

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath  
District Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 18 December 2014 at 6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

**Chairman** Tony Simmons

Michael Anderson  
David Bimson  
Rachel Hood

Tim Huggan  
Michael Jefferys  
Tony Wheble

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Barker, Geoffrey Jaggard and John McGhee.

2. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

3. **Public Participation**

Agenda Item 9 – Work Programme Update and Suggestions for Scrutiny

Mr Andrew Appleby, a local resident, wished to address the Committee on Item 9 on the agenda, Work Programme Update and Suggestions for Scrutiny, in relation to Appendix 4, "Publication and publicity of how Section 106 monies are spent in the district".

He raised concerns regarding two recently established racing yards in Snailwell Road, Newmarket, the associated safety works and the Section 106 monies. At the time of the planning application, the Highways Authority had not raised any concerns regarding safety issues. However, the Highways Authority was now claiming money from the Tesco's Section 106 agreement. He questioned how they could use S106 monies on safety works when it had not highlighted any safety issues at the planning stage; and how the Tesco Section 106 monies had solely been earmarked for horseracing related projects.

#### 4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2014 were accepted by the Committee as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 5. **Items for Call-in**

There were no items the subject of call-in.

#### 6. **Councillor Call for Action - Requests Received**

No Councillor Call for Action requests were received.

#### 7. **West Suffolk Homelessness Strategy 2015-18**

The Committee received Report OAS/FH/14/001, which set out what the West Suffolk councils, along with their partners, would do over the next three years to address and prevent homelessness, ensuring that there was sufficient suitable temporary accommodation and support for those who were homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Councils were required to carry out a homelessness review of their area and produce a strategy to:

- 1) Address the causes of homelessness in the area
- 2) Introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible
- 3) Provide sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that were or may become homeless; and
- 4) Ensure that appropriate support was available for people who had previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

On 9 December 2014, Cabinet agreed for the Strategy to go out for consultation. As part of the consultation process the Committee at its meeting held on 23 in October 2014, had requested to be involved in the consultation as a consultee. Therefore, Members of the Committee were asked to consider the contents of the Strategy and the proposed actions and to make comments for changes and revisions, as appropriate, prior to the Strategy being presented to Cabinet in February 2015 for approval.

Members scrutinised the Strategy in detail and asked a number of questions to which officers provided comprehensive responses. In particular, discussions were held on the following areas:

- (1) It was suggested that the level of proposed units for temporary accommodation should be in proportion to the projected population growth within a given area. Officers agreed to review the proposed numbers of units required accordingly.
- (2) Members highlighted the need to ensure that when someone became homeless that they could still access their local community links. Officers advised Members that the Council tried to place families in temporary accommodation close to their local support links.

- (3) Members questioned how many families with 3 or more children required temporary accommodation and the length of time they had to wait in temporary accommodation before they were permanently housed. Officers agreed to provide a written response.

With the vote being unanimous it was:

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the contents of the West Suffolk Homelessness Strategy (2015-2018) be approved, subject to the Committees comments and other stakeholder comments, as part of the consultation process.

## **8. Decisions Plan: December 2014 to May 2015**

The Committee received Report OAS/FH/14/002, which requested that Members peruse the Decisions Plan (published 10 November 2014) for the period December 2014 to May 2015, for items which it would like further information on, or which might benefit from the Committee's involvement. Members were informed of amendments/additions made since the last plan was published on 29 September 2014.

The Committee considered the Decision Plan in detail and asked questions to which officers duly responded. In particular, discussions were held on:

- 1) Decision Reference Oct14/03: Local Housing Investment Options – Provision of Commercial Loans. Members noted that this had been delayed and requested a written response as to where the Council was in developing this item as it was a key part of the Housing Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Governance and Performance had been invited to the meeting to update the Committee on the Joint Risk Management Strategy and the Joint Information and Communications (ICT) Strategy. The Committee was advised that in July 2014, the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee was presented with the Joint Risk Management Toolkit and the West Suffolk Joint Strategic Risk Register. In February 2015, as part of the Budget report to Cabinet it would include the Councils overarching risk approach with regards to its financial plans. With regards to the ICT Strategy, although a key priority had been bringing the two ICT sections together, work continues on this area and a new date would be set in due course.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report and the verbal update from the Cabinet Member for Resources, Governance and Performance.

*(Councillor Rachel Hood arrived during the consideration of this item).*

## **9. Work Programme Update and Suggestions for Scrutiny**

The Committee received Report OAS/FH/14/003, which provided an update on the current status of the Committee's Work Programme and the Task and

Finish Groups appointed by the Committee. Attached as Appendix 1 to the report were details of progress made on the work programme with an outline of the current position of the Committee's Task and Finish Groups attached as Appendix 2.

