

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held on **Tuesday 21 March 2023** at **7.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present

Councillors

Chair Mike Chester

Vice Chair John Augustine

Richard Alecock	Pat Hanlon	David Roach
Michael Anderson	Diane Hind	Richard Rout
Mick Bradshaw	Ian Houlder	Marion Rushbrook
Sarah Broughton	Paul Hopfensperger	Ian Shipp
Carol Bull	Beccy Hopfensperger	Andrew Smith
John Burns	Victor Lukaniuk	David Smith
Patrick Chung	Birgitte Mager	Clive Springett
Max Clarke	Margaret Marks	Sarah Stamp
Nick Clarke	Sara Mildmay-White	Lance Stanbury
Dawn Dicker	Andy Neal	Peter Stevens
Roger Dicker	Robert Nobbs	Peter Thompson
Andy Drummond	Colin Noble	Jim Thorndyke
Robert Everitt	David Palmer	Don Waldron
Stephen Frost	Sarah Pugh	Cliff Waterman
Susan Glossop	Joanna Rayner	Phil Wittam
	Karen Richardson	

274. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Councillor Karen Richardson arrived during the consideration of this item.)

275. **Chair's announcements (Paper number: COU/WS/23/005)**

The Chair drew members' attention to Paper number: COU/WS/23/005, which formally gave recognition to current and former members of the Council.

As this was the last Council meeting ahead of the elections on 4 May 2023, the Chair took the opportunity to acknowledge and thank members for their contribution to the work of West Suffolk Council and their dedicated service to the community.

The Chair also paid tribute to Councillors David Gathercole, Jim Meikle and John Smith who had sadly passed away during this first administration of West Suffolk Council.

Following the election, the Chair would be inviting all non-returning members from the current administration to a reception at West Suffolk House on 11 May 2023 at 6.30pm.

The Chair then reported on the civic engagements and charity activities which he and the Vice-Chair had attended since the last ordinary meeting of Council on 21 February 2023.

Attention was particularly drawn to an event scheduled for 9 March 2023, which was to unveil a new painting at Palace House, Newmarket. Unfortunately, this engagement was cancelled due to bad weather.

(Councillor Marion Rushbrook arrived during the consideration of this item.)

276. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Trevor Beckwith, Tony Brown, Simon Cole, Jason Crooks, John Griffiths, Brian Harvey, Rachel Hood, James Lay, Aaron Luccarini, Joe Mason, David Nettleton, Karen Soons and Julia Wakelam.

Councillor Simon Brown was also unable to attend the meeting.

277. Declarations of interests

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

278. Leader's statement (Paper number: COU/WS/23/006)

In the absence of Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council, Councillor Joanna Rayner, one of the Deputy Leaders, presented the Leader's Statement on Councillor Griffiths' behalf, as outlined in paper number: COU/WS/23/006.

In her introductory remarks, Councillor Rayner:

- a. **Recognition:** paid tribute to all members, staff and to Councillor Griffiths for his leadership during the first four years of West Suffolk Council. Councillor Rayner placed her thanks on record for the hard work and dedication of the aforementioned in helping to deliver successes for the benefit of communities across the district despite living in challenging times.
- b. **Mildenhall Hub:** referenced Report number: OAS/WS/23/003, which was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee on 9 March 2023. This report provided details of a post-implementation review that had been undertaken on whether the Mildenhall Hub had met its ten objectives. Councillor Rayner emphasised that not only had the objectives been met, but all had been surpassed. She thanked members of the O&S Committee for their scrutiny of the report and for their recommendations which would be presented to Cabinet for consideration in due course. Recognition was also given to the former

Forest Heath members who began the process for creating the, now nationally award winning, Mildenhall Hub.

- c. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF):** provided an update on the Council's distribution of its share of the Government's UKSPF. The funding provided in the first year of its three-year total allocation of £1,943,467 had been given or allocated to more than thirty initiatives across West Suffolk.
- d. **Environment:** congratulated winners of the West Suffolk area in Suffolk County Council's Creating the Greenest County 2023 Awards; including how tackling climate change and making improvements to the environment required commitment from partners, organisations, businesses and individuals alike. The West Suffolk winners and the schools taking part in the anti-idling campaign were examples of where this commitment was being positively demonstrated.
- e. **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF):** provided details of the forthcoming Government funded HAF programme that would be taking place over the Easter holiday period.
- f. **850th Anniversary of The Battle of Fornham:** explained that together with The Battlefields Trust All Saints Hotel, activities would be put on at Moyse's Hall Museum and West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village to encourage people to learn more about the national significance of this part of history.

