

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 18 March 2021** at **5.00 pm** facilitated by MS TeamsLive virtual meetings platform.

Present **Councillors**

Chair Ian Shipp
Vice Chair Simon Cole

Michael Anderson	Stephen Frost
Trevor Beckwith	Diane Hind
Simon Brown	Paul Hopfensperger
Mike Chester	Margaret Marks
Patrick Chung	Joe Mason
Terry Clements	Marion Rushbrook

In attendance

Brian Harvey (Observing)
Joanna Rayner, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs

95. **Remembrance**

Before commencing business, all members were asked to ensure their microphones were muted and observe a minute's silence in remembrance of Councillor Jim Meikle who had sadly died recently. A statement of condolence was given by Councillor Ian Shipp, reflecting Councillor Meikle's contribution to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during his time on the Council.

96. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

97. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tony Brown.

98. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 were confirmed as correct record by the Chair.

99. **Declarations of interest**

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

100. **Announcements from the Chair regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chair informed members he attended Cabinet on 9 February 2021 and presented the Committee's report from its meeting held on 14 January 2021. As per the minutes above, the Chair updated Cabinet on the report presented on Public Space Protection Orders and the Committee's rolling work programme and the suggestion for scrutiny where a small working group was set up to look at the Council's website, which was noted by Cabinet.

101. **Public participation**

Frank Stennett of an address located within the district, had registered to speak in relation to agenda item 8 (Update on the Mildenhall Hub).

However, Mr Stennett was unable to attend the meeting, therefore a member of the Democratic Services Team read out his written statement on his behalf:

I have read with interest the articles in the local press about the battery storage facility at the Mildenhall Hub which uses used vehicle batteries. In light of West Suffolk Council's declared climate emergency this Committee should investigate how environmentally friendly and cost efficient using old vehicle batteries are, compared to new batteries.

Especially considering:

- *What was the cost paid for the used vehicle battery system?*
- *How many used vehicle batteries will need to be disposed of before the equivalent of life in new batteries?*
- *What is the cost of disposal of these old vehicle batteries?*
- *How many cycles are these used vehicle batteries guaranteed for?*
- *How many more used vehicle batteries are needed versus using new batteries?*
- *How cost effective are used batteries versus new and are they good value for money?*
- *What would the cost be for a new battery system?*
- *How much electric storage capacity does the used batteries system have?*
- *How much electric storage capacity would a new battery system have for the same area?*

Once all this information is known then the committee can scrutinise how environmentally friendly and efficient the use of used batteries are in an electric storage system. Thank you for your time.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked Frank Stennett for his questions and in response, agreed with officers that a written response be prepared for Frank Stennett, which would also be shared with all councillors.

In response to a question raised by members regarding the use of car batteries, officers explained that the re-purposed batteries would be supplied and maintained by the supplier and would not involve any batteries being brought or left by members of the public.

102. Exiting the European Union: West Suffolk Council's preparations and current status

[Councillor Paul Hopfensperger declared a local non-pecuniary interest as a small business owner in Bury St Edmunds who imports/exports to/from the EU.]

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/21/003, which set out some of the context from when UK voters voted to leave the European Union (EU) in June 2016, a summary of preparations and impacts including collaborative work across Suffolk and West Suffolk Council's preparations.

The report was intended to enable the Committee to gain a better understanding of the implications of existing the EU for the council, partner organisations, residents and businesses in Suffolk and to understand how organisations were working together to ensure that information and advice was disseminated appropriately.

Since the report was published, there had been a change in legislation and the Director advised of the changes relating to paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 in the report as follows:

Paragraph 1.3: Document checks that were intended to be introduced in April 2021, such as the Pre-notification for Products of Animal Origin (POAO) and the requirement for Export Health Certificates, would now come into force on 1 October 2021.

Paragraph 1.4: Physical checks on products of animal origin that were due to be introduced in July 2021 would now be introduced from 1 January 2022.

West Suffolk Council was working collaboratively with partners to be proactive and pragmatic in maximising possible opportunities and minimising potential risks following the UK's exit from the EU. Consideration of Brexit implications were included in the council's business planning and interactions with partners and providers and officers continue to monitor the full impacts as they emerge. Ongoing council preparations have included support and advice to businesses; review of data security; impact on projects; supply chain; EU residency and housing; support to staff and communications.

One key sector in West Suffolk which was finding the new rules challenging was the horse racing industry. They had been doing their own lobbying to central government on VAT and border issues and checks around the

movement of horses between the UK, Ireland and France, in particular as a historic tripartite agreement was not included in the final settlement.

The Director informed the Committee of a new fund for EU transition business support where [smaller businesses could now apply for grants of up to £2,000](#) from the £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund, to help them adapt to new customs and tax rules when trading with the EU. [The Fund aims to help businesses access practical support to ensure they can continue trading effectively](#) with the EU. Businesses were eligible for grants if they import or export goods between Great Britain and the EU or move goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Businesses that trade solely with the EU and were new to importing and exporting processes were particularly encouraged to apply.

The Committee scrutinised the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. Discussions were held on the Free Port Status for Felixstowe and Harwich Ports; packages from the continent being opened and, in some cases, contents missing; and customers receiving customs bills from packages coming from the EU when they were bought from a UK website domain.

Councillor Paul Hopfensperger explained that the new trading arrangements with the EU had severely hampered trade and placed extra burdens on companies with reams of paperwork. The new paperwork requirements to sell products abroad had meant hours of extra work, including sending items to Northern Ireland. This was affecting people's mental health and he questioned what help was available for people. In response the Director explained that many businesses from a range of sectors had been impacted by the changes. Support was on offer which provided advice on all the rules and regulations. Partners across Suffolk were also looking at a post-Covid, post-Brexit recovery plan to address issues such as mental health as well as what future trading might look like.

