

Informal Joint Cabinet

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

West Suffolk
working together

Notes of a informal discussions of the SEBC/FHDC **Cabinets** held on **Tuesday 1 September 2015** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: Councillors

St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)

John Griffiths (in the Chair for the informal discussions)

Robert Everitt

Ian Houlder

Sara Mildmay-White

Alaric Pugh

Joanna Rayner (present for the informal discussions only)

Peter Stevens

In attendance:

John Burns

Susan Glossop

Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

David Bowman

Andy Drummond

Stephen Edwards

James Waters

In attendance:

Andrew Appleby

Colin Noble

Prior to the formal meeting, informal discussions took place on the following two substantive items:

- (1) West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020; and
- (2) West Suffolk Investment Framework.

All Members of Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet had been invited to attend St Edmundsbury Borough Council's offices to enable joint informal discussions on the reports to take place between the two authorities prior to seeking formal approval at their respective separate Cabinet meetings immediately following the informal discussions.

The Leader of St Edmundsbury Borough Council welcomed all those present to West Suffolk House and the Services Manager (Legal) advised on the format of the proceedings for the informal discussions and subsequent separate meetings of each authority.

Under their Constitutions, both Cabinets listed as standing agenda items: an Open Forum, which provided the opportunity for non-Cabinet Members to

discuss issues with Cabinet, and also: public participation, which provided the opportunity for members of the public to speak. Therefore, as any matters arising from discussions held during these agenda items may have some bearing on the decisions taken during the separate formal meetings, non-Cabinet Members and members of the public were invited to put their questions/statements prior to the start of the joint informal discussions.

1. **Open Forum**

SEBC Councillor John Burns asked a question in connection with the Borough Council considering investing in the construction of smaller, light industrial units in Haverhill and around the Borough as part of its investment strategy. In response, Councillor Alaric Pugh, SEBC Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, explained that both Councils already had these types of units across West Suffolk, including units of different sizes in Haverhill. If the Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan was approved by SEBC full Council on 22 September 2015, this would create further opportunities for investment, thus promoting the generation of jobs and growth.

2. **Public Participation**

No members of the public were in attendance.

3. **West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020**

The Cabinets were presented with the draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (Appendix A) and draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020 (Appendix B).

Members recalled that the first West Suffolk Strategic Plan for 2014 to 2016 was adopted by both FHDC and SEBC Councils in February 2014. This Strategic Plan centred on three priorities as set out in the report. During the last 18 months, the Councils had been working to deliver these priorities and embedding them into the West Suffolk culture. Work had also been undertaken to ensure links between the West Suffolk Strategic Plan and the financial framework, in particular the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

In order to strengthen those links and ensure that the West Suffolk spending plans, resource commitments and delivery plans were intrinsically connected, the development of the revised West Suffolk Strategic Plan had been linked with the MTFS. The MTFS would continue to remain based around the six themes contained in the 2014-2016 version, as outlined in the report.

The draft Plan and MTFS 2016-2020 would require some updating as set out in the report, following adoption by both FHDC and SEBC Councils on 16 and 22 September 2015 respectively. It was therefore recommended that both Leaders be given delegated authority to make the required revisions to ensure the document was as up-to-date as possible when it came into effect in April 2016.

Councillor Stephen Edwards, FHDC Cabinet Member for Resources and

Performance drew relevant issues to the attention of both Cabinets. In response to a question, Councillor Edwards explained that whilst the Councils had made significant savings in previous years, particularly through the shared service agenda, greater emphasis would be placed on income generation as it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve a sustainable budget over the coming years.

The Cabinets commended the officers for the content of both documents, and duly accepted the recommendations.

2. **West Suffolk Investment Framework**

The Cabinets were presented with a proposed new West Suffolk Investment Framework.

The West Suffolk Investment Framework, attached as Attachment A, had been produced to support staff and Members throughout the initial development stages to the decision making process for the Councils' key strategic projects, particularly those that required the Councils to invest. It also supported the Councils' compliance with the 'The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities'.

At the early stages of each of the key projects, the desired outcome(s) could be achieved through a number of different options which needed to be investigated further. It also needed to be ascertained whether each of the projects were deliverable and represented value for money for tax payers before significant capital sums were committed and potentially placed at risk. It was therefore important that feasibility funding was made available at the early stages of the business case development to unlock the projects, realise their investment potential and whether they should proceed to the development of a full business case.

Attachment B provided a summary of the feasibility funding approved to date across West Suffolk, including the expected capital budget and return over time. The expected returns from the key strategic projects were fundamental to delivering a sustainable medium term financial position for the Councils.

Councillor Ian Houlder, SEBC Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance drew relevant issues to the attention of both Cabinets. Members acknowledged the range of strategic projects set out in Attachment B and commended the significant amount of work being undertaken to progress these projects.

(FHDC Councillor Colin Noble arrived during the consideration of this item.)

On the conclusion of the informal joint discussions at 6.24pm, the Chairman then formally opened the meeting of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet at 6.30 pm in the Conference Chamber. On conclusion of that meeting, the Leader of Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) formally opened the meeting as Chairman of FHDC's Cabinet at 6.33pm.

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 1 September 2015 at **6.33 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman James Waters (Leader of the Council) (in the Chair)

David Bowman
Stephen Edwards

Andy Drummond

In attendance:
Andrew Appleby

Colin Noble

92. **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robin Millar.

93. **Open Forum**

This item had already been considered during the informal discussions (Item 1 above refers.)

94. **Public Participation**

This item had already been considered during the informal discussions (Item 2 above refers). No members of the public were in attendance.

95. **West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020**

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/FH/15/038, *West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020*, it was proposed, seconded and,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That subject to updates and amendments by the Leaders, as detailed in paragraphs 13 and 14 of Report No: CAB/FH/15/038, the:

- (1) West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020; and**
- (2) West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020, be adopted.**

96. West Suffolk Investment Framework

Further to the joint informal discussions held prior to the meeting with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet on Report No: CAB/FH/15/039, *West Suffolk Investment Framework*, it was proposed, seconded and,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That the West Suffolk Investment Framework attached at Attachment A to Report No: CAB/FH/15/039, be approved: and

RESOLVED:

That the feasibility funding schedule attached at Attachment B, be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.36pm

Signed by:

Chairman
