

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 3 April 2018 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

Stephen Edwards

By Invitation:

Simon Cole

(Chairman of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee)

Ruth Bowman

(Vice Chairman of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee)

Sara Mildmay-White

(West Suffolk Lead for Housing)

429. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lance Stanbury.

Councillor Andy Drummond was also unable to attend the meeting.

430. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 January 2018 and 13 February 2018 were unanimously confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

431. **Open Forum**

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

432. **Public Participation**

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

433. **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 8 March 2018**
(Report No: CAB/FH/18/020)

Councillor Simon Cole, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented this report which informed the Cabinet of the following substantive items discussed by the Committee on 8 March 2018:

- (1) Barley Homes Group Limited Annual Report 2018.
- (2) Lettings Policy.

- (3) Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance.
- (4) West Suffolk Information Framework – Report from the Joint Task and Finish Group.
- (5) Work Programme Update.

Councillor Cole drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that separate reports containing recommendations of the Committee were included on this Cabinet agenda for Items (2) and (4) above.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the contents of Report No: CAB/FH/18/020, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

434. Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 8 March 2018 - West Suffolk Information Framework (Report No: CAB/FH/18/021)

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval for a new West Suffolk Information Framework.

A joint Task and Finish Group, comprising Members of Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils' Overview and Scrutiny Committees, had been established to devise a new Information Framework. The Framework represented a revised approach to data and the way the West Suffolk Councils used it. It provided a high level summary of the current position and proposed an approach that sought to maximise the Councils' data assets through aligning data across the West Suffolk Councils and its partners to improve the services provided and create better outcomes for residents, customers, visitors, businesses, partners and communities.

The vision and key principles of the Information Framework were summarised in paragraph 1.1.3 of the Cabinet report. Its aim was to provide Councillors, staff, partners and interested members of the public with an overview of the Councils' direction of travel and its intent with regards to data and information and was, therefore, not a delivery document. Detailed individual plans, strategies and service-specific business cases that accorded with this framework would come forward at a later stage.

Councillor Edwards also wished to express his thanks to both Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their involvement and input into this document.

It was proposed, seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the West Suffolk Information Framework, attached as Appendix A to Report No: OAS/FH/18/007, be approved.

435. **Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 8 March 2018 - Lettings Policy (Report No: CAB/FH/18/022)**

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, West Suffolk Lead for Housing, presented this report which sought approval for a revised Lettings Policy.

On 8 March 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Report No: OAS/FH/18/005, which set out proposed revisions to the Lettings Policy. These revisions were required as a result of recent case law and to ensure that the Policy was compliant with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force on 3 April 2018. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the draft policy in detail and recommended its adoption.

Councillor Mildmay-White drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the revisions, as summarised in Section 1.1.2 of the Cabinet report, had been subject to consultation and agreement of the Home-Link (Choice Based Lettings Scheme) partners of the Cambridge and West Suffolk sub-region.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the revised Lettings Policy, attached at Appendix 1 to Report No: OAS/FH/18/005, be approved.

436. **Tackling Rogue Landlords: Civil Sanctions Policy (Report No: CAB/FH/18/023)**

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, West Suffolk Lead for Housing, presented this report which sought approval for a new Civil Sanctions Policy, which if adopted, would help tackle rogue landlords.

The adoption of a new Civil Sanctions Policy, attached as Appendix A to the report, would enable the West Suffolk Councils (Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough) to make use of new powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to tackle a small number of rogue landlords in the private rented sector in West Suffolk and improve the well-being of tenants. On 9 January 2018, the Cabinet had approved the draft Policy for consultation and the outcome of this engagement exercise was contained in Section 5 of the report.

Councillor Mildmay-White drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the engagement process on the draft Policy with landlords, tenants, interested groups and other stakeholders, had largely been positive and had provided the opportunity to promote the Housing Standards service offered by the Councils and the most effective way to enforce the new legislation. Promotion of the preventative and reactive regulatory agendas was key and better landlords involved in the process, had identified that the Councils wished to work with them, not only to achieve compliance, but to deliver a sector that provided an adequate supply of decent homes.

The Cabinet supported its adoption (with new delegated powers to Officers for incorporation into their respective Constitutions being presented to each Council for approval). Due to its importance, the Cabinet were also keen to ensure that this Policy was widely communicated within the District, so that people were aware that it was in operation.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Standards – Civil Sanctions Policy contained in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/18/023, which describes the new measures and sanctions which will support existing enforcement work and pro-active inspection programmes, be adopted.

and

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: (25 April 2018)

That the new delegations regarding the enforcement powers be incorporated into the Scheme of Delegation, contained in Part 3 of the Constitution, to enable these sanctions to be enforced.

437. Workforce Strategy 2018-2020 (Report No: CAB/FH/18/024)

Councillor Stephen Edwards, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, presented this report which sought approval of a new Workforce Strategy.

The Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, set out the West Suffolk Councils' vision for their people and identified the areas needed to focus on to achieve their ambitions. It looked at the composition of the workforce and the current skills set and the skills needed for the future. It identified how the Councils would continue to recruit and develop their workforce and work with their communities to make sure the right people, the right skills and the right behaviours were in place.

Councillor Edwards drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the Strategy aimed to enable West Suffolk to be a confident, co-operative and high performing organisation in every aspect of its work addressing the needs of its customers and communities, together with promoting West Suffolk as an employer of choice.

It was proposed, duly seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Workforce Strategy as contained in Appendix 1 to Report No: CAB/FH/18/024, be approved.

438. Decisions Plan: April 2018 to May 2018 (Report No: CAB/FH/18/025)

The Cabinet considered Report No: CAB/FH/18/025, which was the Cabinet's Decisions Plan covering the period 1 April 2018 to 31 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.

439. **Revenues Collection Performance and Write-Offs (Report No: CAB/FH/18/026)**

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 and Business Rates and the overpayment of Housing Benefit.

Councillor Edwards 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 Council Tax as at 28 February 2018.

Whilst considering this report, the Cabinet indicated that they would also wish to discuss the content of the exempt Appendices and as reference was to be made to specific detail, it was proposed, duly seconded and unanimously **RESOLVED** for these discussions to be held in private session and for the press and public to be excluded from the meeting (see Minute Numbers 440. and 441. below).

Following the conclusion of the discussions in the private session, the press and public were re-admitted to the meeting, where it was proposed, seconded and 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/18/026 be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax totalling £10,297.99.
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Business Rates totalling £24,032.49.
3. Exempt Appendix 3: Overpayment of Housing Benefit totalling £13,613.62.

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

It was proposed, seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the following items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt categories of information, as prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and indicated against each item and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

441. **Exempt Appendices 1, 2 and 3 : Revenues Collection Performance and Write-Offs (paras 1 and 2) (Report No: CAB/FH/18/026)**

The Cabinet considered the exempt Appendices to Report No: CAB/FH/18/026, where reference was made to the specific detail contained therein.

Particular discussion was held in relation to the arrears relating to Council Tax and Officers received agreement from the Cabinet to progress 'test cases' in relation to the action being taken by the ARP to recover outstanding debt.

Once the discussions were concluded in the private session, the meeting then moved back into the open session, where the press and public were re-admitted and the Cabinet then voted on the recommendations contained within the report (see Minute Number 439. above).

The Meeting concluded at 6.35 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
