

Council



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on
Wednesday 27 September 2017 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber,**
District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Ruth Bowman J.P.

Vice Chairman Brian Harvey

Ruth Allen	Victor Lukaniuk
Michael Anderson	Carol Lynch
Andrew Appleby	Louise Marston
Chris Barker	Christine Mason
John Bloodworth	Robin Millar
David Bowman	Robert Nobbs
Rona Burt	Colin Noble
Louis Busuttil	David Palmer
Simon Cole	Peter Ridgwell
Roger Dicker	Nigel Roman
Andy Drummond	Lance Stanbury
Stephen Edwards	James Waters

257. **Remembrance**

Prior to commencing the business on the agenda the Chairman asked all present to remain standing to observe a minute's silence in remembrance of Sophie Claydon, West Suffolk's HR Business Support colleague, who had sadly died in August 2017.

258. **Welcome**

The Chairman formally welcomed Councillor Robert Nobbs to his first meeting of the Authority, following his election to the District Council as result of the St Mary's By-Election on 17 August 2017.

259. **Minutes**

Councillor Peter Ridgwell asked if he was able to vote on the minutes in light of him not having been able to attend the meeting on 26 July 2017. The Chairman confirmed that his absence did not preclude him from accepting the minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2017 were unanimously accepted as an accurate record, subject to the reference to "Pay *Police*" being amended to read "Pay **Policy**" in Minute No. 250 (2.), and were signed by the Chairman.

260. **Chairman's Announcements (Report No: COU/FH/17/024)**

The Chairman advised the meeting that contrary to the list in Report No COU/FH/17/024 she did not attend the Battle of Britain Parade and Service on 17 September 2017.

Furthermore, she pointed out that the Vice Chairman, Leader and Deputy Leader all also attended her BBQ at Brandon Country Park on 10 September 2017.

The report was noted.

261. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Reg Silvester.

262. **Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

263. **The Leader's Report (Report No: COU/FH/17/025)**

The Leader presented his statement to the meeting, as set out in Report No COU/FH/17/025.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Deputy Leader was pleased to advise the meeting that Newmarket Academy was justifiably celebrating the publication of the school's 'Good' Ofsted report after a long and challenging period of change, following the previous judgement of needing improvement.

Pleasingly Ofsted Inspectors had judged the school's overall effectiveness as 'Good' in all key categories. Furthermore, within their report the Inspectors recognised the extensive community involvement that the Academy had benefitted from during their improvement journey.

The Deputy Leader reminded Members of the work that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had undertaken in respect of the Academy and highlighted the fact that the District Council should be proud of the role they had played in this significant achievement.

The report was noted.

264. **Public Participation**

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

265. **A Single Council for West Suffolk - Business Case (Report No: COU/FH/17/026)**

Following the June meeting of Forest Heath District Council at which the draft proposals to form a single Council for West Suffolk were agreed, a period of

public engagement was undertaken which concluded strong support from residents and stakeholders towards the proposals.

Henceforth, the Leader presented this report which set out the final business case, amended in response to the public engagement and the work of the Future Governance Steering Group, and sought approval to the proposal to form a single Council for West Suffolk.

The Leader spoke in support of the proposal which he considered to be the natural 'next step' for Forest Heath following the successful years of working in partnership with St Edmundsbury Borough Council. He highlighted what a great opportunity this proposal gave West Suffolk in shaping its own future and creating a greater democratic voice for its residents.

The Leader also gave thanks to those Members who sat on the Future Governance Steering Group for all their efforts and input, and moved that the final business case be approved and this was duly seconded by Councillor Andy Drummond.

Prior to opening the debate the Chairman reminded the meeting that the business case, if approved, would be submitted to the Secretary of State for determination.

Furthermore, Members were reminded that an extraordinary meeting of Forest Heath Council had been arranged for 18 October 2017 at which the detailed arrangements for a single council would be discussed, if approved.

The Deputy Leader along with Councillors Lance Stanbury, Stephen Edwards and Colin Noble all spoke strongly in support of the proposal.

Councillor Andy Drummond also echoed the support but asked that the photograph on Page 15 of the Business Case (attached as Appendix 2 to Report No COU/FH/17/026) be replaced with an alternative, as the company it depicted (GE Aviation, Newmarket) was no longer in operation.

Councillors David Bowman and Ruth Allen similarly spoke in support whilst also making reference to the importance of public engagement and communication. Councillor Bowman voiced disappointment that no public were in attendance.