In response to questions raised regarding data security and whether any of the recent IT attacks had been Brexit related, and whether data would be more secure if it was only dealt with by UK based providers and how was data securely evaluated. Officers explained that the IT team frequently dealt with IT attacks from all over the world. However, officers agreed to provide members with written responses.

In response to a question raised relating to how many EU nationals had left West Suffolk to return home due to Brexit and the associated impact, officers did not believe this information was available but agreed to investigate and provide members with a written response.

Councillor Paul Hopfensperger informed the Committee that from 1 January 2021 UK companies could no longer use a EU website domain (.eu), but anyone could use a ".co.uk" domain. In response officers explained that this had not been raised as an issue and agreed to look into this further and would provide members with a written response.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

103. **Update on the Mildenhall Hub**

Councillor Jo Rayner, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs thanked the Committee for the invitation and set out the benefits the new Hub would bring by replacing existing facilities in Mildenhall in a way that would save money and improve efficiency. It would create opportunities for services and communities to work together to improve health, wellbeing, and skills. The aim tonight was to provide an update on the project and how it's been affected by Covid-19 in particular. At the Committee's meeting in November 2020 members were made aware of the impact of Covid-19 on the construction programme and having to delay the opening to Spring 2021. However, the Cabinet Member was pleased to now be looking forward to opening date.

The Committee then received a follow-up presentation by a Director, which provided the latest information on the planned opening of the Mildenhall Hub and the specific impact of Covid-19. The presentation included some images of what the site looks like at the present time, landscaping etc.; the latest timetable; reopening plans for leisure facilities; initial impact of Covid-19 on using the Hub; practical adjustments; engagement and the College Heath Road offices.

RG Carter was aiming for a practical completion by the end of April 2021, which was subject to good progress with commissioning of complex systems and Covid-19. Client fit out, testing and staff inductions would be carried out during May. The opening of public facilities would be focused on leisure and the atrium area as part of a rolling programme from 24 May 2021. The school was planning to open to students in early June and an official opening event of the Hub along with all its partners would be held in the Autumn.

The Chair of the Committee wished to express an interest in that he lived nearby to the Hub. He was looking forward to the opening of the Hub and wished to thank everyone involved in the planning and delivery of the project, as it had been challenging at times due to Covid-19.

The Committee considered the presentation in detail and asked a number of questions to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In response to a question raised regarding the number of lanes in the main pool of the hub (six), officers explained that it was a community pool rather than a competition pool. In this regard it was built to the specifications of Sport England who had grant funded the project as well as also working with Swim England. In the hierarchy of pools, a community pool was designed to take swimming galas for which six lanes was typical. Whereas major competition pools would take place at larger regional pools. In addition to the six-lane pool (an increase from the current four) there was a separate learner pool with a fully moveable floor.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the presentation.

104. **Suffolk County Council: Health Scrutiny Committee - 13 January 2021**

[Councillor Joe Mason joined the meeting at 6.22pm during the consideration of this item.]

[Councillor Marion Rushbrook left the meeting at 6.45pm during the consideration of this item.]

Councillor Margaret Marks, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee presented report number OAS/WS/21/004.

The report, prepared by Councillor Margaret Marks, set out what was considered at its meeting held on 13 January 2021. The focus of the meeting was on:

- What are children and young people in Suffolk struggling with in terms of their emotional health and wellbeing? and
- In terms of accessing support needed, what has been working well and what could be improved.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which Councillor Marks provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on the West Suffolk Hospital Future Systems Board Task and Finish Group and whether there were any ambitions for having any specialist services, and whether the delivery of chemotherapy would continue to be delivered at home after Covid-19.

In response to a question raised regarding mental health, Councillor Marks explained that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was working on a road map for young people with mental health as it needed to understand why the current system was failing, so it can then build in resilience and teach young people coping mechanisms. She stated that Covid-19 had not helped over the last year, but the CCG was working hard on the mental health agenda. She also felt that we could all become mental health champions, one way or another.

Councillor Joe Mason explained that you needed to have the right forum to explore the opportunities in addressing mental health. He felt there needed to be an early-years tool and resilience should be taught at an early age.

Councillor Marks also provided a brief update from the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday 17 March 2021.

At the conclusion of the discussions, Councillor Marks agreed to feedback comments made by the Committee to the Health Scrutiny Committee and Clinical Commissioning Group.

There being no decision required, the Committee noted the report on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 January 2021 from Councillor Margaret Marks.

105. **Work programme update**

[Councillor Diane Hind left the meeting at 6.54pm during the consideration of this item.]

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/21/005, which updated members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2020-2021 (Appendix 1).

In considering Appendix 1 and following the recent resignation of Councillor Lisa Ingwall-King, Councillor Diane Hind agreed to take on board and progress the "Anti-idling campaign update" by completing a work programme suggestion form, which was originally raised by Councillor Lisa Ingwall-King back in January 2020.

The Committee received an update from Councillor Stephen Frost, Chair of the Website Working Party. The group held its first meeting on 24 February 2021 where they received a range of information on how and why customers were using the website and accessing services. All members of the group agreed to do some homework, where they would go away and try to do the "top 10" things customers do the most on the website to see how they find the experience and journey and would feed back their findings to the next meeting on 26 March 2021. Councillor Frost wished to thank Councillor Terry Clements for bringing this topic to Overview and Scrutiny for review.

In response to the website update, members suggested the group looks at making the search function user friendly as people use different terminology; making the web pages were engaging and not text heavy; and whether there should be a drop-down menu to select different languages, for example Polish. Councillor Frost agreed to feedback comments to the group.

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

The meeting concluded at 7.02 pm

Signed by:

Chair
