

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held virtually via **Microsoft Teams** live remote meetings platform on **Tuesday 29 September 2020** at **6.30 pm**

Present **Councillors**

Chair Brian Harvey

Vice Chair Margaret Marks

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

82. **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 this virtual meeting of Council.

83. **Remembrance**

Before commencing business, all Members were asked to ensure their microphones were muted and observe a minute's silence in remembrance of West Suffolk Councillor David Gathercole, who had sadly died recently.

84. **Meeting facilitation**

Leah Mickleborough, Service Manager (Democratic Services), was acting as facilitator for the meeting where support was felt necessary, and upon being

invited to do so, assisted the Chair in detailing the housekeeping matters and guidance as to how the meeting would operate within the virtual setting.

85. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

86. 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 14 July 2020.

Members noted that due to the Covid-19 restrictions, attendance at engagements in person remained limited.

The Chair took the opportunity to personally thank West Suffolk Council staff for their sterling efforts in responding to the impacts of the pandemic. On this occasion, he gave particular recognition to those that had supported the distribution of monies from the Government's small business grant support schemes.

87. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Cole, Mary Evans, Jim Meikle, Peter Thompson and Ann Williamson.

Councillor Michael Anderson was also unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor Meikle who was currently unwell. Members joined the Chair in wishing him a speedy recovery.

88. Declarations of interests

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

89. Leader's statement (Paper number: COU/WS/20/007)

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, presented his Leader's statement as outlined in paper number: COU/WS/20/007.

In his introductory remarks, Councillor Griffiths:

- a. acknowledged the outstanding work of West Suffolk staff and councillors in responding to the continuing challenges of Covid-19;
- b. drew attention to agenda item 7.B.3. which would seek members' approval for going out to consultation on the West Suffolk Local Plan Draft Issues and Options documents. Councillor Griffiths explained that this was the first stage of planning the future of West Suffolk up to 2040 with the Issues and Options stage setting the foundations to

support the development of the new Local Plan. The new Local Plan was not only about building new homes in the right places but would promote the future prosperity of West Suffolk by supporting jobs as well as providing access to health, education, green spaces, leisure and many more services, all within the context of addressing the effects of climate change and making better transport links;

- c. stated that in accordance with one of the Council's strategic priorities, namely promoting 'resilient families and communities that are healthy and active', and having worked in partnership with the West Suffolk Health Alliance to promote the integration of health and leisure facilities, the Cabinet would be considering on 6 October 2020, an almost £2 million investment in Brandon Leisure Centre for making improvements to its current facilities;
- d. stated that from the beginning of October 2020, all electricity for the Council's buildings would be supplied from renewable energy sources. A two year contract had been agreed with Ecotricity Limited and bills would remain competitive as current. This, together with several other green initiatives, as summarised in the written statement, was part of the wider programme of proposed actions arising from the work of the Environment and Climate Change Taskforce;
- e. congratulated the Building Control service on their recent award in the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) East Anglia Building Excellence Awards, which were held annually across the UK. The team was 'Highly Commended' for the Sybil Andrews Academy entry in the 'Best Public Service or Educational Building' category. In addition, the Democratic Services Team had been shortlisted for Team of the Year by the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO). The national association, which had members from numerous local authorities from across the UK, would announce the outcome at its virtual annual conference in November 2020;
- f. reported that the two Barley Homes developments in Haverhill were progressing well and the pipeline projects were satisfactorily moving forward too;
- g. stated that independent research had reported that through increased tourism, the West Suffolk local economy was boosted in 2019 by 4.5 percent from 2018. Due to the impacts of Covid-19, this was however, unlikely to be the case in 2020; and
- h. stated that lobbying was continuing on achieving fair funding for West Suffolk. Not only was the Council faced with the additional challenges created by Covid-19 but the Council was facing ongoing budget pressures and it was therefore crucial that a fair deal was sought from Government. In the meantime, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' Group were launching funding initiatives which could assist the Council with supporting the West Suffolk area with its economic recovery.

The Leader responded to a range of questions, which included:

- a. expressing his support to the suggestion of Councillor Paul Hopfensperger to formally record thanks to Alex Wilson, Director and the team that had been working on the new community centre and homes project located on the Howard estate, Bury St Edmunds. Details of the project, which was set to begin construction in the next two months, were set out in paragraphs 51. to 56. of the Leader's statement;
- b. acknowledging the efforts of Haverhill Town Council for their, and other partners' contributions towards the success of the Lifelink project in Haverhill which was to be rolled out in areas across West Suffolk;
- c. that working with partners, a variety of environmentally-friendly initiatives in Haverhill and across West Suffolk were promoted, such as the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging points on lampposts and the provision of solar panels on business premises. 'Green' schemes could be explored for utilisation within disused or under-used estate garage blocks, as appropriate;
- d. that councillors and the organisation as a whole were accountable for trying to make energy and fuel savings from its key emission sources such as buildings, vehicles and fuel use. There was no specific officer appointed to monitor carbon and cash savings emanating from 'green' initiatives as such; however, progress made was measured and monitored through the Environment Statement which was published with the Council's Annual Report;
- e. that in connection with the installation of EV charging points on lampposts Councillor Marks asked whether the vehicles continued to charge overnight when the street lights were off and whether there should be concerns regarding vandalism if the street light was turned off but cars were plugged into it. In response, Councillor Griffiths confirmed vehicles would continue to charge while the light was off; however, he added that further information would be provided on the operation of the scheme to Members in the form of a written response; and
- f. several discussions were being held in respect of the Western Way Development project. Updates would be provided to all members in due course.

(Councillor Crooks joined the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

90. **Public participation**

No members of the public viewing the live broadcast had registered to speak.

