

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(non-decisions making virtual meeting)

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 8 July 2021** at **5.00 pm** facilitated by MS TeamsLive virtual meetings platform.

Present **Councillors**

Chair Ian Shipp
Vice Chair Stephen Frost

Trevor Beckwith
Mike Chester
Patrick Chung
Terry Clements
Diane Hind
Paul Hofensperger

Margaret Marks
Joe Mason
Sarah Pugh
Marion Rushbrook
Julia Wakelam

In attendance
John Griffiths, Leader of the Council

118. **Remembrance**

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

119. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

120. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Brown and Tony Brown.

121. **Declaration of interest**

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

122. **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 29 June 2021 and presented the Committee's report from its meeting held on 10 June 2021.

The Chair updated Cabinet on the report presented by Councillor Joanna Spicer, Chair of the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership, Paul Corney, Head of Anglia Revenues Partnership on the collection of council tax and business rates, the findings from the Website Working Group and the Councillor Call for Action submission, which were noted by Cabinet.

The Chair also updated the Committee on two matters discussed at its last meeting. Firstly, four members came forward to serve on the markets review, but we were missing representatives from Newmarket and Brandon. The Chair was tasked with approaching Councillor Michael Anderson, who was unable to attend the June meeting, as to whether he would represent Newmarket. The Chair was pleased to confirm Councillor Michael Anderson was happy to do so, whilst Councillor David Palmer had come forward to represent Brandon.

Secondly, the Committee discussed the scheduling of the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA). As noted at the previous meeting, Suffolk County Council had a Council meeting on 8 July which presented a potential clash with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There had also been a change of Portfolio Holder at Suffolk County Council. The Chair had written to the new Portfolio Holder, Councillor Richard Smith, who had responded to indicate he wanted to get up to speed on the issues raised in the CCfA. The Chair very much hoped that meant the CCfA could be scheduled to be considered on 2 September 2021.

123. Public participation

No members of the public had registered to speak.

124. Draft West Suffolk Annual Report (2020-2021)

[Councillor Margaret Marks joined the meeting at 5.24pm during the consideration of this item.]

The Leader of the Council, Councillor John Griffiths thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present Report No: OAS/WS/21/012, which outlined the draft West Suffolk Councils' Annual Report (2020-2021) and was before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments.

It had been an unprecedented year and the Council had seen its communities and businesses experience immense change, challenges, and pain. Throughout this the Council had seen dedication, support and community spirit which makes West Suffolk such a very special place to live and work.

West Suffolk Council had been at the forefront as it responded to and began to recover from the impact of Covid-19. The Council had worked across Suffolk, and with partners, as never before and developed working relationships that would benefit all as we look to the future. Staff and Councillors had risen to many unexpected and difficult challenges and worked in ways and at a pace that had been impressive, flexible, and innovative. The Council had also played its role in the national response, delivering what Government had asked, and much more.

As part of the response to COVID-19, the Council had administered grants to local businesses and enforcement teams had helped make sure business owners had the right advice and support to operate safely. The Home but Not Alone initiative had supported local vulnerable people and the Council responded to the government's 'Everyone In' initiative which saw rough sleepers receive accommodation and support. At the same time, the Council never lost sight of its core values of supporting our communities and businesses whilst delivering high quality services. As an organisation the Council continued to run the critical services of waste and recycling, determined planning applications and the families and communities work continued to help local organisations and lifelines such as Life Link. A number of significant projects had also been delivered, including the refurbishment of Newmarket Leisure Centre and the final stages of the completion of the Mildenhall Hub, which would provide better services for local people.

During 2020 to 2021 Suffolk's Public Sector, including West Suffolk Council, worked together to agree a strategic approach for how Suffolk would recover from the coronavirus pandemic. Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' priorities were physical and mental health, town centres, housing and homelessness, young people and climate and environment. The proposals would work alongside individual organisations plans to support recovery among Suffolk residents and businesses.

The draft West Suffolk Council Annual Report (Appendix A) before the Committee provided highlights of all the work that all members and staff had achieved over the past year. The annual report was a small insight into the good work and positive outcomes which the Council delivers day in and day out. The Leader wished to thank everyone involved on delivering another excellent year of achievements during a difficult time which was fast-moving and ever-changing. The Council had never been busier or had greater challenges to face.

The Council was continuing the approach taken in the 2019-2020 Annual Report, by producing a shorter document using infographics, as opposed to the full written report. Feedback received suggested that infographics gave a stronger and more easily digestible summary of the Council's work and could be used in a number of ways, including for example, for briefing materials and social media. The Leader confirmed that the infographics would be include in the final document, which would be presented to Cabinet.

The Chair thanked the Leader for his presentation and explained he liked the shorter version of the Annual Report which could be taken to Town/Council meetings as a briefing document, and suggested whether contact details could be added under each section of the report.

The Committee then examined the document in detail and asked a number of questions of the Leader, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on the level of support provided to the Love Newmarket Business Improvement District; the park home insulation scheme; the swift distribution of the business grant schemes during Covid-19; work being carried out with health partners across West Suffolk; and the

development of a communications plan to explain the role of the Annual Report.

