

Informal Joint Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Notes of Informal Discussions held on Wednesday 25 July 2018 at 5.30pm in Conference Chamber West, West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds

PRESENT: St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

Councillor Sarah Broughton, Beccy Hopfensperger, Clive Pollington,
Karen Richardson, David Roach, Andrew Smith and Patricia Warby.

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

Councillor Louis Busuttill
(Chairman of the informal discussions)

Councillors Chris Barker, John Bloodworth, Rona Burt, Simon Cole,
Colin Noble and Peter Ridgwell

IN ATTENDANCE: SEBC – Councillor Ian Houlder, Portfolio Holder for Resources
and Performance

Prior to the formal meeting, at 5.30pm informal discussions took place on the
following nine items:

- (1) 2018-2019 Performance Report – Quarter 1;
- (2) West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register Monitoring Report – June 2018;
- (3) Work Programme Update;
- (4) Approach to Delivering a Sustainable West Suffolk Budget 2019-2020 and
Medium Term Plan; and
- (5) Appointment of Auditors for West Suffolk Council.

All Members of Forest Heath District Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny
Committee had been invited to attend West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds, to
enable joint informal discussions on the above reports to take place between the two
authorities.

The Chairman of St Edmundsbury's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
welcomed all those present to West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds, and advised on
the format of the proceedings for the informal joint discussions and subsequent
separate meetings of each authority, prior to handing over to the Chairman of Forest
Heath's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, who would be chairing the
informal joint discussions.

Members noted that each Council permitted public participation at their Performance and Audit Scrutiny meetings. Therefore, for the purpose of facilitating these Constitutional requirements, it was proposed that public speaking should be permitted prior to the start of the informal discussions to enable any questions/statements to be considered by both Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committees on items 1 – 5 above. On this occasion however, there were no questions/statements from members of the public.

Each report was then considered in the order listed on each authorities agenda.

1. 2018-2019 Performance Report – Quarter 1

The Service Manager (Finance and Performance) presented the new formatted report, which set out the performance for the first quarter and forecasted financial outturn position for 2018-2019.

In previous years Performance Indicators and Budget Monitoring figures were reported separately. It was now the intention to combine these reports in order to give a clearer indications of the councils' overall performance.

This report showed the current Performance Indicators for the first quarter of 2018-2019, as set out in the following appendices, attached to the report:

- Appendix A: 2018-2019 Performance Indicators, Commentary;
- Appendices B to E: Performance Indicators by Strategic Priority;
- Appendices F to J: Financial Performance for Forest Heath District Council
- Appendices K to O: Financial Performance for St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

Each Assistant Director then presented their performance indicators set out either in the commentary section or Appendices A to E, and highlighted key areas for the Committees attention.

Members considered the report in detail and asked questions of the Assistant Directors on their indicators, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

Discussions were held on the update of pre-planning advice and how it was promoted to developers/agents; the resolution of noise nuisance complaints and what the breakdown of the various noise nuisances were and temporary housing accommodation.

In particular discussions were held on:

Appendix B – (G5 - % of business and residents with high speed broadband) – Members questioned how the council influenced broadband, and why the target was set at 95% and not 100%.

In response members were informed that the council was actively working with Suffolk County Council on this project. With regards to the 95% target, officers agreed to look into this and would provide a written response as to how this was set.

Appendix C – (F6 – residual household waste per household (kg)) - Members questioned what the actual figure was in relation to the small increase in residual waste reported in quarter one.

Officers advised that the actual figures were not to hand, but would provide members with a written response.

Appendix M – Bury Christmas Fayre (predicted overspend arising from additional security) – Members were informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Joint Task and Finish Group would be looking at security as part of its review work.

Appendix M – Off Street Car Parking (car parking income currently expected to fall short of budget levels) – Members questioned whether the “free from 3” parking had affected income?

In response members were informed that “free from 3” parking had been in operation for several years, and this had been factored into the budget setting process. However, one area where the council had seen a drop in demand for parking was for mid-week parking, but there had been a slight recovery in June and figures remained historically high compared to just two years ago.

2. **West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register Quarterly Monitoring Report – June 2018**

The Service Manager (Finance and Performance) presented the quarter one risk register monitoring report for 2018-2019 in respect of the West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register. The Register was updated regularly by the Risk Management Group and at its recent meeting in June 2018 the Group reviewed the target risk, the risk level where the Council aimed to be, and agreed a current risk assessment. These assessments formed the revised West Suffolk Risk Register (Appendix 1).

Some individual controls or actions had been updated and those which were not ongoing and had been completed by June 2018 had been removed from the Register. There had been no major amendments made to current risks during the reporting period and no existing risks had been closed since the Strategic Risk Register was last reported to the Committee.

With regards to the impact of Brexit, the Group would continue to monitor the situation as it developed, amending existing and / or adding new risks where necessary. Any changes would be reported at each meeting of the Committee in the normal manner.

Members considered the report and did not raise any issues.

3. **Work Programme Update**

The Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) presented the report, which provided information on the current status of each Committee’s Work Programme for 2018-2019.

Members considered its work programme for 2018-2019, and did not raise any issues.

