

# Shadow Council

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Civic Leadership Review</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>COU/SA/18/013</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Shadow Council</b>	20 November 2018
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<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To review civic leadership across St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council in preparation for the introduction of West Suffolk Council in April 2019.	
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p><b>It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that the Shadow Council:</b></p> <p><b>(1) Agrees to the proposed requirements and priorities for the role of the future civic leader, as set out in section 18.2 and 18.3 of the Civic Leadership Review report attached to Report No: COU/SA/18/013 , and to delegate the writing of a new protocol encompassing these elements to the Assistant Director (HR, Legal and Democratic Services);</b></p> <p><b>(2) works more closely with town and parish councils by:</b></p> <p><b>(a) engaging with all town and parish councils to seek further ways of supporting them with civic leadership at a local level;</b></p> <p><b>(b) exploring with Bury St Edmunds Town Council possible options for them to lead on town centred ceremonial duties; and</b> <i>continued over....</i></p>	

	<p><b>(3) takes a vote on whether the Shadow Council should convene a special meeting for the purpose of deciding whether to apply for borough status and to suspend paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules for this vote, so that it may only be passed should a two thirds majority of those present and voting at the meeting wish the Shadow Council to apply for borough status.</b></p>
<p><b>Key Decision:</b></p> <p><i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <b><u>do not</u></b> apply.)</i></p>	<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>Consultation:</b></p>	<p>A wealth of information has been gathered utilising a range of different methods. This includes; an online survey, focus groups and a random telephone review of those that have invited the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Mayor/Forest Heath District Council Chairman to events over the last 12 months.</p> <p>A wide range of media materials were prepared for raising awareness and encouraging engagement in communities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• numerous news releases;</li> <li>• use of social media tools including posting into more than 40 local groups and pages;</li> <li>• a Facebook Live session (chaired by the local press) which was made public across the wider social media network and which received in excess of 6,800 views;</li> <li>• written materials, including advertisements, posters and template news releases (these were also sent to town and parish councils and Members for use in local publications);</li> <li>• providing materials at West Suffolk Council customer access points, namely, West Suffolk House, Forest Heath District Council Offices, Newmarket and Haverhill, as well as at the following locations, the Apex, West Stow Country Park and Moyse's Hall Museum; and</li> <li>• engagement with partners through the Suffolk Communications Network, (this includes health organisations and Suffolk County Council) who were asked to promote the review in doctor's surgeries and libraries where possible.</li> </ul>

<b>Alternative option(s):</b>	The legal position is that West Suffolk Council will be a district with a chairman on 1 April 2019. With this in mind, the alternative option is to accept this legal position and do nothing other than determining the Chairman's Protocol for the new role.
<b>Implications:</b>	
Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As outlined in the report, one of the next steps is to re-write the protocol for the civic leader for West Suffolk and then to establish the budget. However, this will not be an additional financial cost for the new West Suffolk Council, i.e. the new civic leader will not cost more than is currently budgeted collectively for the Forest Heath District Council Chairman/St Edmundsbury Borough Council Mayor.</li> <li>There is a cost to apply for borough status. The basic one-off costs associated with borough status are £2,200 which covers the costs of the Privy Council Office to proof the text of the charter, as well as printing it on vellum and sealing it.</li> </ul>
Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As outlined in the report, as the new protocol for the civic leader is prepared, further consideration will be given to whether there is a requirement for a driver. Also dependent on the decisions made with regards to whether the civic leader will be a mayor/chairman, the role of the macebearers could also be affected.</li> </ul>
Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
Not applicable			
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>		Not applicable	
<b>Background papers:</b> <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		Not applicable	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		<p><b>Attachment:</b> Civic Leadership Review Report and its 15 Appendices:</p> <p><b>Appendix 1:</b> Online survey questions  <b>Appendix 2:</b> Focus group questions  <b>Appendix 3:</b> Telephone survey questions  <b>Appendix 4:</b> Mayoralty Protocol 2016  <b>Appendix 5:</b> Chairman Protocol  <b>Appendix 6:</b> Royal Borough Status  <b>Appendix 7:</b> Understanding Borough Status - National Context  <b>Appendix 8:</b> Town Council Case Studies  <b>Appendix 9:</b> Overview of how civic leadership is carried out in the 8 largest authorities in England  <b>Appendix 10:</b> Comparison of regional information  <b>Appendix 11:</b> Detailed overview of alternative approaches to civic leadership  <b>Appendix 12:</b> Ward councillor questions  <b>Appendix 13:</b> Portfolio holder questions  <b>Appendix 14:</b> Detailed overview of survey respondents  <b>Appendix 15:</b> Geographic breakdown of survey respondents</p>	

