

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on **Tuesday 14 December 2021** at **6.30 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair Margaret Marks

Vice Chair Mike Chester

Richard Alecock	Susan Glossop	Sarah Pugh
Michael Anderson	John Griffiths	Joanna Rayner
Mick Bradshaw	Brian Harvey	David Roach
Sarah Broughton	Diane Hind	Ian Shipp
Carol Bull	Rachel Hood	David Smith
Patrick Chung	Victor Lukaniuk	Sarah Stamp
Simon Cole	Birgitte Mager	Lance Stanbury
Dawn Dicker	Joe Mason	Peter Stevens
Roger Dicker	Elaine McManus	Julia Wakelam
Andy Drummond	Sara Mildmay-White	Don Waldron
Robert Everitt	Andy Neal	Cliff Waterman
Stephen Frost	Colin Noble	Nick Wiseman
	David Palmer	

166. **Welcome and introduction**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all persons present in the Conference Chamber. She explained the rationale behind the precautionary health and safety measures that remained in operation for this meeting which aimed to reduce and restrict the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Lance Stanbury and Nick Wiseman to their first meetings of Council since their elections to The Rows ward and to Horringer ward in September and November 2021 respectively.

167. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

168. **Chair's announcements**

The Chair reported on the civic engagements and charity activities which she and the Vice-Chair had attended since the last ordinary meeting of Council on 28 September 2021.

Attention was specifically drawn to representatives of HMS Vengeance, who had assisted at very short notice twice in the last three years with moving the Haverhill foodbank to new premises. This had not only saved the foodbank much needed funds, but enabled them to remain operational, which had been particularly crucial during the COVID-19 crisis. The Chair placed her sincere thanks on record to HMS Vengeance, and also to Councillor Elaine McManus, who had helped to facilitate the move.

The Chair then paid tribute to Joy Childs, former Mayor's Secretary of St Edmundsbury Borough Council, who had sadly died recently. Mrs Childs had supported Mayors and Deputy Mayors for an exemplary 22 years before retiring around the year of 2003.

169. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Augustine, Trevor Beckwith, Simon Brown, Tony Brown, John Burns, Max Clarke, Nick Clarke, Jason Crooks, Pat Hanlon, Beccy Hopfensperger, Paul Hopfensperger, Ian Houlder, James Lay, Aaron Luccarini, David Nettleton, Robert Nobbs, Karen Richardson, Richard Rout, Marion Rushbrook, Andrew Smith, Clive Springett, Karen Soons, Peter Thompson, Jim Thorndyke and Phil Wittam.

Due to the onset of the new Omicron variant of COVID-19, which had resulted in a rapid increase in the virus' infection rate and the implications associated with this, this was a contributory reason for many of the apologies for absence received for this meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mick Bradshaw to the meeting, who had been unable to attend meetings for some time due to a recent spell of ill health.

170. **Declarations of interests**

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

171. **Leader's statement (Paper number: COU/WS/21/015)**

Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, presented his Leader's Statement as outlined in paper number: COU/WS/21/015.

In his introductory remarks, Councillor Griffiths:

- a. **Personal remarks:** expressed his condolences to the family of Joy Childs and welcomed Councillors Lance Stanbury and Nick Wiseman to West Suffolk Council.

