

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 12 March 2020 at 5.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber, College Health Road, Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds IP28 7EY**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair David Nettleton

Michael Anderson

Tony Brown

Mike Chester

Patrick Chung

Terry Clements

Stephen Frost

Diane Hind

Lisa Ingwall King

Joe Mason

Jim Meikle

Marion Rushbrook

Ian Shipp

In attendance:

Susan Glossop, Cabinet Member for Growth

Margaret Marks

Sara Mildmay-White, Cabinet Member for Housing

48. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Dawn Dicker for substituting for Councillor Paul Hopfensperger.

49. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Brown, Simon Cole and Paul Hopfensperger.

50. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 January 2020 and 23 January 2020 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

51. **Public Participation**

[Councillor Jim Meikle arrived at 5.05pm during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Diane Hind arrived at 5.14pm during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Terry Clements arrived at 5.15pm during the consideration of this item].

The following members of the public spoke under this agenda item:

1. Mr Andrew Appleby a local resident from Newmarket and coincidentally a Newmarket Town Councillor, addressed the Committee in connection with Item 5 on the agenda, "Announcements from the Chair regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee".

Mr Appleby said he was speaking purely as a resident of Newmarket and referred to a written response he had received in relation to a statement he had made at Council in February 2020 regarding the parking review decision made by Cabinet stating "we can confirm consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders in Newmarket, including Newmarket Town Council". This was news to Mr Appleby and to other Town Councillors.

Mr Appleby stated he had not received a response to his question regarding the date, place and time of the alleged consultation with Newmarket Town Council or who was in attendance. The written response received refers merely to a meeting with the Clerk and Mayor of Newmarket Town Council. Newmarket Town Council is a corporate body of 18 members. The Clerk is a council employee, and the Mayor a titular head. Meetings with the Mayor and Clerk do not constitute a consultation with the Town Council. Changes to parking charges for Newmarket were first made available in the Cabinet papers a week before the meeting on 11 February 2020 so it was clearly impossible for there to have been any consultation on these.

Mr Appleby asked whether the Committee agreed that the assertion of a consultation with Newmarket Town Council is a figment of imagination and the consultation of the Parking Review Group was inadequate and therefore invalidates the decision of Cabinet. The decision by Cabinet cannot be reviewed by this Committee as it was based on this Committee's own recommendation and he felt this matter should be properly reviewed by Council as it was a non-key decision when considered by Cabinet.

In response, the Chair of the Committee summarised the consultation responses received for Newmarket as part of the online survey which was set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet reports. The Chair stated he met with Councillor Hood, the Mayor of Newmarket and with officers on 11 October 2019 and walked around the car parks in Newmarket and looked at the condition of each car park and agreed that improvements were required. On 8 November 2019 a meeting was also held with Paul Brown (BID Newmarket) and Ross McKittrick (Guineas Centre) to discuss car parking issues.

In reply, Mr Appleby stated he could not see how the Parking Review Group could consult the BID and Guineas Centre, two private limited companies and not the elected representatives of Newmarket Town Council. Mr Appleby reiterated there was no consultation carried out with Newmarket Town Council and therefore the decision should be referred to Council.

2. Mr Frank Stennett a local resident from Fornham All Saints, a Parish Chairman and a businessman addressed the Committee in connection with Item 7 on the agenda, "West Suffolk Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2018-2023 Year 1 Review and Item 11 on the Agenda "Work Programme Update".

Item 11: Mr Stennetts informed the Committee he worked with the Government and DEFRA on the foot and mouth outbreak which is an infectious viral disease. Due to the corona virus (Covid-19), and payment meters being able to spread the virus Mr Stennetts suggested delaying the tariff increases and the Council looks at the public health risks around payment metres spreading the virus. He also suggested the Committee considers reviewing Barley Homes and its purpose.

Item 5: Mr Stennetts wanted to bring to the Committee's attention the important work carried out by the West Suffolk Lettings Partnership.

In response the Chair of the Committee explained the legal notice for parking tariffs had been published and would come into effect on 6 April 2020. Cabinet would review parking charges and make the necessary changes by looking at the occupancy count data year-on-year.

The Chair thanked Mr Stennetts for his comments on the lettings partnership.

