

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held virtually via **MS Teamslive** remote meeting platform on **Tuesday 14 July 2020** at **6.30 pm**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair Brian Harvey
Vice Chair Margaret Marks

Richard Alecock	Robert Everitt	Joanna Rayner
John Augustine	Stephen Frost	Karen Richardson
Trevor Beckwith	Susan Glossop	David Roach
Mick Bradshaw	John Griffiths	Richard Rout
Sarah Broughton	Pat Hanlon	Marion Rushbrook
Simon Brown	Diane Hind	Ian Shipp
Tony Brown	Rachel Hood	Andrew Smith
Carol Bull	Ian Houlder	David Smith
John Burns	Paul Hopfensperger	John Smith
Mike Chester	Beccy Hopfensperger	Karen Soons
Patrick Chung	Lisa Ingwall King	Clive Springett
Max Clarke	James Lay	Peter Stevens
Terry Clements	Aaron Luccarini	Peter Thompson
Simon Cole	Victor Lukaniuk	Jim Thorndyke
Jason Crooks	Elaine McManus	Don Waldron
Dawn Dicker	Jim Meikle	Cliff Waterman
Roger Dicker	Sara Mildmay-White	Ann Williamson
Andy Drummond	Andy Neal	Phil Wittam
Mary Evans	David Nettleton	
	David Palmer	

65. **Welcome**

The Chair formally opened the meeting and welcomed all persons present including those that were viewing the meeting externally via the live broadcast, to the Council's first virtual meeting of Council.

66. **Remembrance**

Before commencing business, all Members were asked to ensure their microphones were muted and observe a minute's silence in respect for the thousands of lives lost during the Coronavirus pandemic, and to their families and friends that had been affected by such loss. Members also joined the Chair in remembrance of former St Edmundsbury Borough Councillor and Mayor, Stefan Oliver, who had sadly died recently.

67. Meeting Facilitation

Leah Mickleborough, Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer, was acting as facilitator for the meeting, and upon being invited to do so by the Chair, detailed a number of housekeeping matters and guidance to help those present and viewing to familiarise themselves with how the meeting would operate within the virtual setting.

68. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

69. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported on the civic engagements and charity activities which he and the Vice-Chair had attended since the last ordinary meeting of Council on 25 February 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, from mid-March 2020 onwards, attendance was either stopped or held remotely. Some engagements were starting to be re-introduced for the Chair and Vice-Chair to attend in person, albeit with COVID-19 safety measures in place.

The Chair took the opportunity to personally thank West Suffolk Council staff for their sterling efforts in responding to the impacts of the pandemic. He particularly acknowledged those that had undertaken additional duties to support residents and businesses in this unprecedented time of need.

70. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Anderson, Joe Mason and Robert Nobbs.

In addition, the Chair reported that the Chief Executive had exercised his urgency powers to grant Councillor David Gathercole a dispensation which would allow him to be exempt from attending meetings for the time being due to ill health (see Minute 79. below). Wishes of good health were expressed to Councillor Gathercole.

71. Declarations of Interests

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

72. Leader's Statement (Paper No: COU/WS/20/007)

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, presented his Leader's Statement as outlined in Paper No: COU/WS/20/007.

In his introductory remarks, Councillor Griffiths:

- a. paid tribute to the lives lost during the Coronavirus pandemic and to former St Edmundsbury Borough Councillor and Mayor, Stefan Oliver (see Minute 66. above);
- b. acknowledged the outstanding work of NHS staff, other key workers and of West Suffolk councillors and staff for their tireless efforts during the pandemic;
- c. explained that with partners, the Council was lobbying Government on fairer funding, which was particularly critical for West Suffolk Council and other rural councils for continuing their hard work in tackling the impacts of COVID-19 and the recovery process;
- d. explained the support the Council, which had exceeded national efforts, had given to local businesses through the delivery of small business grants and rate relief to eligible businesses, together with helping businesses and traders to introduce COVID-19 safety measures in preparation for re-opening, where appropriate;
- e. specifically recognised the work of the Council's Families and Communities team for their support to residents and communities during the crisis, together with the Town and Parish Councils and raft of volunteers that had demonstrated effective cohesive partnership working throughout lockdown and as restrictions began to lift;
- f. specifically recognised the work of the Housing team that had worked tirelessly to accommodate rough sleepers and persons in need during the crisis; and
- g. Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was now operating as planned across West Suffolk (and parts of Mid Suffolk and Babergh).

