

Annual Council



Minutes of the **Annual Meeting** of **Council** held on **Wednesday 19 May 2021** at **11.00 am** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair Brian Harvey

Vice Chair Margaret Marks

Richard Alecock

Carol Bull

John Burns

Mike Chester

Nick Clarke

Roger Dicker

Stephen Frost

Susan Glossop

John Griffiths

Ian Houlder

Elaine McManus

Sara Mildmay-White

Ian Shipp

David Smith

Phil Wittam

131. **Welcome and Introduction**

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 'in person' Annual Meeting of Council.

For the benefit of members of the public that may be watching the livestream, the Chair provided the reasons for holding a non-decision making virtual meeting ahead of this, the official Annual Meeting of Council.

Due to the expiry of special legislation on 7 May 2021 which allowed Council meetings to be held virtually, and despite an unsuccessful High Court challenge, the law only allowed publicly accessible decision making meetings to be held in person at a specific geographical location.

To be able to have meetings in person, consideration also needed to be given to Government guidance in relation to the safe use of council buildings and carefully consider the capacity of West Suffolk Council's venues to host meetings. This was challenging as it was difficult to find venues within the district to accommodate 64 councillors under the present social distancing guidelines. From 21 June 2021, restrictions on social contact were expected to ease which would help mitigate the current challenges.

The virtual meeting held the previous evening was therefore held to enable all members to attend and participate in the discussion on the various agenda items. Matters were voted on a 'minded to' basis, therefore while no formal decisions were made, the outcome of the votes cast would help to inform decision making at this official 'in person' Annual Meeting of Council. A

quorum of members were in attendance on a politically balanced basis to formally resolve the items discussed at the virtual meeting.

132. Election of Chair of the Council for 2021 to 2022

The outgoing Chair called for nominations for the election of Chair for the 2021 to 2022 civic year.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, nominated Councillor Margaret Marks, which was duly seconded by Councillor Elaine McManus.

There being no other nominations, the motion was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Margaret Marks be elected Chair of West Suffolk Council for the 2021 to 2022 civic year.

The retiring Chair briefly acknowledged his years in office (2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021), before inviting Councillor Margaret Marks to take the Chair.

Due to complying with current health and safety regulations, the incoming Chair applied the Chain of Office herself, which was located in its case directly in front of her. She then signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, which would be signed by the Monitoring Officer at the conclusion of the meeting.

133. Chair's announcements

The Chair briefly reiterated from yesterday evening's meeting, the Council's tribute to the outgoing Chair, Councillor Brian Harvey.

At this stage in proceedings, the incoming Chair would usually present the retiring Chair with their past Chair's badge. Councillor Harvey had been very keen to resolve the production of the Chains of Office, which were recently finalised and therefore available for the Annual Meeting. Unfortunately, after the Chains were completed, the jeweller's factory suffered a Covid-19 outbreak, which meant that the production of the Past Chair's badge had not been finished in time for the Annual Meeting. An appropriate moment would be determined to provide it to Councillor Harvey in the near future.

The Chair then briefly acknowledged her forthcoming year in office.

134. Apologies for absence

Due to the reasons set out in the Chair's introduction regarding adhering to present Government guidelines on maintaining social distancing, a compliment of 17 members were present at this meeting. This accorded with the quorum for Council meetings and allowed health and safety measures to be observed.

In addition to the required 16 members present, Councillor Ian Houlder was in attendance in case another member of the Conservative Group was unable

to attend at short notice, which would enable the meeting to remain quorate. In order to observe the political balance of the Council, Councillor Houlder remained present in the meeting room but refrained from voting on any of the items.

Apologies for absence were therefore received from Councillors:

Michael Anderson, John Augustine, Trevor Beckwith, Mick Bradshaw, Sarah Broughton, Simon Brown, Tony Brown, Patrick Chung, Max Clarke, Terry Clements, Simon Cole, Jason Crooks, Dawn Dicker, Andy Drummond, Robert Everitt, Pat Hanlon, Diane Hind, Rachel Hood, Beccy Hopfensperger, Paul Hopfensperger, James Lay, Aaron Luccarini, Victor Lukaniuk, Birgitte Mager, Joe Mason, Andy Neal, David Nettleton, Robert Nobbs, Colin Noble, David Palmer, Sarah Pugh, Jo Rayner, Karen Richardson, David Roach, Richard Rout, Marion Rushbrook, Andrew Smith, John Smith, Karen Soons, Clive Springett, Sarah Stamp, Peter Stevens, Peter Thompson, Jim Thorndyke, Julia Wakelam, Don Waldron and Cliff Waterman.