52. **Announcements from the Chair Regarding Responses from the Cabinet to Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chair informed members he attended Cabinet 11 February 2020 to present the Committee's report on items it considered on 9 January 2020 and drew relevant points from the report to the Committee's attention. In particular Councillor Jo Rayner, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs presentation of the report on Management of Events in West Suffolk.

At the same meeting, the Cabinet Member for Operations, Councillor Peter Stevens presented the recommendation report from the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 23 January 2020, setting out its recommendations from the Parking Review Group, which was approved.

53. **Registered Provider of Social Housing (Havebury Partnership)**

[Councillor Terry Clements declared a non-pecuniary interest as an Honorary Life President of Havebury Housing Partnership.]

Councillor Diane Hind declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Vice-Chair of Havebury's Scrutiny Panel].

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/20/004, which reminded members that at its meeting on 2 September 2019 the Committee resolved to invite Registered Providers in West Suffolk to future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As Havebury Partnership was a significant stockholder in West Suffolk, Mr Andrew Smith, Chief Executive, Anita Jones, Director of Operations and Scott Baily, Director of Development from the Havebury Housing Partnership had been invited to the meeting to give a presentation/overview on the following topics:

- development pipelines for the West Suffolk area including rural sites;
- single/shared accommodation for under 25s;
- housing tenure, particularly the provision of social rent;
- affordability checks and supporting people to maintain tenancies;
- joint working with West Suffolk Council; and
- provision of housing for older people and policy to support people who would like to move.

The presentation covered the above topics as well as setting out the background to Havebury Housing and its journey; its Corporate Plan 2018-2022 which was currently being refreshed; its objectives; current and future developments; strategic opportunities (new older person strategy; new homelessness strategy and new community investment strategy).

Following the presentation, detailed discussions and responses were provided on the following:

- property refurbishments and community spaces;
- homes which are more dementia friendly;
- multi-agency partnerships for community areas to clean up;
- fly-tipping on housing estates and interaction with the Council;
- the affordability of housing for younger people;
- the need for suitable accommodation for people moving on;
- electric vehicles and the provision of charging points on housing estates in the future;
- constraints on land prices;
- social challenges over the next 20 years.

In response to a question raised on climate change, the Committee was informed that as part of the mid-term review of the Corporate Plan 2018-2022, Havebury would be looking at climate change and about where to invest in new or existing housing stock. Havebury was also doing as much as anyone else with regards to renewables.

The Committee discussed homes for life and the issue of an aging population. Anita explained that Havebury had been rebalancing its housing stock profile over the last five years to ensure there were smaller properties being built on development sites. Furthermore, Havebury was looking at its Older Persons Strategy as well as its Asset Management Strategy. Havebury was building smaller, flexible units designed for the young, middle aged and older generations.

In response to a question raised regarding estate walk-arounds which used to include ward members, Havebury confirmed these still took place with its tenants and these could be opened-up and extended to other organisations, including ward members.

In response to a question raised regarding what percentage of Havebury's housing stock was solid/cavity wall Anita agreed to provide the figures following the meeting.

In response to a question asking how proactive Rangers in the community were, members were informed that the number of Rangers had been increased, and Havebury were confident they had the team in place to deal with neighbourhood issues.

In response to a question raised with regards to tenants maintaining their gardens, Anita advised that Havebury had Rangers and a neighbourhood advice service. Havebury also had a fund for a supportive gardener scheme, if tenants were struggling to maintain their own gardens which could be accessed if there was a genuine need.

In response to a question raised on service charges and how they were decided, the Committee was informed that an annual assessment was carried out each year. Not all tenants had separate service charges as these could be pooled for a housing estate. Every year Havebury looked at where there were large impacts on tenants, such as water charges.

Councillor Diane Hind then moved the recommendation, this was duly seconded by Councillor Terry Clements and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED: That

1) Havebury Housing Partnership be invited back to a future meeting once the following Strategies had been progressed:

- i) New Older Persons Strategy**
- ii) New Homelessness Strategy**
- iii) New Community Investment Strategy**

2) Flagship Housing be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.

At 6.35pm the Committee adjourned the meeting for a short break.

[Councillors Michael Anderson, Mike Chester and Jim Meikle left the meeting at 6.45pm following the vote taking place on this item].

At 6.47pm the Committee recommenced its business.

