

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 26 April 2022** 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)

Sarah Broughton

Carol Bull

Andy Drummond

Robert Everitt

Susan Glossop

Joanna Rayner

David Roach

Peter Stevens

By invitation

Stephen Frost

(Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

In attendance

Rachel Hood

(Vice Chair of the West Suffolk Local Plan Working Group)

345. Welcome and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all persons present within the Conference Chamber. He 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.

346. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

347. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

348. Declarations of interest

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

349. **Open forum**

No non-Cabinet members in attendance wished to speak under this item.

350. **Public participation**

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

351. **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 17 March 2022
(Report number: CAB/WS/22/017)**

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed members of the following substantive items considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2022:

1. Response on Homes for Life and Ageing Population Housing Questions
2. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee – 26 January 2022
3. Work programme update 2022

Councillor Stephen Frost, Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet, including that the Committee had agreed to convene an additional informal virtual meeting to progress the '20 mph zone' topic that was currently on their work programme. A representative from Suffolk County Council (SCC), as the Highways Authority, would be in attendance to assist with the discussions.

In addition to thanking Councillor David Roach, Portfolio Holder for Planning, for his excellent presentation to the Committee on the 'Homes for Life and Ageing Population - Housing' topic, Councillor Frost drew attention to the Committee's discussions on potential methods to discourage and prevent anti-idling, as set out in paragraph 2.3.4 of the report.

In response, the Chair explained that the Council, with SCC and other partners, was actively looking at ways to improve and promote better air quality in West Suffolk in general, which coincided with the Council's commitment to tackling climate change and mitigating adverse impacts on the environment. The Committee was thanked for the work it had undertaken to date on this issue.

352. **Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 1 March 2022 (Report number: CAB/WS/22/018)**

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed members of the following substantive items considered by the Anglia and Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee on 1 March 2022:

1. Performance Report
2. Welfare Reform Update
3. Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Financial Performance 2021 to 2022
4. Verification Policy
5. Forthcoming Issues
6. Exempt Item: Partnership Working through Section 113 Agreement

Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property, drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet, including that it was expected that payments of the Government's £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate grant were expected to be distributed from 29 April 2022 to eligible persons that paid their council tax by direct debit where data matched, and where a successful direct debit had already been taken from April's council tax payments. Payments to be made to eligible persons under the discretionary rebate grant scheme, would be made at a later date. ARP were congratulated for their outstanding work regarding the administration and operation of the schemes.

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Health, provided an update on Discretionary Housing Payments that had been distributed to eligible persons in West Suffolk over the last two years. She explained that year-on-year reductions in grant funding had been received from Government and this was likely to continue into 2023. The Housing team was working closely with ARP, SCC and other partners to mitigate the impact on those affected, particularly given the added pressures following the current increases in fuel and energy prices, and the cost of living in general. Councillor Mildmay-White was joined by Cabinet in thanking the teams for their tireless efforts in this regard.

353. West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options consultation (Report number: CAB/WS/22/019)

(Councillor Sarah Broughton declared a pecuniary interest as she and her husband owned a parcel of land within an area in Great Barton identified within the West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document. She left the meeting during the consideration of this item and did not return, and therefore, she did not take part in the debate or the vote.

Councillors Broughton, Griffiths and Mildmay-White declared local non-pecuniary interest as appointed shareholder representatives of Barley Homes (Group) Ltd. Councillors Griffiths and Mildmay-White remained in the meeting for the consideration of the item and voted (Councillor Broughton had already declared a separate pecuniary interest and had left the meeting.)

The Cabinet considered this report, which was recommending to Council, approval of the West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options document, for the purposes of public consultation.

The West Suffolk Local Plan would cover the period up to 2040. Upon adoption it would set out the Council's policies to address housing and employment needs and other associated economic, social and environmental priorities.

It was an important tool in supporting delivery of West Suffolk Council's strategic priorities and essential for the continuation of an effective planning service. In addition, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), required local planning authorities to prepare and keep an up-to-date local plan.

The Preferred Options document (Appendix A) represented the next stage of the plan making process. It was proposed to consult on the Preferred Options Local Plan and supporting documents for eight-plus weeks from Thursday 26 May to Tuesday 26 July 2022.

Appendix A was divided into three parts, namely:

Part One: strategic policies

Part Two: non strategic policies

Part Three: site allocations

A summary of the content of each part was detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

Councillor David Roach, Portfolio Holder for Planning, drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet, including that, subject to Council approval, it was important to note that the plan was still evolving, and no firm decisions had been made at this stage. The Council would continue to gather evidence throughout the local plan preparation and this consultation was an important aspect of this. Therefore, this was not what the final plan would look like.

The response received from this consultation would help shape the next version of the local plan. That version would be the document which the Council proposed to submit for examination to the Planning Inspectorate and would be subject to a further round of consultation prior to its submission.

Councillor Roach made specific reference to the work undertaken on the Employment Land Review. Emphasis was placed on the fact that gathering the evidence base for this element of the local plan was still ongoing and evolving.

It had been brought to the Council's attention that there was an omission in the Employment Land Review that was published in December 2021. The Jockey club were listed in the document having been surveyed as a stakeholder when they had not been.

The Council had responded to this error, and the consultants had now undertaken a survey with the Jockey Club. Following this survey, they had produced an addendum that would be published alongside the Employment Land Review (ELR). It should be noted that the ELR was a pure employment needs document – looking at office, industrial and distribution services.

The Horse Racing Industry Cluster, given their special character and special nature of the industry, was different and required special protection. The Council now had a Memorandum of Co-operation in place with the Horse Racing Industry and the Council would work with them on the evidence that was needed to consider their specific needs.

Councillor Roach added that use of the text 'Preferred Options' within local plan-related documentation was specific planning terminology, which was formally recognised as part of the stages required to develop the new local plan.

In response to questions, the Cabinet was informed that:

- Policies emanating from the emerging local plan would not be given weight as material planning considerations until the examination stage of the local plan development process. This was therefore a paramount consideration when making decisions on planning applications.
- The principal methods by which the proposed consultation would be undertaken were set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report. This would include a mix of 'in person' and virtual events. The consultation dates, including those where 'in person' events would be held, would not be published until approval has been given by Council to proceed.

Councillor Roach placed his thanks on record for the outstanding work of relevant officers and the West Suffolk Local Plan Working Group for their excellent contributions in reaching this significant stage of the local plan development process. These sentiments were echoed by his Cabinet colleagues, which included adding their thanks to Councillor Roach for his lead role in the process.

Recommended to Council: (17 May 2022)

That:

1. The West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options (Regulation 18) document, as contained in Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/22/019, together with supporting documents, be approved for the purposes of public consultation.
2. Delegated authority be given to the Director (Planning and Growth), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to make minor non-material consequential changes to the documents, as necessary.

354. West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options consultation - Appendix A: Part One - Strategic Policies (Report number: CAB/WS/22/019)

See minute 353. above.

355. West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options consultation - Appendix A: Part Two - Non Strategic Policies (Report number: CAB/WS/22/019)

See minute 353. above.

356. West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options consultation - Appendix A: Part Three - Site Allocations (Report number: CAB/WS/22/019)

See minute 353. above.

357. Decisions Plan: 1 April 2022 to 31 May 2023

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 May 2023.

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 6.32 pm

Signed by:

Chair