- b. **Staff Awards:** recommended viewing the recording of the West Suffolk Council Staff Awards that had been held virtually via Teams that afternoon.
- c. **COVID-19:** encouraged members and staff to get vaccinated and have the booster in light of the rapid increase in the infection rate of COVID-19 which appeared to be due to the new highly contagious Omicron variant. The potential implications associated with this, including ensuring the delivery of essential services was maintained, was highlighted. Such services included refuse collection, for which revised rounds for the festive season had been issued. Members were encouraged to cascade the temporary arrangements throughout their various communication outlets accordingly.
- d. **Barley Homes:** stated that in respect of reference to paragraph 36. of his Statement, following delivery of Barley Homes' properties at Stonemill Park, this would amount to a combined total of 63 homes delivered at Westmill Place and Stonemill Park in Haverhill.
- e. **Housing priorities:** stated that the Council's housing priorities were debated by Cabinet on 7 December 2021 (Report number: CAB/WS/21/059 refers). Decisions included extending the life of the Housing Strategy to 2024 and approving revisions to the associated Implementation Plan.
- f. **Energy and environment:** stated that the Council continued with its drive to be carbon neutral by 2030, which included facilitating the implementation of the Solar for Business grant scheme. This initiative was operating extremely well and included the biggest installation to date, which would commence in Newmarket in the new year.
- g. **Proposed incubation units:** stated that Council would be debating the proposed provision of incubation units at Suffolk Business Park later in the meeting (COU/WS/21/016 refers). Councillor Griffiths considered this proposal was an excellent example of an economic growth initiative that would bring investment, jobs and skills to enhance future certainty and prosperity for West Suffolk. The scheme was designed to be cost neutral, providing a valuable asset whilst supporting the growth of local businesses. An opportunity had been seized for investment in appropriate infrastructure that accorded with the Council's priorities.

The Leader responded to a range of questions relating to:

- a. **West Suffolk Council:** that since the creation of West Suffolk Council in 2019, it had achieved far more than it could have as the separate predecessors of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils, which not only had delivered savings but supported families and communities; built new homes and the Mildenhall Hub as well as refurbishing Brandon Leisure Centre; invested in growth and green energy, to name a few. This was not only due to the Conservative administration but a combined, stronger, better cross-party effort of members working

collaboratively to achieve its aims for the residents of the entire district of West Suffolk.

- b. **Barley Homes:** that a number of environmentally beneficial initiatives had already been successfully incorporated into the new homes built by Barley Homes and an aspiration to achieve zero carbon homes in the future was a consideration. However, together with other considerations, cost implications needed to be taken into account before a commitment could be made to this.
- c. **Housing delivery in Brandon:** that Natural England's position regarding the protection of the stone curlew in The Brecks, which significantly impacted potential housing growth in Brandon, was recognised. As part of the development of the new West Suffolk Local Plan, work was being undertaken to try and overcome the complexities associated with this issue. Engagement with neighbouring authorities who were also affected by Natural England's stance on this matter, ward members and other partners was key to this work.
- d. **Street lighting:** the operation of street lighting was largely transferred to Suffolk County Council several years ago; however, due to a variety of reasons, which were mainly historical, the ownership and maintenance of some street lights remained with some town and parish councils, including in the former Forest Heath area. This would be investigated to ascertain whether the situation could become equitable across the entire district.

(Councillors Mick Bradshaw, Dawn Dicker and Roger Dicker left the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

172. **Public participation**

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

173. **Referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet (Report number: COU/WS/21/016)**

Council considered the referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet, as contained within report number: COU/WS/21/016.

A. Referrals from Cabinet: 9 November 2021

1. West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005: Statement of Policy 2022 to 2025

Approval was sought for the West Suffolk Statement of Gambling Policy 2022 to 2025, which had been revised following a period of consultation with key stakeholders. If approved, this statement of policy was anticipated to remain current until its next review in 2024 for re-adoption by 31 January 2025.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Environment, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that the West Suffolk Statement of Gambling Policy set out how the Council, in its role as

licensing authority, would carry out its functions under the Gambling Act 2005. It recognised the importance of responsible gambling within the entertainment industry, while seeking to balance this with the key objectives of the Act. The objectives were:

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime and disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime
- Ensuring that gambling was conducted in a fair and open way
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Members noted the purpose and content of the Statement of Gambling Policy and the proposed minor revisions which had been subject to consultation and had broadly been supported. One further minor alteration had been made following consultation.

