

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 9 March 2023** at **5.00 pm** in the **Conference Room, Mildenhall Hub**, Sheldrick Way, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7JX

Present **Councillors**

Chair Ian Shipp
Vice Chair Stephen Frost

Mike Chester
Diane Hind
Margaret Marks
David Palmer

Marion Rushbrook
Sarah Stamp
Julia Wakelam

In attendance

Joanna Rayner, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs

207. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

208. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Anderson, Trevor Beckwith, Simon Brown, Patrick Chung, James Lay, Joe Mason and Sarah Pugh.

209. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

210. **Declarations of interest**

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

211. **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 7 February 2023 and presented the Committee's report from its meeting held on 12 January 2023. As per the minutes confirmed above, the Chair updated Cabinet on the scrutiny of Havebury Housing Partnership and the Committee's forward work programme, which were noted by Cabinet.

212. Public participation

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

213. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee - 25 January 2023

[Councillor David Palmer arrived at 5.05pm.
Councillor Jo Rayner, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs arrived at 5.10pm.]

[Councillor Jo Rayner declared a non-pecuniary interest as she worked at West Suffolk Hospital].

The Chair agreed to bring this item forward on the agenda to enable the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs to be present to present the Mildenhall Hub post implementation report.

Councillor Margaret Marks, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee presented report number OAS/WS/23/004, which set out what was considered at its meeting held on 25 January 2023. The primary focus of the meeting was:

- The East of England Ambulance Service.

Attached to the report were the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Report from Councillor Marks
- Agenda Item 5a – East of England Ambulance Service
- Agenda Item 5b Evidence Set – East of England Ambulance Service

Councillor Marks informed the Committee this was her last report to the Committee sitting on the Health Scrutiny Committee. In addition to the report, Councillor Marks updated the Committee on Hospitals at Home and the phlebotomy work she had been helping Councillor David Palmer with, in Brandon, which Councillor David Palmer thanked her for at the meeting. She then referred the Committee to the report.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which Councillor Marks provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on phlebotomists and training to take blood; how the EEAST intended to improve the current service; Hospital at Home; and how the Health Scrutiny Committee followed up recommendations with the various health providers.

In response to a question raised clarifying what phlebotomy was, Councillor Marks explained it was taking bloods for testing. Staff were trained in a day on how to draw blood, but they did not stay very long in the job because staff were on the lowest pay scale, and it was all they did. However, it was a good starting point to get a foot on the career ladder in the NHS. Most GP surgeries were unable to keep up with demand, meaning patients then had to travel to another facility to have their blood taken.

In response to a question raised on the EEAST, Councillor Marks explained there was no straight forward answer on how to improve the service. The failings of the EEAST service were due to other parts of the NHS system. An ambulance cannot discharge a patient from the ambulance if a hospital has run out of beds, unless discharging patients at the other end of the NHS service. More work needs to be done on early prevention and not on strategies, which Councillor Jo Rayner (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs) fully supported.

The Chair thanked Councillor Margaret Marks for her reports, knowledge and passion put into representing West Suffolk Council on the Health Scrutiny Committee.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the report presented by Councillor Margaret Marks.

214. **Mildenhall Hub Post Implementation Review**

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs presented report number: OAS/WS/23/003, which asked the Committee to carry out a post implementation scrutiny review of the Council's involvement in the Mildenhall Hub (the Hub).

The Hub opened to the public in May 2021 and represented a combined public sector investment of over £40m into facilities for Mildenhall and the surrounding area. The Hub was one of several hub projects completed, underway or planned in West Suffolk. The Hub was designed by Concertus Design and Property Consultants and built by R G Carter Construction with project management from Currie and Brown.

The report followed on from an earlier and concluded scrutiny exercise in 2017 by establishing whether or not the Council's own involvement in the project was on track to achieve the desired long-term outcomes. It also sought to identify any remaining actions associated with delivering the original objectives of the project.

This scrutiny review was only a partial examination of the true scope of the Hub project and its outcomes as it represented the perspective of one organisation only (West Suffolk Council). Also, nothing contained in the report represented the views or findings of any other partner organisation unless specifically attributed.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the Committee's support in flagging up some actions to reflect the learning from the first two years of operation. She felt it was important to highlight the impact of future growth within the Hub itself and next door through the planning proposal for West Mildenhall so this could be considered when assessing the Hub's parking and highways arrangements.

The Committee examined the following issues and was asked to make recommendations to Cabinet/Council accordingly:

1. Has the capital project achieved the objectives last set for it by the Council?

2. How has the Hub performed in its first 20 months against its business plan and funding model?
3. What remaining actions are there to deliver the Council's original objectives.

The Cabinet Member explained that in 2017, in addition to financial objectives, there were 10 shared strategic objectives for the project to build the Hub which were agreed by Forest Heath District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Council, ranging from property objectives through to strategic ambitions. The 10 objectives set out in section 4 of the report had all been met in varying degrees and the expected benefits to make the public estate more efficient and more integrated looked like they were also being met.

The Cabinet Member advised the report contained a typographical error which had been corrected in the online version and an explanation had been emailed to members of the Committee in advance of the meeting.