4. **Approach to Delivering a Sustainable West Suffolk Budget 2019-2020 and Medium Term Plan**

The Service Manager (Finance and Performance) presented the report, which set out the proposed approach and timescales around the 2019-2020 budget setting process against the agreed principles, as we head into the new West Suffolk Council.

Shadow Council on 17 July 2018, considered the recommendations from the Shadow Executive (Cabinet) regarding the adoption of the new West Suffolk Council's Strategic Framework and Medium Term Financial Strategy. As the report was published prior to that date, the report was written on the basis that those recommendations would be supported by the Shadow Council, which was the case. The Shadow Council was also asked to support the key principles set out in Report No: EXC/SA/18/002 for the development of the 2019-2020 budget and medium term financial plans for the new West Suffolk Council.

Recognising the important role the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee played in the development of the budget, it was agreed that a report be brought to the Committee, setting out the proposed approach to achieving these principles, including timescales and next steps.

Members considered the report and the approach set out for delivering a Sustainable West Suffolk Budget for 2019-2020 and Medium Term Plan, and did not raise any issues.

5. **Appointment of Auditors for West Suffolk Council**

The Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) presented the report, which asked the Committee consider the options available for appointing External Auditors for the new West Suffolk Council.

In September 2016, both Committee's recommended that Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Council "opt in" to the PSAA audit arrangements for the statement of accounts work for 2018-2019. As a result of the transition to a new West Suffolk Council, both Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury would cease to exist and officers would notify the PSAA that they would no longer be part of this arrangement. However, the new West Suffolk Council would need to confirm its audit arrangements to appoint a local auditor to audit its accounts in 2019-2020.

West Suffolk Council from 2019-2020 onwards could choose one of the following options:

- 1) Establish a stand-alone Auditor Panel to make the appointment on behalf of the Council; or

- 2) Commence work on exploring the establishment of local joint procurement arrangements with neighbouring authorities.

Advice from the PSAA confirmed that the West Suffolk Council would need to formally opt in to the PSAA arrangements, which meant existing arrangements could not be transitioned across.

Therefore members were being asked to reaffirm their commitment to option 3, which was to "opt in" to the PSAA arrangements. For completeness the report set out in detail the advantages and disadvantages for each of the three options again for member's consideration.

The Committee was informed that this report was only coming back to members due to the arrangements to move to a new Council, and not through any dissatisfaction with the PSAA process or appointment of auditors to date.

The Shadow Council must, by 31 December 2018, take action to implement new arrangements for the appointment of external auditors from April 2019 under a new West Suffolk Council. In order that more detailed proposals could be developed, the Shadow Council will be asked to give early consideration to the preferred approach.

Members considered the report and reaffirmed their commitment to option 3, to "opt in" to the PSAA arrangements.

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 6.11pm, all Members remained in Conference Chamber West to then hold their individual formal meetings.

In the presence of St Edmundsbury's Performance and Audit Scrutiny members, the Chairman then formally opened the Forest Heath District Council Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in Conference Council West at 6.14pm.

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 25 July 2018** at **6.14pm** in **Conference Chamber West, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Louis Busuttil
Vice Chairman Colin Noble

Chris Barker
Rona Burt
John Bloodworth

Simon Cole
Peter Ridgwell

218. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes declared.

219. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Anderson, Christine Mason and Reg Silvester.

220. **Public Participation**

Public participation had been taken within the previous informal joint discussions and there had been no questions statements from member of the public.

221. **2018-2019 Performance Report - Quarter 1**

Further to the informal joint discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, the Committee formally considered Report No: PAS/FH/18/020.

Members had considered the report and with there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the year end forecast financial position.

222. **West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register Monitoring Report - June 2018**

Further to the informal joint discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, the Committee formally considered Report No: PAS/FH/18/021.

Members had considered the report and with there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the updated West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register, attached at Appendix 1 to Report No: PAS/FH/18/021.

223. Work Programme Update

Further to the informal joint discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, the Committee formally considered Report No: PAS/FH/18/022.

Members had considered the report and with there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of its forward work programme for 2018-2019.

224. Approach to Delivering a Sustainable West Suffolk Budget 2019-2020 and Medium Term Plan

Further to the informal joint discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, the Committee formally considered Report No: PAS/FH/18/023.

Members had considered the report in detail, and there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the approach and timescales for the 2019-2020 budget setting process and medium term plans as we head into the new West Suffolk Council.

225. Appointment of Auditors for West Suffolk Council

Further to the informal joint discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, the Committee formally considered Report No: PAS/FH/18/024.

The Committee considered the report and **noted** the arrangements for appointing External Auditors for the new West Suffolk Council and Shadow West Suffolk Council.

Councillor Simon Cole moved the recommendation, this was duly seconded by Councillor Colin Noble, and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED

That subject to the approval of the West Suffolk Shadow Council, Option 3, to 'opt-in' to the sector led body (Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited) for the independent appointment of the Council's External Auditor, beginning with responsibilities for the financial year 2019-2020, be approved.

The Meeting concluded at 6.15pm

Signed by:

Chairman