The policy's associated Local Area Profile (LAP) had also been updated. A LAP was an assessment of the key characteristics of West Suffolk in the context of gambling-related harm. The Council's approach was based on the possible risk to gambling-related harm, in adherence to the objectives set out in the Act. Some or many of these matters, many of which were summarised in the report, would have been considered and addressed by existing premises.

On the motion of Councillor Drummond, seconded by Councillor Mike Chester, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved: That

1. the revised West Suffolk Gambling Act 2005: Statement of Policy for the period 2022 to 2025, as contained in Appendix B to Report number CAB/WS/21/048, be agreed.
2. The revised West Suffolk Local Area Profile, as contained in Appendix C to Report number CAB/WS/21/048, be agreed.

2. Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2022 to 2023

Approval was sought for the council tax base for tax setting purposes for the 2022 to 2023 financial year.

The council tax base was the total taxable value at a point in time of all the domestic properties in the council's area. It was a yearly calculation and represented the estimated number of chargeable dwellings after allowing for exemptions and discounts, projected changes in the property base and after applying an estimated collection rate. The council tax base was used in the calculation of council tax, further details regarding which was set out in Report number: CAB/WS/21/050.

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

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

Resolved: That

1. The tax base for 2022 to 2023, for the whole of West Suffolk be 57,406.34 equivalent band D dwellings and for each of the predecessor areas be: Forest Heath 19,455.81 and St Edmundsbury 37,950.53, as detailed in paragraph 2.6 of Report number CAB/WS/21/050.
2. The tax base for 2022 to 2023 for the different parts of its area, as defined by parish or special expense area boundaries, be as shown in Appendix 3 of Report number CAB/WS/21/050.
3. The Director (Resources and Property) be given delegated responsibility to make changes to the tax base figures, as a result of any government announcements pertaining to local council tax support or any data updates relating to significant claimant increases, as detailed in paragraph 2.5 of Report number CAB/WS/21/050.

3. Proposed Incubation Units, Suffolk Business Park, Bury St Edmunds

Approval was sought for a number of recommendations in connection with the proposed provision of incubation units on land at Suffolk Business Park, Bury St Edmunds.

The West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2020 to 2024 set out three strategic priorities, including the Council's commitment to focus its energies and resources on the "Growth in West Suffolk's economy for the benefit of all our residents and UK plc". This proposed project was a key example of how the Council could support and invest in its communities and businesses as it provided incubation space for new and developing companies that would not otherwise be provided.

Councillor Susan Glossop, Portfolio Holder for Growth, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that authority was sought for the development of 40,000 square feet of start-up/incubation space, as phase one, for companies mainly in the advanced manufacturing and engineering (AME) sector and its supply chain. The costs of borrowing to fund this development through prudential borrowing, would be covered by the business rates that were forecasted to be retained locally, as a result of the Enterprise Zone at Suffolk Park, Bury St Edmunds.

A full business case for phase one was attached as Appendix A to the Cabinet report (CAB/WS/21/052), which included Exempt Appendix 2, which for ease of reference, had been attached to the Council referral report (COU/WS/21/016). The business case was supported by a risk register (Appendix 1) and a high-level project plan (Appendix 3). Additional business case(s) would be required to bring forward phase two.

The Phase One Business Case set out the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management cases for this development. It detailed the project

objectives and concluded that the case was made for the proposal to be supported and delivered in line with the high-level programme. The project required the allocation of approximately £12.1 million of capital funding which was assumed to be funded through prudential borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The financial case explained the assumptions that had been made to determine the capital cost, revenue implications, cash flow projections and the unique arrangement for financing the debt over 17 years, along with the retention of the 'Pot B' business rates received from the Enterprise Zone on Suffolk Business Park which would be used to pay for the costs of borrowing, with support from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Suffolk County Council (SCC).

