

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 12 March 2024** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair Victor Lukaniuk (Deputy Leader of the Council) (in the Chair)

Donna Higgins
Diane Hind
Gerald Kelly
Richard O'Driscoll

Ian Shipp
Jim Thorndyke
Indy Wijenayaka

In attendance
Peter Armitage
Birgitte Mager
Joe Mason

559. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cliff Waterman and David Taylor.

560. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

561. **Declarations of interest**

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

562. **Open forum**

The following non-Cabinet member spoke under this item:

1. **Councillor Joe Mason (Ward Member for Haverhill North)**

Councillor Joe Mason addressed the Cabinet with specific questions in relation to car parking charges and measures to support the High Street in Haverhill.

Councillor Mason asked if Cabinet had a clear, cohesive plan to help improve the vibrancy and encourage greater footfall in Haverhill's High Street. As part of the plan for encouraging greater footfall, Councillor Mason stated that

there was currently no free car parking in Haverhill and asked whether there were plans to support that.

In response, Councillor Indy Wijenayaka, Portfolio Holder for Growth, provided Councillor Mason with examples of initiatives that were in place to support Haverhill High Street, including the forthcoming 'Makers' Market' which had previously proved successful and the 'Free from Three' car parking initiative on Fridays. The Cabinet was committed to supporting the High Street with an holistic strategy in place which aligned with the Council's strategic priorities.

Councillor Mason was informed that he would be provided with a written response which would expand on this further.

563. Public participation

There were no members of the public in attendance on this occasion.

564. West Suffolk Council Food Safety and Health and Safety Service Plan 2024 to 2025

(Report number CAB/WS/24/017)

The Cabinet considered this report which sought approval for the West Suffolk Food Safety and Health and Safety Service plan 2024 to 2025.

The Food Safety and Health and Safety Service plan outlined the Council's commitment to protect public health and safety and the environment by conducting programmed and reactive interventions, investigations, and research to detect, eliminate and control hazards by applying fair, transparent, and proportionate enforcement.

The plan, which was a statutory requirement set out in the code of practice for food safety, was attached as Appendix A to the report, and was considered in detail by the Cabinet.

Councillor Gerald Kelly, Portfolio Holder for Governance and Regulatory, drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet, which included summarising progress made against the 2022 to 2023 plan; the key challenges identified that would affect the implementation of the 2024 to 2025 plan, and how resourcing of the team was a key factor to the successful implementation of the plan, as set out in sections 2.1, 3.1 and 5.1 of the report respectively.

The Cabinet supported approval of the plan and acknowledged the extensive amount of work undertaken by officers in this service area.

Resolved:

That the Food Safety and Health and Safety Service Plan 2024 to 2025, as contained in Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/24/017, be approved.

565. Decisions Plan: 1 March 2024 to 31 May 2024

(Report number CAB/WS/24/018)

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period 1 March 2024 to 31 May 2024.

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

566. Revenues collection performance and write offs

(Report number CAB/WS/24/019)

The Cabinet considered this report, which provided the collection data in respect of council tax and national non-domestic rates (NNDR) and sought approval for the write-off of the amounts contained in the exempt appendices attached to the report.

Councillor Diane Hind, Portfolio Holder for Resources, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including the current performance of both council tax and business rates collection, as set out in Section 2 of the report.

Members noted that there was an extensive and supportive recovery process prior to the engagement of an enforcement agency. The Council currently used the services of the ARP Enforcement Agency to assist in the collection of business rates and council tax and also had online tracing facilities.

In response to a question, the Cabinet was informed that every effort was made to recover a debt before reaching the point of seeking approval to write it off. In the event that a written-off debt became recoverable, the amount was written back on, and enforcement procedures would be re-established. Debt recovery rates were improving considerably.

Recognition was given to the extensive amount of work undertaken by officers in this service area and to the Anglia Revenues Partnership as a whole.

Resolved:

That the write-off of the amounts detailed in the exempt appendices to Report number: CAB/WS/24/019, be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Council Tax totalling £24,604.84
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Overpayment of Housing Benefit totalling £25,713.11
3. Exempt Appendix 3: Sundry Debt of £9,439.63

567. Exclusion of press and public

See minute number 568. below.

568. **Exempt appendices: Revenues collection performance and write-offs (paragraphs 1 and 2)**

(Exempt appendices 1, 2 and 3 to Report number CAB/WS/24/019)

The Cabinet considered the exempt appendices to this report. However, no reference was made to specific detail and, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The meeting concluded at 6.21 pm

Signed by:

Chair