The Deputy Leader responded to a range of questions relating to:

- a. **Supplementary questions:** that working within the requirements of the Council Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of the Constitution, it was not always possible for public speakers to be given the opportunity to ask a supplementary question arising from the reply to their question. The response given depended on the level of detail required to fully answer the question. Whilst a maximum time allocation of five minutes for the question to be put and answered was a requirement of the Procedure Rules, it was at the Chair's discretion to allow a supplementary question if the maximum time allocation had already been reached by the time the original question had been put and answered.
- b. **Recognition of fellow councillors, staff and achievements made:** some members wished to place their thanks on record to fellow councillors and specifically to the Cabinet and committee Chairs for their work over the last four years, with particular recognition given to the tireless efforts made to improve the lives for the residents they represented regardless of political affiliation. Recognition was also given to the officers and staff of West Suffolk Council who continued to deliver excellent services, going above and beyond in many circumstances, especially during the pandemic. The achievements of West Suffolk Council in the last four years were also recognised.

Councillor Rayner wholeheartedly agreed with the sentiments raised and in response to a specific question in relation to the achievements of the Council, she stated that she was very proud of the achievements made to date and work was still ongoing to progress some areas as the Council moved into its new administration. It was hoped these would be taken forward with the same enthusiasm and energy as previously demonstrated.

- c. **Markets:** Following his own personal recognition of fellow councillors, staff, partners and volunteers, together with demonstrating his support for the additional train stops at Kennett Station, Councillor Ian Shipp asked the following two-part question in connection with the markets:
- i. That following the successes of the pilot Makers Markets and their return to Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket, whether there were any plans to be rolled out to the rural markets in Mildenhall, Brandon and Clare.
 - ii. That following the Markets Review undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2022 and the subsequent approval of the recommendations by Cabinet in July 2022, what the current position was in respect of the actions identified to be taken forward as a result of the review.

A written response would be provided following the meeting by Councillor Rayner. In accordance with the Constitution, this response would be circulated to all members and published on the Council's website.

279. **Public participation**

The following members of the public spoke under this agenda item:

1. **Aaron Leeves**, a resident in the district, asked a question in connection with so-called '20 minute neighbourhoods' that were being trialled in towns in various parts of the country. It was asked whether West Suffolk Council was also going to trial a '20 minute neighbourhood' in any of the district's towns.

In response, Councillor Andy Drummond, Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Environment, first drew attention to a document produced by the Town and Country Planning Association which provided guidance to local authorities on planning for climate change. He urged attendees to read the document.

He then responded to the question firstly by reinforcing West Suffolk Council's commitment to addressing the challenge of climate change. That commitment was very transparent through the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and the production of an action plan. The annual monitoring of the action plan, together with the Council's environmental performance was reported to Cabinet with the papers published on the Council's website.

The action plan stated the need to address travel and transport emissions through a range of measures; however, the evaluation or rolling out of 20-minute neighbourhoods was not featured.

West Suffolk Council was also a partner in the Suffolk-wide Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan. This Plan also recognised the need to address transport emissions and means by which these could be reduced. As Suffolk was a very rural county, this would be challenging; however, there were currently no plans for 20-minute neighbourhoods across Suffolk.

2. **Robert Seys**, a resident in the district, provided a statement in the lead up to his question. He expressed concern regarding a number of issues relating to global sign ups to Agenda 21, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals Programme. On a local level, he felt that the infrastructure was not in place to support the so-called '20-minute neighbourhood' zones. The specific question related to the Council's understanding of the origins of Agenda 21, Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals Programme.

In response, Councillor Drummond reiterated the various policy approaches there had been to addressing environmental challenges. The references made by Mr Seys related to international approaches. The UK Government had put in place its own policies which directed the work of the Council. All this information was publicly available.

3. **Ian Smith**, a resident in the district, expressed concern that West Suffolk Council had signed up to the UK100 organisation, which as a member included pledging 'to deliver a Net Zero future'. Mr Smith asked whether the Council supported the implementation of restrictive traffic measures in Bury St Edmunds or other towns in Suffolk. He urged members not to implement a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN), otherwise known as a '20-minute neighbourhood' or a '15-minute city'.

In response, Councillor Drummond reiterated the reply he had given earlier to Mr Leeves and hoped that this had addressed his concern regarding '20-minute neighbourhoods' and restrictive measures. The Council joined the UK100 organisation last year in order to confirm their commitment to Net Zero and to work with other councils to help achieve this. Councillor Drummond added that Suffolk County Council was the Highways Authority and no '20-minute neighbourhoods' had not been set out in their Local Transport Plan, which covered the period 2011 to 2031.

