

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 7 June 2018** at **6.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Simon Cole
Vice Chairman Rona Burt

Chris Barker
John Bloodworth
Christine Mason

Robert Nobbs
David Palmer
Nigel Roman

230. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutions declared.

231. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brian Harvey.

Councillor Reg Silvester was also unable to attend.

232. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 April 2018 and 19 April 2018 were confirmed as accurate records, and signed by the Chairman.

233. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from the public.

234. **Announcements from the Chairman regarding responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other updates from the Chairman**

The Chairman advised that he attended Cabinet on 22 May 2018, and presented the Committee's reports on items it considered on 16 April 2018 and 19 April 2018, which were noted.

235. **Draft West Suffolk Annual Report (2017-2018)**

The Chief Executive, Ian Gallin presented Report No: OAS/FH/18/014 on behalf of the Leader of the Council, which outlined the draft West Suffolk

Annual Report (2017-2018) which had been written as a joint West Suffolk document and was before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

The draft West Suffolk Annual Report (Appendix A) highlighted the key activities and developments that had been achieved over the financial year 2017-2018, with regard to the priorities set out in the West Suffolk Strategic Plan. The draft report contained a number of case studies and examples from West Suffolk to illustrate the achievements described. Following a decision by Portfolio Holders, this year's annual report would be designed typeset document.

The report also included responses to specific key questions identified by scrutiny members on areas they wished to be appraised on during the annual presentation to the Committee on the Annual Report.

Members examined the document and did not suggest any amendments to be made to the draft Annual Report.

However, the Committee did ask follow-up questions relating to Barley Homes. Members were informed that it had been agreed to continue progressing the three committed sites and those coming through the pipeline. An application had been submitted for the Town Hall site and a revised business plan would be coming to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in the year.

The Committee also discussed delivering growth; what was going on nationally with a number of large retail shops restructuring or closing down; deterring anti-social behaviour and the poor appearance of buildings, and questioned what the council could do to help retail shops locally.

In response members were informed the council was working on its Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan. It was also working with the Bid in Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket and Haverhill. West Suffolk did not have a significant issue with empty retail properties. However, there was a campaign in Haverhill to make vacant properties less attractive to deter anti-social behaviour.

The Chief Executive thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for scrutinising the draft Annual Report.

It was then proposed by Councillor Rona Burt, seconded by Councillor Nigel Roman and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RECOMMENDED

That the Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2017-2018, as attached at Appendix A to Report No: OAS/FH/18/014 be approved, subject to comments made during the meeting.

236. **West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/015, which presented the draft West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy (Appendix 1). The Homelessness Act 2002 required all councils to review and produce a new homelessness strategy at least every five years. A review of the West Suffolk's Homelessness Strategy was due in 2018. In addition to this, by producing a new West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy the council was responding to the fundamental changes to legislation and additional duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, West Suffolk councils had conducted a review of homelessness in the area between November 2017 and April 2018. The review took the form of an evidence base that was attached as Appendix A to the West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy (Appendix 1). The depth and scope of the review had contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the key issues facing West Suffolk. It had also enabled the councils to consider where it needed to focus its attention in the future in order to determine which priorities and actions the councils needed to focus on.

The West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy was an important part of what the councils were doing across West Suffolk to prevent and reduce homelessness. However, other activities which supported the reduction of homelessness were outlined in West Suffolk's Housing Strategy and the Strategic Framework 2018-2020.

The delivery plan attached at Appendix B to the report had been developed to deliver on the councils priorities as set out in the strategy and would be resourced through existing budgets and resources and by accessing external funding sources from the government and other partners.

The Committee considered the document, the five priorities and felt it addressed all areas. Therefore, members did not suggest any amendments to the draft West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy.

However, the committee did ask questions on homelessness /rough sleeper figures and how they were being measured; the homeless workshop held earlier in the year, which had been well received by partners. A second workshop was currently being organised.

It was noted that the council was continuing to explore options to increase its accommodation options. Also across Suffolk there was a lack of service for "complex needs" to support the homeless and rough sleepers.

It was then proposed by Councillor Rona Burt, seconded by Councillor Nigel Roman, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RECOMMENDED

That subject to comments made during the meeting, the Draft West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction Strategy, be approved.

237. **Review of the Garden Waste Collection Service (GWCS) - Scoping Report**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/016, which sought the establishment of a West Suffolk Joint Task and Finish Group to review the Garden Waste Collection Service (GWCS), and make recommendations to the West Suffolk Shadow Executive in Autumn 2018.