This project provided the opportunity to deliver on the Council's original vision for the employment allocation at Suffolk Business Park. It built on the commitment shown by the Council, New Anglia LEP and SCC to funding/developing the Eastern Relief Road (now Rougham Tower Avenue) and also reflected the intent behind establishing the Enterprise Zone on Suffolk Park. The intention was that, once built, the centre would be run by a leading provider of business support to the AME sector. This would be a first for West Suffolk and a significant achievement. The aim was to provide space for start-up or growing businesses in a supported/flexible environment, with access to high quality business advice and networking opportunities.

A detailed discussion was held and whilst being mindful of the risks involved but acknowledging the proposed mitigation measures and safeguards in place, members considered this was an extremely exciting and positive scheme, which accorded with the Council's vision for the economic growth and prosperity of the district.

Councillor Glossop placed her sincere thanks on record to members, officers and partners involved for enabling the proposal to come forward.

On the motion of Councillor Glossop, seconded by Councillor John Griffiths, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved: That

1. The business case (Incubation Units at Suffolk Business Park), attached as Appendix A to Report number CAB/WS/21/052, be approved and the project objectives be endorsed.
2. The purchase of 6.8 acres of net developable land to enable the project to be delivered, be approved.
3. The development of 40,000 square feet employment space (phase one) on Zone 3 of Suffolk Business Park in accordance with the details contained in the business case, be approved.
4. A £12.1 million capital budget for phase one only, funded through the Investing in our Growth Fund through prudential borrowing, with the revenue impact in line with the financial case section of Appendix A to Report number CAB/WS/21/052, be approved.

5. It be agreed for officers to proceed in line with the Council's agreed Scheme of Delegation. However, where necessary agreement, be sought for delegation to the Director (Resources and Property) and the Director (Planning and Growth), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property and with the Portfolio Holder for Growth, to make changes to the proposal to reflect the need for the project to evolve as time moves forward and to enable the project to be delivered in accordance with the finance case and the programme.
6. It be agreed for the Council's Section 151 Officer to make the necessary changes to the Council's prudential indicators, as a result of recommendation 4. above.

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

B. Referrals from Cabinet: 7 December 2021

Following the publication of the agenda and papers for this meeting which took place before the Cabinet meeting was convened, confirmation was given that the Cabinet made no changes to the recommendations contained in the referral report provided.

1. Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors

Approval was sought for the appointing process for external auditors, which would take effect from the 2023 to 2024 financial year.

At the conclusion of the transitional arrangements for the appointment of external auditors, as explained in the Council referral report, the Council had agreed to continue to use the Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) (Report number: COU/SA/18/010 - Appointment of External Auditors) as its route to select its external auditors Ernst and Young for the remaining term of the five years from 1 April 2019 (ending the financial year 2022 to 2023).

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee had considered three options for the appointment of external auditors, which would commence with responsibilities for the financial year 2023 to 2024, as summarised in the Council referral report.

Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including thanking the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for their thorough consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three options available, as set out in Report number: PAS/WS/21/021.

The Cabinet had supported the recommendation of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and agreed to recommend to full Council that the Council should continue to 'opt-in' to the sector led body (Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA)) for the independent appointment of the Council's external auditor.

Council was also supportive of the approach.

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

Resolved:

That it be agreed to continue to 'opt-in' to the sector led body (Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA)) for the independent appointment of the Council's external auditor, beginning with responsibilities for the financial year 2023 to 2024.

2. Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget

Approval was sought for proposals for inclusion in the medium-term financial plans.

On 18 November 2021, the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (PASC) considered proposals for delivering a sustainable balanced budget for 2022 to 2023 and for developing the medium-term plans. This included a number of key budget assumptions proposed and the rationale behind those assumptions, as set out in section 2 and Table 1 of paragraph 3.6 of Report number: PAS/WS/21/024.

The recommendations, which had been endorsed by Cabinet on 7 December 2021, were now presented for approval by Council. These, together with any further recommendations emanating from PASC and Cabinet in the coming weeks, would be incorporated into the budget setting process, the composite report for which would be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2022.