A range of questions were asked of the Leader, namely:

- a. Whether payment methods utilised by car parking ticket machines were aligned across West Suffolk car parks and whether risk assessments were undertaken to ascertain if the means by which payments could be made catered for all, including those with disabilities or impairments. In response, Councillor Griffiths, assisted by Councillor Peter Stevens, Portfolio Holder for Operations, stated that machines were in line with national standards and whilst compliant, any variances identified were assessed and mitigated where possible to achieve consistency across the district. All the Council's car parks were independently 'Park Marked', which was an award given under the Safer Parking Scheme for meeting a national standard aimed at reducing crime, the fear of crime, cleanliness and accessibility. Ringo could be used in all car parks obviating the need to interact with a ticket machine.
- b. In the context of referring to West Suffolk Council (WSC) needing to intervene in the last tax year to prevent 393 households from becoming homeless and as the present COVID-19 related moratorium on evictions was due to end on 23 August 2020, which, unless WSC intervened, would potentially result in 47 households being made

homeless, Councillor Clarke asked what support was being given regarding this matter. A written response would be provided by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Housing, and this would be shared with all Members in due course.

- c. Councillor Clarke then expressed how he felt that children in his community were being failed by society and asked how the Council was providing support to children, schools and communities to help improve young people's attainment, particularly in Maths and English. In response, Councillor Griffiths stated that improvements in educational attainment in some areas was recognised and a multi-agency approach was being taken to tackle educational inadequacies across Suffolk. The Council was actively working with partners to mitigate this.
- d. With reference to paragraphs 43. and 44. of the Leader's Statement, which provided details of grants allocated to small businesses during the COVID-19 crisis, Councillor Cliff Waterman asked what steps the Council had taken to prevent fraud, or if there was fraud how was it detected; whether there was any monitoring of how the money was being used, and whether there were any measurable outcomes. A written response would be provided by Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, and this would be shared with all Members in due course.
- e. In the context of referring to West Suffolk Council (WSC) working with registered housing associations and private landlords to meet anticipated demand for housing the homeless in the future, whether consideration should be given to WSC building its own social housing stock to enable the Council to be in a good position to cope with any future emergency that required housing for a large number of people. A written response would be provided by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Housing, and this would be shared with all Members in due course.
- f. With specific reference to car parking in Newmarket, how the success of CPE was monitored; whether car parking spaces were sizeable enough to accommodate larger cars; and whether there was consistency and sufficient publicity given to methods of payment at ticketing machines. In response, Councillor Griffiths, assisted by Councillor Peter Stevens, Portfolio Holder for Operations, stated that a monthly statement was produced by CPE operatives to ascertain and monitor performance; car parking spaces were in line with national standards, and a reiteration of the reply to question a. above was given, including that signage was displayed in each car park on the range of methods to pay.

73. **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present within the virtual setting. No members of the public viewing the live broadcast had registered to speak.

74. **Referrals Report of Recommendations from Cabinet**

Council noted that there were no referrals from Cabinet from the meetings held on 26 May 2020 or 23 June 2020.

75. **Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021 (Report No: COU/WS/20/008)**

(Although the Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021 did not make specific reference to individual employees' pay, Councillors Richard Alecock and Lisa Ingwall-King declared pecuniary interests in this item as their spouses were employed by West Suffolk Council. Both members remained in the meeting but did not take part in the discussion or vote.)

Council considered this report, which sought approval for the Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021.

The Localism Act 2011 and supporting guidance provided details of matters that must be included in this statutory pay policy, but, also, emphasised that each local authority had the autonomy to take its own decisions on pay and pay policies. The Pay Policy Statement must be approved formally by Council each year. The statement could be amended in year, must be published on the Council's website and must be complied with when setting the terms and conditions of Chief Officers.

Set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report, were details of what was included in the Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021, which was attached at Appendix A.

Councillor Carol Bull, Portfolio Holder for Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council. In response to questions, Councillor Bull stated that the Council was significantly below the national average pay ratio and in Suffolk, of the data sourced, West Suffolk's ratio compared extremely well with only Ipswich Borough Council faring better. She added that in respect of whether the same differential increase between the national living wage and the Council's minimum pay of £9.00 per hour that was awarded last year would be added this year and if this would also be applicable to the under 25's was subject to review.