## **1. Key issues and reasons for recommendations**

### **1.1 Overview of key findings**

- 1.1.1 The new West Suffolk Council will be the seventh largest district-tier council in England, with a population of 179,385. It will be 74.9% rural (using the 2011 Rural Urban Classification).
- 1.1.2 Currently the civic leadership function for Forest Heath District Council is carried out by a chairman and for St Edmundsbury Borough Council it is undertaken by a mayor. (The current civic titles are used throughout this paper and in the report, although it is recognised there are opportunities to review the title in future).
- 1.1.3 With the creation of the new West Suffolk Council on 1 April 2019, there is an opportunity to redefine the arrangements for civic leadership in order to support West Suffolk Council's ambitions to drive growth and prosperity in local communities. The new arrangements need to look to the future while recognising and building on the traditions of the past.
- 1.1.4 There were three main areas that need to be considered when defining the new role for civic leadership for West Suffolk Council:
- Requirements of the role;
  - The priorities for the civic leader; and
  - Format for how the role will be delivered.
- 1.1.5 A wide range of information has been gathered utilising a range of different methods to help inform decision making on the way forward. These are outlined in Part 3 of the main report.
- 1.1.6 Before considering the way forward there are some interesting findings and themes that have arisen from all the information that has been accumulated through the comprehensive review:
- A mayor and chairman have the same powers and they are both apolitical roles. There are many similarities in the core roles/purpose of the civic leader, particularly in terms of the ceremonial and ambassadorial functions regardless of whether this is undertaken by a mayor/chairman.
  - Borough and district have exactly the same powers, for example in relation to issuing Freedoms.
  - There are differing opinions with regards to the new West Suffolk Council status. On the one hand, there are those that feel that the continuity of history and symbolism of the St Edmundsbury Borough should not be lost (St Edmundsbury has been a Borough since 1974). Alternatively others consider that district status would be most appropriate for a progressive, new West Suffolk Council with a largely rural area.

- Only boroughs can have a mayor but you can have a borough with a chairman. However, research shows that all authorities that are boroughs do have a mayor.
- Town councils can resolve to have a mayor as their civic leader by voting at Full Council to do so. Town mayors/chairmen are official representatives of their town and they act as an ambassador for the town council and can make official visits to their twin towns. They are responsible for promoting the town, networking and taking an interest in all aspects of the local community. Haverhill and Newmarket Town Councils currently have a mayor, although these are carried out in different ways. The Haverhill Town Mayor wears robes as well as a chain of office depending on the function they are attending, whereas the Newmarket Town Mayor does not wear robes, but has a chain of office. It is a matter of choice for the town council as to how their town mayor will be dressed.
- Research into how other authorities across the country carry out their civic leadership functions shows that in general, where a civic leader is a mayor, they tend to attend more events, up to 550 events, compared to around 100-200 for chairmen. Also, where there are mayors, the costs of civic leadership is almost always higher, reflecting the larger number of events and support required to undertake the bigger role.
- The survey showed that it was predominately Bury St Edmunds residents who do not want to lose the historic aspect and tradition and ceremony attached to having a mayor. They have expressed the importance of the ceremonial aspects of this role and good press coverage/PR/profile raising that can be achieved. The review of written press coverage and the telephone survey suggests that the St Edmundsbury Mayor currently attracts more coverage. However, the attendance of the St Edmundsbury Mayor or Forest Heath Chairman was equally appreciated by those requesting their attendance at events.
- The survey also found a commonly expressed view that local people will not relate to a distant mayor of a large authority; a successful mayor is one who is largely known by local population and one whom they can identify as one of their own.