54. West Suffolk Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2018-2023: Year 1 Review

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Sara Mildmay-White presented Report No: OAS/WS/20/005, which was a first-year review of the West Suffolk Housing Strategy Implementation Plan.

In December 2018, West Suffolk Council adopted the Housing Strategy covering the period 2018-2023. This included an implementation plan setting out key actions to be achieved across each of the three housing priorities.

The implementation plan attached as Appendix A to the report had been reviewed and regularly monitored since it was adopted to ensure that progress was being made towards delivering the councils priorities and addressing any challenges.

The report set out the progress which had been made along with some challenges that were being addressed. The main points were set out in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of the report.

The Cabinet Member for Housing reminded the Committee that the issue of homelessness was specifically addressed in the Council's Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy which was presented to the Committee last year.

The Committee scrutinised the implementation plan, the detailed information on progress made since its adoption, along with some challenges which were being addressed.

In particular discussions were held on Homes for Life and what was being built for older people; the development of an affordable housing guide for parish/town councils; the transference of the Home-Link housing register system to another provider, which had led to better processes when applying for housing and higher satisfaction rates from customers; houses in multiple occupation and enforcement; 30% affordable housing; S106 agreements; and homelessness prevention and reduction to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In response to a question raised officers explained that under the Disabled Facilities Grant, the Council had spent last year £900k of its allocation for adaptations to houses, and more would be spent next year.

In response to a question raised officers explained that a new Planning White Paper was imminent. Once the White Paper was available, the next Local Plan would include clear goals/measures, particularly in relation to energy efficiency in houses.

In response to a question raised regarding temporary accommodation, officers explained that the Council had a mixture of temporary accommodation across West Suffolk. In relation to Haverhill, the Council had the use of six properties. Officers also stated that the Council was always looking for properties that could be purchased and used for temporary accommodation, with self-contained units being favoured.

The Committee commended officers in the number of empty homes which had been brought back into use in 2019-2020 and suggested this should be publicised as a positive news story.

The Committee **noted** the progress made against the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan and requested that a future report be presented to the

Committee on Homes for Life setting out what was being built for older people.

55. **Suffolk Cross-Authority Task and Finish Group - Citizens Advice (Final Report)**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/20/006, which set out the findings and recommendations reached by the Suffolk Cross-Authority Task and Finish Group (Citizens Advice) (the Group).

In December 2019 the Group held three sessions. At the first session the Group received an extensive presentation by Citizens Advice Chief Officers which dealt with value; impacts and funding. The second session involved interested parties and representatives from authorities, primarily concerned with impacts and involvement in funding. The final session was a discussion period with members of the Group on all aspects.

The Group established three points as crucial from the start: The Service Value; the Impacts on other authorities and the future Funding of Citizens Advice in Suffolk.

The Committee considered the report and recommendations, which were primarily for Suffolk County Council's consideration, and asked questions to which the Chair provided responses.

In particular discussions were held on the CAB's consumer phone service and national issues around calls not answered.

In response to a question raised, officers explained that each year the Grant Working Party gave funding to help with outreach work to provide support in villages.

The being no decision required to be made by the West Suffolk Council, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

56. **Suffolk County Council: Health Scrutiny Committee - 21 January 2020**

[Councillor Diane Hind left the meeting at 7.35pm during the consideration of this item.

Councillors Dawn Dicker and Stephen Frost left the meeting at 7.37pm during the consideration of this item]

Councillor Margaret Marks, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee presented Report No: OAS/WS/20/007.

The report, prepared by Councillor Margaret Marks, set out what was considered at its meeting held on 21 January 2020, being:

- Progress made to transform the arrangements for the commissioning and delivery of sexual and reproductive health services in Suffolk; and

- An update on non-emergency patient transport in Suffolk.
- An update on a special meeting held by the Joint East Suffolk and North Essex Health Scrutiny.

The Committee considered the report and asked questions to which Councillor Margaret Marks provided comprehensive responses.

Discussions were held on patient travel and the Committee agreed there needed to be more working together on health transport for patients across the county.

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the report on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 January 2020, from Councillor Margaret Marks.

57. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/20/008, which informed Members on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Cabinet for the period 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not raise any issues.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020 Decisions Plan.

58. Work Programme Update

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/20/009, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2019-2020 (Appendix 1).

The Committee considered the report and did not raise any issues.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update.

The meeting concluded at 7.45pm

Signed by:

Chair