During the first two years of operation, around 30,000 households had subscribed each year and the service was generally operating in line with the original assumptions and expectations. However, a review of the GWCS was being proposed for the following reasons:

- i) It was agreed that the subscription charge, and the service itself, would be reviewed after the first three years of operation;
- ii) A new funding arrangement with Suffolk County Council takes effect from April 2019;
- iii) Implementation arrangements for Year 4 of the GWCS would need to commence in October 2018, ready for April 2019;
- iv) IT improvements were required to reflect changes to the corporate CRM, online functionality and the GDPR regulations; and
- v) To consider opportunities to amend the customer "application and pay experience" and the associated service terms and conditions.

It was proposed that the Joint Task and Finish Group comprises of eight Members; four from each council with at least one from each council being a member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. The Group would be supported by officers and the Portfolio Holders. The review will be carried out between July and October 2018, in order to feed into final reports for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in November, and a report to the Shadow Executive. This would allow time for recommendations to be taken account of before the arrangements for 2019 needed to commence as there were system and communications arrangements that needed to be undertaken ahead of the annual soft launch for payments in February.

Councillor Rona Burt felt the scheme had been a great success and residents were satisfied with the good service.

The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) then informed members that Councillor Rona Burt, a member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee was happy to sit on the Group.

The Committee considered the report and asked questions to which the Cabinet Member for Operations and officers duly responded. The Committee then nominated Councillors Chris Barker, Robert Nobbs and David Palmer as the Overview and Scrutiny representatives.

It was then proposed by Councillor Rona Burt, seconded by Councillor John Bloodworth, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Chris Barker, Robert Nobbs, David Palmer from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Rona Burt from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee be appointed to sit on the West Suffolk Garden Waste Collection Service Joint Task and Finish Group to carry out a review of the Garden Waste Collection Service and to make recommendations for 2019.

238. Shadow Scrutiny Committee Nominations

On 30 May 2018, the Shadow Council agreed to appoint a Shadow Scrutiny Committee of up to 13 members, consisting of up to 8 existing members from the St Edmundsbury Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and up to 5 existing members from the Forest Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the Chairman from each Committee being automatically appointed as one of the representatives.

The Committee considered the request to appoint up to 4 members, of which 4 members put their names forward (Councillors Chris Barker, John Bloodworth; Rona Burt and David Palmer) to sit on the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

It was then proposed by Councillor Nigel Roman, seconded by Councillor John Bloodworth, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Chris Barker, John Bloodworth, Rona Burt, David Palmer and Councillor Simon Cole as the Chairman of the Forest Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be appointed to sit on the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

239. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/017, which asked Members to peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019, on items it would like further information on or might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not raise any issues or questions. Therefore, there being no decision required, **noted** the contents of the 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019 Decisions Plan.

240. Work Programme Update and Re-appointments to Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/018, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2018-2019 (Appendix 1).

The report also requested that Members identify questions they would like the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Families and

Communities to cover in their annual report to the Committee on 12 July 2018.

The Committee considered Appendix 1, and at the time of the meeting had not identified any questions they wished to put to the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing but had identified one question for the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities regarding community chest funding. However, members were asked to submit any further questions following this meeting to the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) by Wednesday 13 June 2018.

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the current status of its work programme.

The report also sought the District Council's nominated representative and substitute member on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny

As in previous years, Suffolk County Council (SCC) wished a representative to be appointed to its Health Scrutiny Committee from each of the County's District and Borough Councils. It was recommended that the members should ideally be from the District's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, although it was not essential.

The current members on this joint body were:

- Councillor John Bloodworth as the nominated representative; and
- Councillor Christine Mason as the nominated substitute.

Attached at Appendix 2, to the report was a brief summary provided by Councillor John Bloodworth on issues which had been considered by the SCC Health Scrutiny Committee during 2017-2018).

The Committee considered the report and re-nominated Councillor John Bloodworth as the District's nominated representative and Councillor Christine Mason as the substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for 2018-2019.

It was then proposed by Councillor Rona Burt, seconded by Councillor Robert Nobbs, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That full Council be asked to confirm the appointment of Councillor John Bloodworth as the District Council's nominated representative and Councillor Christine Mason as the substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for 2018-2019.

The Meeting concluded at 6.55pm

Signed by:

Chairman