1.1.7 While it is recognised that a decision around borough status and whether to have a mayor/chairman may be subject to further debate by the new West Suffolk Council in the future, the present review is considered by the Civic Leadership Working Group to provide the most comprehensive assessment that can be reasonably undertaken at this time to help the Shadow Council to reach a decision.

1.1.8 During the course of the review it has become evident that there is a need for a revised approach for the civic leader of the new West Suffolk Council because of the following issues that have been identified:

- Events attended by St Edmundsbury Mayor and Forest Heath Chairman focus on the towns within St Edmundsbury and mainly Bury St Edmunds town.
- Rather than supporting the priorities of the Councils, the agenda can be individualised and changed every year. Therefore there is not a strong correlation between events that the current civic leaders attend and the Councils' priorities, particularly in relation to growth and housing. Education and local growth are currently the least frequent events that are supported by either civic leader.
- There is confusion over what civic leadership is and how the different civic roles work together. Two towns in west Suffolk currently have mayors. Having both town mayors and a St Edmundsbury Borough Mayor tends to result in confusion and duplication of event coverage.
- There is not presently any co-ordination of attendance at events with ward councillors and cabinet members.
- The geographic size of the new West Suffolk Council means consideration has to be given to making sure that the role is deliverable by one person in terms of numbers of commitments and distances to be travelled.

## 1.2 **Requirements of the role of civic leader**

- 1.2.1 Having considered a range of different ways that civic leadership can be carried out, the proposal is to continue to appoint a civic leader from within the existing 64 elected councillors of the new West Suffolk Council (as per the Constitution) and to retain the approach of appointing one civic figurehead and one deputy, who maintain political neutrality.
- 1.2.2 The length of the term of office shall remain as one year.
- 1.2.3 A more coordinated and team-based approach is required to ensure that civic leadership is woven into the fabric of the council and is supported by other councillors and portfolio holders and vice versa, thereby reducing the need for joint attendance at some events and maximising the benefits where attendance is carried out together.
- 1.2.4 It is important to ensure that there is a more equitable approach to recognising communities across west Suffolk, removing the focus from being on key towns and this needs to be reflected when determining what events the civic leader should attend.
- 1.2.5 Maximising communication methods and promoting the civic leadership role internally and externally are critical success factors, ensuring that press coverage reflects the work of the wider communities and businesses of west Suffolk, which goes hand-in-hand with the role being reflective of the broader area.
- 1.2.6 There is a need to consider how the civic leader can gain greater buy-in from young people, raising awareness about democracy and the role of the

council. There are a range of options that could be considered, from appointing a cadet civic leader to hosting youth engagement events in the council chambers.

- 1.2.7 There is a requirement for more involvement of and closer consultation with town and parish councils. It is also worth noting that it is intended to undertake a review of the connection between West Suffolk Council and its town and parish councils in 2019/2020 and this needs to consider how the civic leader of the West Suffolk Council can complement and support the work of towns and parishes better and vice versa and to consider how some functions could be undertaken differently.