In the context of the provision of figures within the Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021 relating to whether a gender pay gap was evident within the Council, Councillor Karen Soons asked Councillor Bull whether any figures were available in respect of a potential diversity/ethnicity pay gap. A written response would be provided by Councillor Bull and this would be shared with all Members in due course.

On the motion of Councillor Carol Bull, seconded by Councillor Patrick Chung, it was put to the vote and with the vote being 56 for the motion, 1 against and 2 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/2021, as detailed in Appendix A to Report No: COU/WS/20/008, be approved.

76. **Amendments to the Constitution (Report No: COU/WS/20/009)**

Council considered this report, which sought approval for a number of amendments to the Council's Constitution.

The Constitution Review Group met periodically to review the effectiveness of the Constitution, which following adoption by West Suffolk Shadow Council, came into effect for the creation of West Suffolk Council on 1 April 2019. The Review Group was established to identify any areas that could be developed further to improve the way the Council made decisions while ensuring that processes remained efficient and transparent.

Councillor Carol Bull, Portfolio Holder for Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that the Constitution Review Group was satisfied that the Constitution was generally operating as intended. However, the Group was suggesting changes should be made in the following areas:

- a. The procedure for handling Motions on Notice: as proposed in Appendix A;
- b. Adding a standing agenda item in respect of 'Declarations of Interests' at meetings: as set out in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8;
- c. Gambling Act Scheme of Delegation: as proposed in Appendix B; and
- d. Delegation Panel Notification: as set out in paragraphs 2.12 and 2.13.

It was noted that if approved, the changes would take effect immediately, therefore the handling of the motion on notice contained later on the agenda at Item 12. would be considered in accordance with the new procedure set out in Appendix A.

On the motion of Councillor Carol Bull, seconded by Councillor Diane Hind, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That with immediate effect:

1. the revised procedure for Motions on Notice in the Council Procedure Rules, as attached at Appendix A to Report No: COU/WS/20/009, be approved;
2. the adding of "declaration of interests" as a standing item on all committee and Cabinet meeting agendas, be approved;
3. the revisions to the Gambling Act Scheme of Delegation, as attached at Appendix B to Report No: COU/WS/20/009, be approved; and
4. it be agreed to remove the requirement for officers to call Parish / Town Councils within two days of a Delegation Panel meeting taking place.

77. **West Suffolk Annual Scrutiny Report: 2019/2020 (Report No: COU/WS/20/010)**

Council received and noted the West Suffolk Annual Scrutiny Report for 2019/2020.

Article 7 of the Council's Constitution required that 'the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee must report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.'

Councillor David Nettleton, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2019/2020, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council. He placed his thanks on record to the Committee, its Parking Review Group and to Cabinet during his appointment as Chair, and acknowledged the work of officers that had supported him and the Committee, with particular recognition given to Christine Brain, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), and to Darren Dixon, Service Manager (Property) and Rachael Mann, Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) for their support with the parking review.

Councillor Brian Harvey, Chair of the Council and Councillor Ian Shipp, present Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, placed their thanks on record to Councillor Nettleton for his informative report and for his Chairmanship of the Committee during 2019/2020.

Councillor Ian Houlder, Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, drew attention to the specific work of that Committee and its two sub-committees. He placed his thanks on record to the Committee and to Rachael Mann, Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) and to her teams in Finance and Internal Audit for their continuing support.

No questions were asked.

78. **The Use of Chief Executive Urgency Powers during COVID-19 (Report No: COU/WS/20/011)**

Council received and noted this report, which summarised a number of decisions taken by the Chief Executive during the COVID-19 crisis by exercising his urgency powers.

The COVID-19 pandemic required the Council to work rapidly to respond to the emerging threat, and associated Government guidance, as the situation evolved. In the vast majority of cases, officers throughout the organisation were empowered through the Council's business continuity plans and scheme of delegation to make decisions to support the Council's response. This enabled the Council to continue to deliver vital services to its communities whilst ensuring appropriate measures were taken to safeguard staff and our stakeholders.