Also included in the Report were two "suggestions for scrutiny" forms concerning:

Appendix 3 – Promotion of businesses and provision of micro-commercial premises based around the expansion of Cambridge and its economy; and

Appendix 4 – Publication and publicity of how Section 106 monies were spent in the district.

#### Promotion of businesses and provision of micro-commercial premises

Councillor Simon Cole informed Members that he would like to see a Task and Finish Group set up between officers and Members to look at the possibility of a seedbed centre in Newmarket; to examine existing land owned by the Council; to renovate and sell off business units that were not suitable for its needs; to convert those the Council owned into more suitable units for the areas they were located in and to develop a strategy to promote the area.

The Committee was asked to consider whether the issue presented would be appropriate for scrutiny, including potential outcomes and if added to the work programme to decide on appropriate timescales for future reporting.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Tourism informed the Committee that the Council had commissioned a study of Innovation and Incubation for West Suffolk. This study had considered the provision of some form of centre in Newmarket. The study formed the basis for further work which included finding a site. With regards to the A11, the Council had bought into the study on the growth potential of the A11 corridor (Thetford to Newmarket) being commissioned by Breckland and South Norfolk Councils. Phase one of this study was to investigate the growth potential of the corridor and to see if outside consultants agree/disagree with the targets for growth which underpin the "business case" for further developing co-operation going forward. The study would also help identify where areas could be developed for businesses.

A lengthy debate on the issue was held and taking into account information provided by Councillor Simon Cole, the Cabinet Member and Officers, the Committee agreed to set up an Informal Member Workshop to discuss various issues and to look at options such as land supply, incubation space and to work with the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**Resolved:**

**That**

- (1) Officers be asked to set up an Informal Member Workshop, open to all members, including the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group to look at land supply; employment land; incubation space etc. and to formulate findings.
- (2) A report on the findings from the Informal Member Workshop be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

#### Publication and publicity of Section 106 monies

Councillor Simon Cole informed Members that residents were unaware that much of the good that came from Section 106 (S106) was tied to developments and that the Council should be publicising and promoting the S106 benefits of development to the wider community. The benefits would be a greater understanding of the history of an area/ward in terms of relating development to benefit to the community.

The Committee was asked to consider whether the issue presented would be appropriate for scrutiny, including potential outcomes and if added to the work programme to decide on appropriate timescales for future reporting.

The Head of Planning and Growth informed the Committee that the Council would have from April 2015, an Annual Report and quarterly monitoring reports throughout the year. The intention was to have the Annual Report from April 2015 available on-line which would give residents the ability to question spending regarding Section 106 monies and by which organisation. The report would include trigger points indicating when the money should be spent by/required to be paid.

It was reported that in prior to shared services, the Performance and Audit Committee used to receive updates. Officers agreed to look into the most appropriate reporting route for future updates.

A lengthy debate on the issue was held and taking into account information provided by Councillor Simon Cole and Officers, the Committee agreed for a verbal update on progress, including the appropriate reporting route for quarterly monitoring reports on Section 106 monies be presented to the Committee at its next scheduled meeting.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

#### **Resolved:**

That a verbal update on progress, including the appropriate reporting route for quarterly monitoring reports on Section 106 monies be presented to the Committee on 22 January 2015.

#### **10. Improving Healthy Lifestyles Update**

The Committee received Report OAS/FH/14/004, which updated Members on the council's activities relating to improving healthy lifestyles, following on from an earlier presentation to the Committee on 24 October 2013.

The report provided an overview of progress made so far by the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board; Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee; West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group; Forest Heath Health and Wellbeing Forum; Live Well Suffolk, Community Health Coach; Healthy Health; Otago – Falls Prevention; Suffolk County Council Integrated Healthy Lifestyle Service and Anglia Community Leisure.

Members scrutinised the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which the Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture and officers provided responses. In particular, discussions were held on:

- (1) The contracts for the out of hours service, 111 service and community hospitals, which had been extended to 2016. The Committee noted that work would commence in mid 2015 in drafting a tender document for all three services to be brought together under one new contact and that the Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture and officers would be involved in the discussions.
- (2) The Committee acknowledged the health work happening Suffolk wide, but suggested that any future reporting should also include more detail about the local impact of Suffolk wide campaigns.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

## 11. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business raised.

The Meeting concluded at 7.18 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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