91. **Referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet (Report number: COU/WS/20/008)**

Council considered the referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet, as contained within report number: COU/WS/20/008.

A. Referrals from Cabinet: 21 July 2020

Members noted that there were no referrals emanating from the Cabinet meeting held on 21 July 2020.

B. Referrals from Cabinet: 22 September 2020

Following the publication of the agenda and papers for the Cabinet meeting held on 22 September 2020, which took place before the meeting was held, the Chair confirmed that no changes had been made to the recommendations contained in the referral report.

1. Annual Financial Resilience Report (2019-2020)

Approval was sought for the Annual Financial Resilience Report (2019-2020).

Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council.

In response to a question regarding the recent cancellation of a Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (PASC) meeting, which was largely due to Ernst and Young, the external auditors being unable to produce its '2019-2020 Annual Results Report to those Charged with Governance' report within the necessary timescale, Members were informed that it was disappointing. However, regular contact was being made with Ernst and Young regarding the current position and a report would be presented to the next PASC meeting on 19 November 2020 alongside its 'Annual Audit Letter 2019-2020'.

On the motion of Councillor Broughton, seconded by Councillor Ian Houlder, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That the Annual Financial Resilience Report (2019-2020), as contained in Report number: FRS/WS/20/001, be approved.

2. Financial Resilience Report (June 2020)

Approval was sought for the Financial Resilience Report for the first quarter of the 2020 financial year.

Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council.

On the motion of Councillor Broughton, seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That the Financial Resilience Report (June 2020), as contained in Report number: FRS/WS/20/002, be approved.

3. West Suffolk Local Plan Draft Issues and Options documents – approval for public consultation

Approval was sought for the West Suffolk Local Plan Issues and Options documents for public consultation.

The Local Plan was important in supporting delivery of the Council's strategic priorities and essential for the continuation of an effective planning service. In addition, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, (2004), required local planning authorities to prepare and keep an up-to-date Local Plan.

The new West Suffolk Local Plan would plan for the period to 2040 which aligned with local plans being produced by neighbouring authorities. The Issues and Options Local Plan consultation was the first of several rounds of public consultation in the local plan preparation process.

The Issues and Options document had three main parts, namely:

- Part one: spatial vision
- Part two: local issues
- Part three: settlement profile

Each part was summarised in paragraph 2.3 of Report number: CAB/WS/20/057 (attached as Appendix 1 to the referrals report), with the full parts contained in Appendix A.

Councillor David Roach, Portfolio Holder for Local Plan Development and Delivery, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that subject to approval, public consultation on the draft Issues and Options Local Plan and supporting documents would be undertaken for ten weeks from Tuesday 13 October to Tuesday 22 December 2020. The proposed engagement programme would involve a range of methods, the majority of which were set out in paragraph 4.3 of the Cabinet report.

A number of issues were raised during the discussion, including:

- requesting that the consultation reached as many stakeholders, parish councils, organisations, groups and individuals as possible, especially during the current Covid-19 crisis. Recognition was given to the importance of member engagement within their own wards, which included encouraging parish councils to actively engage within their own communities. While Government Covid-19 safety guidelines needed to be adhered to, this would support efforts in trying to achieve a good response rate from the wider community;
- the complexities and challenges faced in Brandon, which was principally due to the significant environmental constraints which presently prevented substantial housing growth in this location. A meeting was being sought

with Natural England to discuss the specific environmental constraints and whether compromises could be reached;

- the methods used for recording consultation responses and ensuring that the handling of personal data complied with data protection regulations;
- that new homes should comply with national minimum space standards; and
- ensuring typographical errors within the draft Issues and Options documents were identified and rectified as part of the development of the final versions prior to adoption.

Councillor Roach duly responded to questions raised, reiterating that the consultation would be carried out for an extended period and new methods of non-contact engagement were being implemented to try and reach as many as possible. He thanked members for attending the workshops which had helped shape the draft Issues and Options documents, and thanked Planning Policy officers for their sterling efforts in reaching this first stage of the local plan process.

These sentiments were echoed by the Chair.

On the motion of Councillor Roach, seconded by Councillor Patrick Chung, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That:

1. the West Suffolk Local Plan Issues and Options documents be approved for public consultation, as set out in Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/20/057; and
2. delegated authority be given to the Service Manager (Strategic Planning) to make minor non-material consequential changes to the documents as necessary.

(Councillor Houlder left the meeting during consideration of this item.)

92. **Appointment to the Guildhall Feoffment Trust**

Council considered a narrative item which sought an appointment to the Guildhall Feoffment Trust.

West Suffolk Council appointed three of the 17 trustees to the Guildhall Feoffment Trust. Following the recent resignation of Mrs Patsy Warby a new nomination was sought to act as a West Suffolk appointed trustee.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including recording his thanks to Patsy Warby, a councillor of the former St Edmundsbury Borough Council for her contribution to the Trust. Councillor Griffiths explained both he and Councillor Carol Bull presently represented West Suffolk Council on the Trust and that Councillor

John Augustine had expressed an interest in filling the vacancy. He wished to formally nominate Councillor Augustine to the role and subject to approval, very much looked forward to working with him on the Trust.

On the motion of Councillor Griffiths, seconded by Councillor Carol Bull, it was put to the vote and with the vote being 51 for the motion, 1 against and 3 abstentions, it was

Resolved:

That Councillor John Augustine be appointed to the Guildhall Feoffment Trust to represent West Suffolk Council as one of three trustees for a term of four years.

(Councillor Diane Hind left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

93. **Any other urgent business**

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

94. **Conclusion**

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

The meeting concluded at 7.54 pm

Signed by:

Chair