In the table of capital costs in paragraph 5.7 of the report, all of the individual numbers themselves were correct but these actually added up to a new net capital requirement of £11,420,000 not £11,300,000. This then meant the summary figure for the variance from the 2018 estimate for the net capital requirement, shown on the first line of paragraph 5.9 was £1.3 million and not £1.18 million.

The Committee was reassured that the correct net capital requirement figure of £11.42 million was used to work out the borrowing costs in the revenue impacts table set out in paragraph 5.14 of the report. The error did not affect any of the numbers in the table, including the current overall net revenue position of £7,000, meaning the overall finding of the financial section of the report was unchanged.

The report included information on the baseline position; delivery of strategic objectives (non-financial); impact of new leisure facilities; wider hub concept and other partners' facilities; environmental performance; external recognition; delivery of financial objectives and further actions to implement project objectives.

The Committee scrutinised the report in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the strategic objectives; the future growth and expansion of the Hub; disabled access and drop-offs; the length of various partner leases; electric vehicle rapid charging points at the old Mildenhall swimming pool site; the old College Heath Road site and progress on transferring it to Barley Homes; the Hub's BREEAM and energy efficiency ratings and general environmental performance and the environmental credentials of 3G pitches.

In response to a question raised on whether 3G pitches were good for the environment, officers explained the operation benefits in that they could be used 365 days a year and financial model but agreed to provide a written response on the environmental credentials.

In response to a question raised on the Hub's energy rating as being "D", officers explained the environmental credentials and the Hub's BREEAM rating which was "good" with an aspiration of being BREEAM "excellent". In relation to whether the Hub was rated as "D" and what this meant in practice, officers agreed to provide a written response.

The Committee went through each of the Cabinet Member's suggested actions in turn. In relation to action 4 the Committee felt the highways audit should be carried out in "late" 2023 and agreed to including the word "late" in the recommendation. This was to ensure that the audit reflected the higher amount of parent traffic in the winter months.

The Committee also discussed the impact of increased pedestrian traffic on vehicles using Mildenhall High Street and suggested that separate representations should be made to the Highway Authority that they consider upgrading the existing zebra crossing on the High Street at the end of Church Walk to a light-controlled crossing.

The Committee also felt that there would be value in a final Overview and Scrutiny review of the Hub in 2026 to ensure the Hub was still on track for meeting its financial objectives by year five of operation.

The Committee agreed that the Hub was an amazing building and the statistics over exceeded itself and its vision.

At the end of the scrutiny review the Committee concluded that the Mildenhall Hub had met the strategic and environmental objectives set for it by Forest Heath District Council in 2018 and was making good progress towards the break-even financial test by year five of its operation.

The Committee then voted on each recommendation in turn as follows:

It was proposed by Councillor Margaret Marks, duly seconded by Councillor Mike Chester, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet endorses subject to joint-funding and planning consent, adaptations be made to the eastern plaza to:

- **Reduce the walking distance from disabled parking spaces to the eastern entrance;**
- **Create a disabled drop-off;**
- **Future-proof the future expansion of the Hub by providing more disabled parking spaces.**

It was proposed by Councillor Sarah Stamp, duly seconded by Councillor Marion Rushbrook, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet endorses when any works to the east plaza are complete, investigate, consult on and, if appropriate, introduce a Traffic Regulation Order to regulate the parking on site.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Shipp, duly seconded by Councillor Marion Rushbrook, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet endorses the current and future capacity of on-site car parking should be taken into account as part of any proposals for expansion of education capacity at and adjacent to the Hub; and the Council, as Hub landlord, should make submissions to the Local Planning Authority, Highways Authority and/or education partners accordingly on behalf of the partnership.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Shipp, duly seconded by Councillor Julia Wakelam, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet endorses the final required highways audit of the Queensway/Sheldrick Way junction be commissioned in late 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor Stephen Frost, duly seconded by Councillor Sarah Stamp, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet endorses the current and future capacity of the Queensway/Sheldrick Way junction should be taken into account as part of any highway appraisals for the delivery of the West Mildenhall masterplan and/or any proposals for expansion of primary and secondary education capacity at and adjacent to the Hub; and the Council, as Hub landlord, should make submissions to the Local Planning Authority, Highways Authority and/or education partners accordingly on behalf of the partnership.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Shipp, duly seconded by Councillor Julia Wakelam, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet makes representation to Suffolk County Council regarding a light-controlled crossing being installed at the zebra crossing in the High Street leading to Church Walk, Mildenhall.

It was proposed by Councillor Stephen Frost, duly seconded by Councillor Mike Chester, and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet endorses a future review on progress against the year five financial test by way of a final report on the Mildenhall Hub Post Implementation Review be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2026, subject to the completion of a scoping / key lines of enquiry exercise being carried out with the Strategic Director.

215. **Work programme update**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/23/005, which updated members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2023 (Appendix 1).

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update.

At the close of the meeting, the Chair advised that this meeting was the last Committee meeting in this administration and thanked all members of the Committee, officers for their support, Cabinet Members and guests who had attended over the last four years.

The meeting concluded at 6.20pm

Signed by:

Chair