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

Having considered the process and approach to setting the Council's 2022 to 2023 budget and the principles and challenges faced in achieving this, Council supported the recommendation of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and subsequently Cabinet.

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

Resolved:

That the proposals as detailed in Section 2 and Table 1 at paragraph 3.6 of Report number: PAS/WS/21/024, be included in the medium-term financial plans to 2026.

3. Treasury Management Report (September 2021)

Approval was sought for the Treasury Management Report for the first half of the 2021 financial year.

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

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

Resolved:

That the Treasury Management Report (September 2021), as contained in Report number: FRS/WS/21/005, be approved.

4. West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) 2022 to 2023

Approval was sought for proposed changes to the West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Each year the Council was required to review its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). Cabinet Report number: CAB/WS/21/058 provided an annual review of the 2021 to 2022 scheme and proposed to make changes to the scheme for 2022 to 2023, having been subject to preceptor, stakeholder and public consultation, as required by the relevant regulations when amendments to the scheme were proposed.

Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that the proposed changes to take effect from 1 April 2022, were as follows:

If implemented, these changes would affect:

1. the threshold for how much capital a customer could own (for example, savings) and still be entitled to a council tax reduction
2. the impact that living with non-dependent adult friends or family members had on the council tax reduction that a customer received
3. the relationship between the application processes for Universal Credit and for Local Council Tax Reduction
4. the way in which fluctuations in a customer's earnings were taken into account in the LCTRS

Each of the proposed changes were detailed in turn within section 2 of the Cabinet report.

In response to a question, Council was informed that the proposal to lower the 'capital threshold' for council tax reduction from £16,000 to £10,000 and to remove the requirement to pay a tariff on savings over £6,000 (as summarised in paragraph 4.9.2 of Report number: COU/WS/21/016), was not a central government initiative and had been proposed locally for implementation under the West Suffolk LCTRS. The proposed changes had been formulated to ensure the scheme benefitted those most in need and consultation had been undertaken on all proposals prior to their presentation for approval.

Having considered the proposed revisions, their potential impact and the outcomes of the consultation, the majority of members were supportive of the amended scheme, agreeing that the proposals were pragmatic and proportionate.

On the motion of Councillor Broughton, seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, it was put to the vote and with the vote being 33 for the motion, two against and no abstentions, it was

Resolved: That

1. the Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTRS) Scheme for 2022 to 2023, as outlined in Report number: CAB/WS/21/058, be reviewed.
2. The changes to the scheme outlined in section 2 of Report number: CAB/WS/21/058, and as detailed in Appendix C, be agreed.

174. Consolidation of byelaws for skin piercing activities (Report number: COU/WS/21/017)

Council considered this report, which sought approval and adoption of new consolidated West Suffolk byelaws in respect of licensing skin piercing practices following the revocation of the current byelaws relating to this matter.

Members noted that this item had been deferred from the last meeting of Council held on 28 September 2021 and the report had been amended to reflect the issues raised at that meeting.

In preparation for the creation of a single West Suffolk Council, it had been agreed to retain separate byelaws in the former Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury areas with regards to the licensing of skin piercing practices.

Together with other related matters as set out in paragraphs 1.2 to 1.4 of the report, it was now proposed that these be consolidated into one set of byelaws covering all activities, which would ensure that all skin piercing licensing was legally enforceable in a consistent way across the district.

The legal position was set out in the report, and it was proposed that the model byelaws previously adopted by St Edmundsbury Borough Council and as set out in Appendix A, would be adopted by the entire district for the reasons set out in paragraphs 1.5 to 1.7 of the paper.

In addition, it was recommended that the Council updated its hygiene guidance and the relevant page on its website, to ensure that licensees and applicants were fully cognisant of the proposed requirements and felt supported in understanding appropriate practice.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Environment, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, including that following the discussion held at the meeting on 28 September 2021, a minor amendment

was proposed to clarify the model byelaws, as shown in Appendix A, to remove the words 'by means of a hygienic piercing instrument' from section 3.1.a(iii). This would ensure that all cosmetic jewellery was provided in a sterile condition to the customer during skin piercing activities.