In a small number of cases, decisions had to be taken that fell outside the scope of the scheme of delegation, or the terms under which decisions were delegated to officers, and therefore it was necessary to employ the Chief Executive's Urgency Powers, as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

Some urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive that fell within the scope of 'executive' functions, were reported to Cabinet on 26 May 2020. The report presented at this meeting, informed of those decisions that were 'non-executive' (Council-led) in nature, as follows:

Appendix A: To exempt Councillor David Gathercole from attending a meeting of Council until 31 December 2020, or until he was able to do so, whichever was sooner

Appendix B: To grant planning permission for the construction of a skatepark in Newmarket

Appendix C: To appoint Councillor Ian Shipp as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Appendix D: To make modifications to the Statement of Community Involvement

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council.

The Chair wished to place his sincere thanks on record to Councillor Griffiths and specifically to Ian Gallin, Chief Executive and to his team for the ongoing response of the Council to this extremely fast moving, unprecedented crisis situation.

79. **Motion on Notice**

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, had given notice under the Council Procedure Rules of the Constitution of a motion set out in the agenda. The motion would be seconded by Councillor Ian Shipp, Leader of the Independent Group and Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The motion was to give thanks to those who had supported the efforts in West Suffolk in response to the Coronavirus outbreak, the terms of which were contained in the agenda.

Members noted that earlier in the meeting under Agenda Item 9, Council approved recommendations relating to making amendments to the Constitution. These were to be effective immediately, which meant the procedure rules regarding the handling of motions on notice had changed. The Chair invited Leah Mickleborough, Monitoring Officer and facilitator for the meeting, to reiterate how the rules had changed, as set out in Appendix A to Report No: COU/WS/20/009.

Councillor Griffiths was duly invited to put his motion, which included reiterating his sincere thanks to a raft of organisations, volunteers and individuals across West Suffolk, as well as the NHS and key workers for their responses to the crisis.

Councillor Ian Shipp was duly invited to second the motion, where he added his thanks to a similar extensive range of organisations, volunteers and individuals that had provided truly outstanding contributions to their communities in response to the outbreak. He expressed his pride at being a

councillor and resident of West Suffolk as he witnessed the excellent co-ordination and partnership working to support those in need.

In accordance with the new procedure rules for handling motions on notice, the first five Members that had indicated a wish to speak on the motion were invited to do so for three minutes in turn. Each acknowledged the outstanding work of specific organisations, volunteers and individuals within their own wards and across West Suffolk as a whole.

Specifically, Councillor Mary Evans drew attention to the meaning of 'sustainable communities' and how this was often termed in relation to buildings and service provision; however, since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, communities across a range of populated areas including those in very small hamlets had demonstrated resilience and cohesiveness which had made them 'sustainable'.

On the motion of Councillor John Griffiths, seconded by Councillor Ian Shipp, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That West Suffolk Council gives its thanks to all those that have supported the efforts across West Suffolk to respond to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Supporting text:

This includes thanks to the Council's staff, who have risen to the challenge magnificently, finding new ways of working to deliver support to our residents and businesses when they have needed it the most.

We would like to pay tribute to all those people in our communities who have worked tirelessly within our towns and villages to help each other. Whether that be a village shop that has made vital deliveries to vulnerable residents stuck at home, those individuals who have queued at pharmacies to collect life saving prescriptions or Parish and Town Councils and community groups who have set up support networks to ensure people know they have someone they can call on in their time of need.

We recognise and value the hard work and dedication of our partner organisations to support communities in their time of need. Whether that be charitable organisations who have advised and supported individuals and their families or business groups, the work of carers and members of staff of the social services team at Suffolk County Council, or business support groups that have mobilised to advise and support each other as the challenge of safe social distancing has arisen.

We welcome the work undertaken by many key workers throughout our area such as teachers who have kept schools open to help other key workers and staff in local shops and supermarkets who have continued to service customers or adapted the way they work to respond.

Finally, we would like to particularly to pay tribute to the wonderful NHS staff throughout West Suffolk who have provided services with dignity and care during the greatest challenge the service has faced in its history.

We are very proud and humbled by the efforts of everyone doing such a great job, while supporting themselves and their families through a very difficult time.

80. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business considered on this occasion.

81. **Conclusion**

On conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked all present for their attendance at this first virtual meeting of Council. The live broadcast subsequently ended at this point.

The meeting concluded at 8.04 pm

Signed by:

Chair
