Suffolk (Report Nos: CAB/SE/17/022 and CAB/FH/17/026)

The Cabinets considered the above report, which sought approval for a number of recommendations to enable further work to be undertaken on testing potential suitable future governance options for west Suffolk. This would specifically include the development of a draft business case on the option of a single council for west Suffolk, for presenting to each Council on 13/14 June 2017.

Councillors James Waters and John Griffiths, FHDC's and SEBC's respective Leaders, drew relevant issues to the attention of both Cabinets, including that in recognition of the significant changes in the UK economy, society and demographics, alongside financial and governmental changes, it was timely for all local councils to consider their role, form and structure, in order to ensure they were fit for purpose for the next decade. Many of these challenges were new and more complex than those previously faced by local government.

FHDC and SEBC had taken the opportunity to reflect on their arrangements to secure future financial and structural resilience so that a strong base from which to invest in could continue in order to support communities and businesses, and enable the delivery of services to customers into the next decade.

The Cabinets considered each of the following issues, as detailed in the report:

- (a) the changing context for local government in west Suffolk;
- (b) the options for future governance that were available to the councils, including the option of a single council for west Suffolk;
- (c) the proposed approach to exploring these options;
- (d) the longer-term process; and
- (e) the immediate next steps.

As part of deliberation of the above, the Cabinets considered the immediate establishment of a 'Future Governance Member Steering Group', the proposed terms of reference for which were contained in Appendix A. This Group would be tasked with advising and supporting the Leaders of the Councils on the technical requirements involved with moving forward the proposals set out in the draft business case due to be presented to both authorities' full Councils meetings on 13/14 June 2017. Should the final business case be approved by both Councils in September 2017, this Group would also support the ultimate decision making processes.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the officer team for the proposed new Future Governance Member Steering Group would be led by the Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer. Other officers would provide support, knowledge and expertise at meetings depending on the nature and subject matter under consideration.

The recommendations set out on pages 1 and 2 of the report were unanimously supported by both Cabinets.

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 4.46 pm, the Chairman then formally opened the meeting of Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet at 4.46 pm in the Council Chamber.

Minutes of Cabinet overleaf.....

Extraordinary Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 30 May 2017 at 4.46 pm at 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)

David Bowman
Andy Drummond

Stephen Edwards
Lance Stanbury

In attendance: Ruth Bowman

321. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

322. 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).

323. 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).

324. The Future of Local Government in West Suffolk (Report No: CAB/FH/17/026)

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/FH/17/026, it was proposed, seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The changing context for local government in West Suffolk, be noted.
2. Recognition be given to the need to continue to assess whether the current governance structures are the most effective they can be, particularly in regard to future role/challenges for communities.
3. Further work from Officers be commissioned, to test the option of a single council for West Suffolk against the alternative options outlined in Report No: CAB/FH/17/026, through the production of a business case, for consideration by Council on 14 June 2017.
4. The establishment of a Future Governance Member Steering Group be agreed, on the basis set out in Section 4.6 of Report No: CAB/FH/17/026 and the Terms of Reference set out in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/17/026.

The meeting concluded at 4.47 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