Members considered the amendment satisfactorily addressed the matter previously raised and supported the proposals.

On the motion of Councillor Drummond, seconded by Councillor Julia Wakelam, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved: That

1. All current skin piercing byelaws be revoked.
2. The new consolidated West Suffolk byelaws, as contained in Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/21/017, be adopted; and the updating of guidance and webpages so that applicants are fully cognisant of appropriate requirements and practices, be supported.

175. Community Governance Review (Report number: COU/WS/21/018)

Council considered this report, which sought approval to commence a Community Governance Review (CGR) of all parish and town councils in the West Suffolk area.

CGRs provided councils with an opportunity to make changes to community governance arrangements to ensure that parish and town councils provided for cohesive communities, improved community engagement, better local democracy and resulted in improved effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Whilst a full review was not required at this time for the reasons set out in the report, it was proposed to carry out an interim review on the consequential impact on parish warding arrangements in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket from the new division boundaries for Suffolk County Council. It also provided an opportunity to look at a specific issue which was deferred by the review carried out by St Edmundsbury in 2016 and to resolve any small anomalies to existing community governance arrangements.

Councillor Carol Bull, Portfolio Holder for Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council, which included making reference to the proposed Terms of Reference for the CGR that were attached to the report as Appendix A. These set out the purpose and objectives of the review and how it would be undertaken and also included proposing the creation of a Task and Finish Group, which would be appointed by Council and Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Governance. The Group would oversee the review process and make recommendations to Council for approval at various stages of the review. Approval of the final recommendations would be implemented by the making of a Community Governance Order.

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group were attached as Appendix B. Upon approval for its establishment, Group Leaders would be asked to make their nominations for appointment by the Monitoring Officer.

On the motion of Councillor Bull, seconded by Councillor Julia Wakelam, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved: That

1. The commencement from 17 December 2021 of a district-wide Community Governance Review (CGR), be agreed.
2. The Terms of Reference for the CGR attached at Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/21/018, be approved.
3. A Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group as set out at Appendix B, be established.
4. Group Leaders be requested to notify the Monitoring Officer of their respective nominations for appointment to places on the Task and Finish Group.

176. Any other urgent business

In accordance with section 2.2(q) of the Council Procedure Rules contained in Part 4(a) of the Constitution, with the agreement of the Chair, the following item of business was considered as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances, as set out below:

Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 required councillors to attend at least one meeting of the Council or act as an appointed representative of the Council every six-month period, unless the failure to attend was due to a reason pre-approved by the authority.

Councillor Max Clarke last attended a meeting of Council on 22 June 2021. As the Council meeting in November was cancelled due to lack of substantive business, he was planning on attending the meeting on 14 December 2021 to ensure he did not face automatic disqualification from West Suffolk Council on 22 December 2021.

Unfortunately, under current COVID-19 legislation, Councillor Clarke was needing to self-isolate and therefore could not be present at the meeting. Council was therefore asked to consider granting a dispensation to Councillor Clarke due his current situation and the requirement to abide by COVID-19 legislation.

On the motion of Councillor Margaret Marks, seconded by Councillor John Griffiths, it was put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, a dispensation be granted to Councillor Max Clarke for non-attendance at meetings for a period in excess of six consecutive months by reason of self-isolation requirements under current COVID-19 legislation, and that the situation be reviewed at the next ordinary meeting of Council.

177. Exclusion of press and public

See minute 178. below.

178. Exempt Appendix: Referrals of recommendations from Cabinet (paragraph 3) (Report number: COU/WS/21/016)

Council considered Exempt Appendix 2 attached to Report number: COU/WS/21/016; however, no reference was made to specific detail and, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm

Signed by:

Chair