4. **Geoff Mealing**, a resident in the district, provided some background to the use of digital currencies and so-called Digital Concentration Camps, and his views on what he felt were the potential impacts of their implementation. He specifically asked whether the Council knew anything about Digital Concentration Camps and whether the Council would be a part of it.

In response, Councillor Robert Everitt, Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities stated that the Council was not aware of this issue and thanked Mr Mealing for bringing the matter to members' attention.

4. **Ellie De Pasquale**, a resident in the district, provided a statement in the lead up to her question. She gave her views on what she felt were the potential impacts of 5G emissions on human health, the environment and biodiversity. She specifically asked what health and safety risk assessments

and environmental impact assessments had been done before installation of the 5G communication masts in Bury St Edmunds. Concern was particularly expressed regarding exposure to, in her view, potentially harmful levels of radiation emitted from the 5G towers.

In response, Councillor David Roach, Portfolio Holder for Planning, stated that applicants were required to self-certify that the levels of exposure to radiation met international recognised guidelines as stated in paragraph 117 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Councillor Roach quoted this paragraph to those present.

In response to an additional question regarding the exchange of sources of information relating to this matter, Ms De Pasquale was advised to email Councillor Roach directly outside of the meeting.

No further questions were asked. The Chair concluded this item and invited the members of the public present to remain in the meeting to observe the following agenda items should they wish to do so.

280. Referrals report of recommendations from Cabinet

Council noted that there were no referrals emanating from the Cabinet meeting held on 14 March 2023.

281. Pay Policy Statement 2023 to 2024 (Report number: COU/WS/23/007)

Council considered this report, which sought approval for the Pay Policy Statement 2023 to 2024.

The Localism Act 2011 and supporting guidance provided details of matters that must be included in this statutory pay policy, but, also, emphasised that each local authority had the autonomy to take its own decisions on pay and pay policies. The Pay Policy Statement must be approved formally by Council each year. The statement could be amended in year, must be published on the Council's website and must be complied with when setting the terms and conditions of Chief Officers.

Set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report, were details of what was included in the Pay Policy Statement 2023 to 2024, which was attached at Appendix A.

Councillor Carol Bull, Portfolio Holder for Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council.

On the motion of Councillor Bull, seconded by Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, it was put to the vote and with the vote being 44 for the motion, none against and four abstentions, it was

Resolved:

That the Pay Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024, as contained in Appendix A to Report number COU/WS/23/007, be approved.

282. **West Suffolk Council Constitution - proposed amendments (Report number: COU/WS/23/008)**

Council considered this report, which sought approval for amendments to the two areas of the Constitution.

The Constitution Review Group periodically met to review the effectiveness of the Constitution, identifying any areas that could be developed further to improve the way the Council made decisions, ensuring that processes were efficient and transparent.

The Group met on 8 February 2023 and considered two areas recommended for amendment:

- Part 4; Council Procedure Rules
- Part 4; Scrutiny Committees Procedure Rules

The specific amendments proposed were summarised in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of the report, with each clearly laid out as tracked changes in Appendices 1 and 2 attached to the report.

Councillor Carol Bull, Portfolio Holder for Governance, drew relevant issues to the attention of Council. This included, as proposer of the substantive motion, proposing an additional change to one of the suggested amendments to the Scrutiny Committees Procedure Rules, as follows:

Referring to paragraph 2.3 of the report (paragraph 1.3 of Appendix 2), the following additional text, shown in bold, was proposed in addition to the suggested revised wording, as indicated below:

- (n) *To appoint one member of the Committee to act as the Council's representative on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee **who will report their findings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee** and to appoint one member of the Committee as a substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.*

On the motion of Councillor Bull, seconded by Councillor Jim Thorndyke, it was put to the vote and with the vote being 46 for the motion, none against and two abstentions, it was

Resolved:

That:

1. The revised wording for Part 4; Council Procedure Rules (as set out in paragraphs 1.1.4; 1.2 and 1.3 of Appendix 1 to Report number COU/WS/23/008), be approved.
2. The revised wording, as amended to include the additional text shown below, for Part 4; Scrutiny Committees Procedure Rules (as set out in Section A; Overview and Scrutiny Committee; paragraph 1.3 of Appendix 2 to Report number COU/WS/23/008), be approved:

- (n) *To appoint one member of the Committee to act as the Council's representative on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee **who will report their findings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee** and **to** appoint one member of the Committee as a substitute member on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.*

283. **Any other urgent business**

There were no matters of urgent business considered on this occasion.

The meeting concluded at 8.06 pm

Signed by:

Chair