1.3 **Priorities for the civic leader/supporting the aims and ambitions of West Suffolk Council**

- 1.3.1 Regardless of title, what is required in the future, is a professional, progressive and accessible civic leader, well connected to the aims of the new West Suffolk Council.
- 1.3.2 The ambassadorial function remains a central part of the new role; championing and supporting local communities/businesses. Being non-political means the civic leader's views can be widely heard.
- 1.3.3 The civic leader can be a major influence in promoting the image and importance of West Suffolk Council in the regional and national context, as well as supporting local communities and businesses.
- 1.3.4 The working group recommend that the following principles apply to the new civic leader role:
- To support economic growth and development in partnership with key stakeholders, such as the BID and Chamber of Commerce and American Airbases;
  - To continue to chair council meetings;
  - To continue to support key national and military events in a ceremonial role;
  - To continue to host countywide events such as the Harvest Festival, Battle of Britain commemorations and so on;
  - To continue to support educational events, but to ensure where these are undertaken they are linked to a broader remit rather than being, for instance, specific to one school;
  - To reach out and engage with local communities and to continue to champion the contributions of local citizens, groups and businesses;
  - To remove twinning responsibilities and support them through the town councils, as they are in some cases already;
  - To support charities but not to be responsible for hosting or organising specific charity events to raise funds; and
  - To reduce the number of events attended by the civic leader, ensuring there is a more focused approach on supporting key strategic events, likely to have the biggest impact across West Suffolk communities.
- 1.3.5 To recognise and thank the contributions of citizens, including, for example, thanking people by attending events, hosting receptions for community



groups and volunteers, granting Freedom awards and also by making best use of the advertising/promotion of events.

**1.4 Format for how the role will be delivered: West Suffolk Council Status**

1.4.1 While the legal order laid down by Government is that West Suffolk Council will be a district with a chairman on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, there are various options councillors can look at as to whether the new Council will be a borough or district or have a mayor or a chair after this date. These are detailed within the report and outlined in section 2 below.

1.4.2 The branding for the new West Suffolk Council will not change whichever decision is made regarding borough or district status.

**2. Additional supporting information**

2.1 There are three overarching options for how the civic leadership role could be undertaken:

- a) West Suffolk chooses not to apply for borough status and accepts district status, adopting a chairman as their civic leader.
- b) West Suffolk applies for borough status and if granted then chooses whether to adopt a mayor or chairman as their civic leader.
- c) West Suffolk applies for borough status, but fails to attain this and thus becomes a district council with a chairman as their civic leader.

2.2 In terms of deciding the format for which option will be adopted, there is a need for a staged approach to decision making.

2.3 The Shadow Council initially needs to decide whether to apply to the Privy Council for borough status. Once the outcome of this is known, further consideration could then be given to deciding whether the civic leader will be a mayor/chairman, if and as required.

2.4 The decision to apply to the Privy Council for borough status requires a two-thirds majority vote in favour (excluding abstentions) at a specially convened Shadow Council meeting.

2.5 If councillors vote in favour of convening this meeting, then the plan will be to arrange this in December 2018. It is for this reason that it is recommended that the Shadow Council suspends paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules when voting whether to convene the special meeting, so that it may only be passed should two thirds majority of those present and voting at the meeting wish the Shadow Council to do so, thus replicating the later voting requirements that would be required at the special meeting if called.

2.6 The implications for whether the Shadow Council request the convening of a special meeting to decide on borough status or not are outlined below:

Decision not to convene a special meeting:

- Legal position prevails in May 2019 of district status and a chairman.
- Consult with town and parish councils on the impact and opportunities for them given the changes to civic leadership for the new West Suffolk Council for the longer term.

Decision to convene a special meeting:

- The special meeting is convened in December 2018.
- If the special meeting achieves two thirds majority, immediately make an application to the Privy Council.
- Consult with town and parish councils on the impact and opportunities for them with particular focus on the interim year ahead 2019/2020, whilst the Shadow Council awaits the outcome of the application.
- Await to hear from the Privy Council as to whether borough status is granted and then, if it is, make a decision as to whether the civic leader should be a mayor or a chairman.

2.7 Following the decisions made by the Shadow Council, the next steps are as follows:

- Writing of the protocol for the new civic leader (as outlined in the recommendations);
- Developing implementation options from 1 April 2019 (as required) which includes consulting with town and parish councils; and
- Agreeing the budget/resourcing requirements for supporting the civic leader.