Councillor Peter Ridgwell questioned the need for the Mildenhall Hub development in light of the single council proposal which he considered to be in conflict. The Leader responded at length and clarified that the Mildenhall Hub scheme was a much needed community facility for Mildenhall and the surrounding area. It would include a new leisure centre, a swimming pool and a new high school amongst other facilities – it was not simply a replacement for the District Offices. Accordingly, the project was still planned for delivery if the single council proposal was approved.

The Chairman then addressed the meeting in her capacity as Chairman of the Future Governance Steering Group and highlighted the work that the Group had undertaken. She spoke in support of the proposal which she considered would bring about significant benefits and opportunities.

Prior to the vote being taking on the motion for approval the Leader requested a recorded vote and this was supported by five other Members, in line with the Council's Procedure Rules.

Upon being put to the vote Members voted as follows:

Name of Member	For	Against	Abstained
Ruth Allen	X		
Michael Anderson	X		
Andrew Appleby	X		
Chris Barker	X		
John Bloodworth	X		
David Bowman	X		
Ruth Bowman	X		
Rona Burt	X		
Louis Busuttil	X		
Simon Cole	X		
Roger Dicker	X		
Andy Drummond	X		
Stephen Edwards	X		
Brian Harvey	X		
Carol Lynch	X		
Victor Lukaniuk	X		
Louise Marston	X		
Christine Mason	X		
Robin Millar	X		
Robert Nobbs	X		
Colin Noble	X		
David Palmer	X		
Peter Ridgwell		X	
Nigel Roman	X		
Lance Stanbury	X		
James Waters	X		
TOTAL	25	1	0

With 25 voting for the motion and with 1 against, it was

RESOLVED:

That the final business case for a single council for West Suffolk, attached as Appendix 2 of Report No COU/FH/17/026, be approved for submission to the Secretary of State for Local Government.

The Chairman reminded all present that immediately following the meeting of Council there would be an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet at which the decision made by Council would seek Executive ratification prior to submission.

266. **Review of Political Balance and Appointment to Politically Balanced Bodies (Report No: COU/FH/17/027)**

The Leader presented this report and explained that following the outcome of the District by-election for the Forest Heath (St Mary's Ward) vacancy which had taken place on 17 August 2017, the political make-up of the Council changed.

Accordingly, the Council was requested to review the allocation of seats and substitutes to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules.

The Leader moved the report's recommendations and this was duly seconded by Councillor David Bowman.

Councillor Andrew Appleby addressed the meeting in respect of Paragraph 1.1.5 of the report which made reference to the settlement reached between political groups regarding seat allocations.

Councillor Appleby sought clarity as to how this position had been reached and, accordingly, proposed an amendment to the recommendations in that the Licensing and Regulatory Committee remain as is and instead his group would sacrifice a seat from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to enable the Conservatives to gain one. This was duly seconded by Councillor Ruth Allen.

The Service Manager (Democratic Services) confirmed that she had received written confirmation from Group Leaders that the changes as stated in the report were accepted.

Furthermore, Councillor Appleby's proposal to amend the membership on the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee would not bring about any form of change in respect of political balance as the Council's Scrutiny Committees were not required to be politically balanced, hence they were not included in the report before Council.

The Chairman then put the amendment to the vote (as proposed by Councillor Appleby) and with 6 voting for and 20 against, the Chairman declared the amendment lost.

The Leader's motion to approve the recommendations within the report were then put to the vote and with 20 voting for, 4 against and with 2 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The formula for the allocation of seats to the political groups on those Committees which are required by law to be politically balanced as set out in Paragraph 1.1.1 of Report No: COU/FH/17/027, be approved;

2. The allocation of seats on the Committees which are required by law to be politically balanced, as indicated in Appendix 1 and Paragraph 1.2. of Report No: COU/FH/17/027, be approved; and
3. If the Council is unable to confirm the appointment of Members and Substitute Members at the Council meeting on 27 September 2017, the Service Manager (Democratic Services) be given Delegated Authority to appoint Members and Substitute Members to those bodies set out in recommendation (2) above, on the basis of nominations from the relevant Group Leaders.

267. Questions to Chairmen of other Committees

There were no questions to Chairmen of other Committees.

268. Urgent Questions on Notice

There were no urgent questions on notice.

On conclusion of the meeting the Chairman reminded Members that immediately following there would be an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet at which the decision made in respect of a single West Suffolk Council would seek Executive ratification prior to submission.

All non-Cabinet Members were welcome to remain in the meeting in order to observe proceedings, should they wish to.

The meeting concluded at 6.43pm

Signed by:

Chairman