Comments and suggestions made by the Committee during its discussions on the draft Annual Report, for example included:

- Adding contact details under each section of the Annual Report;
- Growth in West Suffolk's economy - first bullet point, amend '£70,000,000' to read "£70 million"
- Highlighting more of the work carried out by West Suffolk Council on the distribution of business grants.
- Provision of appropriate housing – suggest listing the various types of dwellings built, specifically the number of bungalows built for lifetime homes;
- Include wording about the Council working in other towns with health partners and other partner organisations such as with One Haverhill to develop a Haverhill Hub;
- Environmental measures – due to lockdown/Covid-19 ensure that environmental figures do not look artificially bad next year (2021-2022).

Officers agreed to look at the comments and suggestions and would be incorporated into the final document, where appropriate, to be presented to Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council wished to thank the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for scrutinising the draft Annual Report and for their comments.

At the conclusion of the discussions, the Committee endorsed the Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2020-2021, attached at Appendix A to Report number OAS/WS/21/012, subject to comments made during the meeting.

125. **Appointments to Outside Scrutiny Bodies (2021-2022)**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/21/013, which sought nominations (annually), for one full member and one substitute member to serve on the Suffolk County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee for 2021-2022.

The Health Scrutiny Committee was responsible for scrutinising wellbeing and health services across the County and meets four times a year. The Committee had 10 members in total: five county councillors and one co-opted representative from each of the district and borough councils in Suffolk. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was an extract from the SCC's constitution, setting out the role of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee considered the report for the position of the West Suffolk Council's nominated representative on the Suffolk County Council Health

Scrutiny Committee. One nomination was received from Councillor Joe Mason for Councillor Margaret Marks to continue on the Health Scrutiny Committee, which was supported by Councillor Patrick Chung.

Councillor Joe Mason explained why he felt Councillor Margaret Marks was an excellent full representative on the Health Scrutiny Committee for West Suffolk Council given her extensive background in the health profession and participation in various health organisations and initiatives over many years.

The Committee then considered the substitute position on the Health Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Mike Chester advised he was happy to act as the interim substitute, which was supported by Councillor Margaret Marks.

At the conclusion of its discussions, the Committee requested that Council be asked to confirm at its next meeting the appointments of Councillor Margaret Marks as the full representative and Councillor Mike Chester as the interim substitute representative to the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for 2021-2022.

126. **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 July 2021 to 31 May 2022**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/21/014, which informed members on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Cabinet for the period 1 July 2021 to 31 May 2022.

The Committee considered the Decision Plan and asked questions on "Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2022 to 2023" and the "Environment Action Plan" reports, to which responses were provided. In particular, the Committee raised questions on the following:

- The "West Suffolk Rural Task Force Action Plan Update" report being considered by Cabinet on 21 September 2021. The Committee asked how the recommendations of the Rural Task Force were being incorporated into the Local Plan, to which officers agreed to provide a written response.
- The "Applications for Community Chest 2022-2023" report being considered by Cabinet on 8 February 2022. The Committee asked how the awarding of the community chest process worked. Officers explained the community chest work was led by the Grant Working Group and agreed to provide a written response on the process.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 July 2021 to 31 May 2022 Decisions Plan.

127. **Work programme update**

The Committee received Report number OAS/WS/21/015, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items, and items currently agreed but had yet to be programmed for 2021 as attached at Appendix 1. It also set out information seeking at least one new member from the Committee to replace Councillor Ingwall-King on the Modern-Day Slavery Working Group.

The Committee considered the request to seek at least one new member from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor Ingwall-King on the Modern-Day Slavery Working Group who resigned as a West Suffolk Councillor in March 2021. At the time of the meeting, no members came forward to sit on the Working Group.

Councillor Diane Hind informed members she had produced a small report on "anti-idling" on the work carried out by the Residents Working Group which had been emailed to the Committee for information. As a follow-up to this, Councillor Diane Hind agreed to complete a work programme suggestion form for the Committees consideration at its September 2021 meeting, focusing on anti-idling, 20 mile and hour speed limit and improving air quality around our towns. This piece of work was originally raised by Councillor Lisa Ingwall-King in January 2020.

A member of the Committee raised a question regarding the street trading and vending policy, which had previously been scrutinised by the St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee over a course of several months and questioned whether this was now due for review. Officers explained that the Council would be looking at the policy in the near future as reported to all members in March 2021 and agreed to provide a written response on the proposed time frame for carrying out this piece of work.

At the conclusion of discussions, the Committee:

1. **noted** the current status of topics currently scheduled in its rolling work programme for 2021, attached at Appendix 1;
2. **noted** that following the meeting, the Chair would seek a volunteer to replace Councillor Lisa Ingwall-King on the Modern-Day Slavery Working Group.
3. **noted** Councillor Diane Hind agreed to complete a work programme suggestion form setting out the scope for an update on Anti-Idling for the Committee to consider at its meeting on 2 September 2021.

The meeting concluded at 6.13pm

Signed by:

Chair