For the benefit of persons viewing the livestream, the Monitoring Officer also listed the members present.

135. **Formal decision making on 'minded to' decisions**

Council was required to formally resolve the matters where 'minded to' decisions were made at the previous evening's non-decision making virtual Annual Meeting of Council.

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to advise of the 'minded to' decisions made at that meeting, and it was suggested that a vote be taken 'en bloc' to formally resolve those matters collectively.

The list of 'minded to' decisions made in the following order as listed on the agenda were:

1. Election of Vice Chair of the Council for 2021 to 2022:
Councillor Mike Chester
2. It be **noted** that the appointment of Deputy Leader, Cabinet members and their portfolios **presently remain unchanged**
3. Review of political balance and appointment to politically balanced bodies 2021 to 2022:
**Recommended as proposed in Report number:
AGM/WS/21/001**
4. Appointment of:
 - a. Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
Councillor Ian Shipp
 - b. Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
Councillor Stephen Frost
 - c. Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:
Councillor Ian Houlder

- d. Vice Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:
Councillor Karen Richardson
5. Review and representation on outside bodies 2021 to 2022:
**Recommended as proposed in Report number:
AGM/WS/21/002**

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, reiterated his comments made during his announcements of the previous evening, including formally welcoming the six new members to the Council which had recently been elected in by-elections, namely Councillors Nick Clarke, Birgitte Mager, Colin Noble, Sarah Pugh, Sarah Stamp and Julia Wakelam. He also paid tribute to those members who were no longer with the Council, including those that had sadly passed away during 2020 to 2021, namely Councillors David Gathercole and Jim Meikle.

He again commended West Suffolk Council staff for their sterling work during these extremely challenging times, whilst continuing to deliver services.

Other than 2. above which was to be noted by Council, Councillor Griffiths moved the motion to formally resolve the aforementioned 'minded to' decisions taken at the virtual Annual Meeting. This was duly seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White.

The motion was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That:

- 1. Election of Vice Chair of the Council for 2021 to 2022**
Councillor Mike Chester be elected Vice Chair elect of West Suffolk Council for the 2021 to 2022 civic year.
- 2. Review of political balance and appointment to politically balanced bodies 2021 to 2022**
 - a. The committees and sub-committees for 2021 to 2022 be approved, in accordance with the number of seats and terms of reference, as contained in Appendix C of Report number: AGM/WS/21/001.
 - b. The political balance and allocation of seats on committees as contained in Appendix A to Report number: AGM/WS/21/001, be approved.
 - c. The political balance and allocation of substitutes on Committees as contained in Appendix B to Report number: AGM/WS/21/001, be approved.
 - d. Based on the agreed allocations, it be agreed that Group Leaders have up to 14 days in which to notify the Monitoring Officer of their nominations to committee places, on which the Monitoring Officer will appoint

members and substitute members to committees and sub-committees.

3. Appointment of:

a. Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ian Shipp be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

b. Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Stephen Frost be elected Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

c. Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ian Houlder be elected Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

d. Vice Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Karen Richardson be elected Vice Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for 2021 to 2022.

4. Review and representation on outside bodies 2021 to 2022

- a. The Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to appoint the Council's representatives on outside bodies, in accordance with the nominations put forward by relevant Group Leaders, or the nominated body, or the individual listed, as detailed in Appendix A to Report number: AGM/WS/21/002.
- b. Where no representative is nominated, the Service Manager (Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to seek nominations from other bodies and individuals, to be approved by Council in due course.
- c. It be noted that where the outside organisation is discharging executive functions, or the Council is an observer on an organisation, these appointments will be made by Cabinet.
- d. It be noted that it is intended to continue to review representation on outside bodies to ensure that it remains beneficial for the organisation and for the Council.
- e. It be noted that the nominations to the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee, be proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for subsequent confirmation by Council.

Due to complying with current health and safety regulations, the incoming Vice Chair applied the Chain of Office himself, which was located in its case directly to the side of him. He then signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office, which would be signed by the Monitoring Officer at the conclusion of the meeting.

The Vice Chair then briefly acknowledged his forthcoming year in office, reiterating many of his comments made at the virtual meeting held on the previous evening.

136. **Conclusion**

On conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked all present for their attendance at this 'in person' Annual Meeting of Council. The live broadcast subsequently ended at this point.

Whilst observing current health and safety regulations, the Declarations of Acceptance of Office of the Chair and Vice Chair were duly signed by the Monitoring Officer.

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am

Signed by:

Chair
