

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 20 July 2021** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair John Griffiths (Leader of the Council)

Vice Chair Sara Mildmay-White (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Carol Bull

Andy Drummond

Robert Everitt

Susan Glossop

Joanna Rayner

David Roach

Peter Stevens

By invitation

Ian Shipp

(Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

In attendance

Julia Wakelam

256. **Welcome and meeting facilitation**

The Chair formally opened the meeting and welcomed all persons present within the Conference Chamber and explained that when meeting in person, the Council continued to consider the most recent Government guidance in relation to the safe use of council buildings to host meetings.

257. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah Broughton.

258. **Declarations of interest**

Members' declarations of interest were recorded under the item to which the declaration related.

259. **Open forum**

The following non-Cabinet member spoke under this item:

Councillor Julia Wakelam (Report number CAB/WS/21/032: Environment and Climate Change Action Plans: 2021 Update)

Councillor Julia Wakelam wished to address the Cabinet in relation to the above report.

In her opening remarks, she expressed her support for the report and for what the Council had so far achieved in addressing the climate emergency and congratulated Officers on these achievements. She also commended the development of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan (SCEP) which had been approved by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (as referenced within the report at Appendix C).

Councillor Wakelam called for further work to be undertaken by the Council in the following key areas:

- The adoption of virtual hybrid meetings, to allow for remote attendance at meetings by Members/public etc..
- Further educating communities on the climate crisis and to encourage them to be active in their communities by the promotion of environmental practices.
- The Council to be working towards achieving 'Zero Carbon' by 2030.
- The Council to ensure that their contractors/suppliers understood and promoted environmental practices.
- Energy efficiency programmes for home-owners to be able to improve their homes with energy efficient measures. Also working with the Council's housing partners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- With regards to the Council's approach to biodiversity, it should be not be using pesticides to control unwanted vegetation and should also be promoting the re-wilding of some grass verges.

The Chair thanked Julia for her positive remarks. The Cabinet would be discussing the detail of this report, later on the agenda, but the Chair did wish to initially respond to some of the comments made.

During the height of the pandemic, the Council had held all of its meetings virtually as allowed by temporary Regulations and would continue to do so for some of its non-public meetings. The future use of hybrid meetings was also currently being investigated, including understanding the practicalities and legalities of being able to meet in that manner.

The Chair agreed that the continued collaboration with the community was very important, alongside the promotion of re-wilding schemes and the reduction in the use of pesticides.

The Council was ensuring that homes being built were more environmentally friendly and the work currently being undertaken on the development of the new West Suffolk Local Plan would also assist with addressing environmental issues. The Council also continued to work closely with its housing partners and outlined some of the environmental initiatives being introduced by Flagship Homes and Havebury Housing.

In conclusion, the Chair also went on to explain that this year's West Suffolk Business Festival (being held from 4 to 15 October 2021) would also include an Environmental Award.

260. Public participation

No members of the public in attendance had registered to speak.

261. Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 22 June 2021 (Report number CAB/WS/21/029)

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items discussed by the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee at its meeting held on 22 June 2021:

1. Anglia Revenues Partnership Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register
2. Performance Reports
3. Welfare Reform Update
4. Quarter 4 ARP Financial Performance 2020 to 2021
5. Forthcoming Issues

On behalf of Councillor Sarah Broughton, Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Substitute Member on the ARP Joint Committee, also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet. Councillor Mildmay-White also wished to particularly express her thanks to the staff working within the Anglia Revenues Partnership for all of the work undertaken to help their clients through the COVID pandemic.

262. Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 8 July 2021 (Report number CAB/WS/21/030)

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 8 July 2021:

1. Draft West Suffolk Annual Report (2020-2021)
2. Appointments to Outside Scrutiny Bodies (2021-2022)
3. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 July 2021 to 31 May 2022
4. Work Programme Update

Councillor Ian Shipp, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, also drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet.

263. Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2020-21 (Report number CAB/WS/21/031)

The Cabinet considered this report which explained that the draft West Suffolk Annual Report highlighted the key activities and developments that had been achieved over the financial year 2020-21, with regards to the priorities set out in the West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2020-2024. The Annual Report also included the Council's activities to support local communities and businesses in response to and recovery from COVID-19.

The Council was continuing its approach, as taken with the 2019-20 Annual Report, by producing a shorter document using infographics, as opposed to the full written report. Feedback had suggested that these infographics provided a strong and easily digestible summary of the Council's work over the previous 12 months and could be used in a number of ways, including briefing materials and social media.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also considered the Annual Report on 8 July 2021 and their recommended amendments were set out in paragraph 1.4 of Report number: CAB/WS/21/031.

Resolved:

That the draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2020-21 be approved.

264. Environment and Climate Change Action Plans: 2021 Update (Report number CAB/WS/21/032)

The Cabinet considered this report which explained that, in September 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency, having already established the Environment and Climate Change Taskforce. The aim of the Taskforce was to make recommendations on the Council's future role in protecting and enhancing the way in which it carried out its operations and through specific initiatives.

In July 2020, the Cabinet also agreed an Action Plan, designed to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce and to be taken forward by Officers and overseen by Cabinet. The Cabinet had also agreed to a review of progress against the actions.

The report updated the Cabinet on the progress in implementing the agreed actions from both reports and summarised some of the wider developments that had impacted upon the Council's work in lowering carbon emissions and improving environmental impacts across the organisation. It also included the full Environmental Statement, an annual summary of the Council's performance with regards to the environment and climate change. Finally, it also referenced the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan that had been approved by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders.

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council also drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet. He was very pleased to be able to bring an update on the Action Plans and to share the progress that the Council had made to reduce its carbon footprint to net-zero and improve the environment. The Leader thanked all the Cabinet Members for the work their service areas had done and also local Members who has supported community-based activities.

The Leader also referred to how the COVID pandemic had enforced new ways of working upon the Council, which had assisted with some of the particular environmental successes. However, the Leader wished to specifically emphasise that the Council's carbon emissions had been on a downward trajectory before COVID and, although, this may had accelerated the delivery, he was very confident that these improvements would have happened in any event and that the Council would have met its carbon budget target. This

had also provided the opportunity to continue with the new working practices, in particular remote meetings and the plan to return to the Offices only when necessary and to make agile working part of the Council's new 'normal'.

The Leader also wished to highlight the following particular achievements of the Council:

- Securing of £1.4m of Government funding (from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund) to support a programme of works to decarbonise the Council's estate (glazing, solar PV installations and air source heat pumps at a number of council buildings).
- In addition, it would support the installation of a new electrical infrastructure and a battery energy storage system to provide benefits to West Suffolk House in the short term and then support the energy provision for the new Western Way development.
- Installation of 46 electric vehicle chargers across 15 locations.
- Nearly 1,000 residents had signed up as volunteer litter pickers and the Council's previous litter campaign was being used as national best practice.
- 1,500 trees had been planted across the area.
- Following a trial of peat free alternatives in 2020, the Council's parks were now completely peat free.

Therefore, the Council was delivering on major initiatives and was also making smaller changes for its environment that were having a real impact.

Other Cabinet Members also commended the achievements of the Council.

Resolved

That:

1. The proposed actions and activities in the Environment and Climate Change Actions Plans be approved, as set out in Appendix A to Report number CAB/WS/21/032.
2. Future progress updates be provided as part of the Annual Environmental Statement, which formed part of the Council's Annual Report.
3. The full Environmental Statement for the Council's 2020/21 performance be approved, as set out in Appendix B to Report number CAB/WS/21/032.
4. The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan be endorsed, as set out in Appendix C to Report Number CAB/WS/21/032.

265. Decisions Plan: 1 July 2021 to 31 May 2022 (Report number CAB/WS/21/033)

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period 1 July 2021 to 31 May 2022.

Members took the opportunity to review the intended forthcoming decisions of the Cabinet. However, no further information or amendments were requested on this occasion.

The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm

Signed by:

Chair
