

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 3 January 2023 at 6:30 pm**

Members of the Cabinet present:

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith

Other Members present:

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Steve Wiles

Officers present:

Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Damilola Bastos (Finance Planning Manager), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Emily Chilvers (Empty Homes Officer), Duncan Coleman (Interim Asset & Investment Manager), Teresa Howarth (Principal Environmental Health Officer), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Chris Phillips (Senior Estates Surveyor), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Tony Rudd (Valuer), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer), Julian Sturman (Specialist Accountant – Capital and Treasury Management), Heather Tucker (Head of Housing), Amber Welham (Finance Business Partner - Housing), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mark Jepson, Assistant Cabinet Member for Community Health.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Announcements

Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

The Leader took the opportunity to wish all those at the meeting a very healthy and

peaceful new year. East Suffolk Council had another busy and exciting year ahead and its plans and ambitions would continue to demonstrate the Council's commitment to make the district the best place it could be for residents, businesses, and visitors.

The Leader was saddened to report that after a short illness, County and Felixstowe Town Councillor Graham Newman, died in the St Elizabeth Hospice on 28 December. All those present sent sincere condolences to his wife, Jan, and to all of his family. Graham had worked tirelessly in support of the Local Government family. He was also a hardworking and honourable man and was a great loss, not only to his family but to all who knew him.

He had served with distinction as County Councillor for Felixstowe Coastal since 2005. He was Chairman of the County Council in 2020/21. He served on the Felixstowe Town Council since 2009, becoming mayor in 2014/15, and again in 2018/19. Those present held a few moments of respect for Councillor Graham Newman.

The Leader announced that, with immediate effect, a new Executive Outside Body appointment. Cabinet had delegated authority to the Leader, at its meeting in June 2022, to make any necessary changes to the members of the Outside Bodies for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal Year. Councillor Cackett, Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, will sit on the Greater Anglia Integrated Transport Forum, which would meet on a quarterly basis.

Finally, the Leader took the opportunity to formally welcome Chris Bally, the new Chief Executive, to his first Cabinet meeting since taking up his new post. He looked forward to working with him.

Councillor Cook, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources reported that the Council would be receiving £404,835 funding from the Government, as part of £100m of new grant funding in 2023-24, to support economically vulnerable households with council tax payments. The Government expected local authorities to use the majority of their funding allocations to reduce bills for current working age and pension age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) claimants, by up to £25. Councils could use their remaining allocation as they see fit to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.

It was noted that this was similar to the £150 Hardship Relief that LCTRS recipients received at the start of the pandemic. Initial modelling from ARP had suggested that the main scheme of £25 discounts would cost around £274,000, with around £131,000 available for discretionary reductions. This was not made reference to in the Appendix B update to the Cabinet Budget report, included in the agenda for later this evening. However, it would be referenced in the Budget report to the Scrutiny Committee, and as the Council was required to use Discretionary powers to grant this as a relief, a full report would be brought directly to Full Council on 25 January 2023, for the scheme to be approved.

Councillor Rudd, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health reminded everybody,

where possible, to have their Covid and flu vaccinations. It was noted that hospitals were currently under great strain and many were requesting all visitors to wear face masks.

Councillor Mallinder, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment thanked the refuse collection teams for their hard work over the Christmas and New Year period, where significantly more waste was generated than normal. He encouraged everyone to recycle sensibly and not to leave glass bottles next to a bottle bank if it was full, as the bottles could break, causing a hazard for people and wildlife. He also asked for people to recycle their real Christmas trees responsibly.

4 Empty Homes - Policies for Forced Sale and Prioritising Action

Cabinet received report **ES/1392** of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, which sought approval of the policies for forced sale and prioritising action. Councillor Kerry reported that following the Cabinet decision in April 2022 to take a proactive approach to bringing Long Term Empty Homes back into use, the Council had appointed an Empty Homes Officer, who had started work in August 2022. Since then, there had been a best practice review, which had led to this report, which set out clear rules for assessing long term empty homes against local priorities and determining when action to force the sale of a property should be taken to recover debts.

It was noted that the proposals in the report had been drawn up following the review and consultation with other Councils, including Suffolk partners, who were working in this area. There was a proposed scoring matrix, to help prioritise properties in an appropriate and consistent manner, and the policy on forced sale established some clear guidance on when this action was most appropriate – usually for abandoned homes. Councillor Kerry stated that the report recommended the adoption of these new policies, to provide a transparent and consistent approach to dealing with problematic long term empty homes.

The Cabinet were very supportive of the report and policies. It was noted that empty homes could become a blight on local communities and it was important for the Council to take a proactive approach, where possible.

Councillor Byatt sought clarification about the process and whether an empty home problem could be resolved sooner than the 24 months referred to in the report? Councillor Kerry stated that each case was dealt with on an individual basis and some were very complex, legally. Councillor Kerry invited Theresa Howarth, Principal Environmental Health Officer, to explain further. She stated that whilst each case was unique, the Council would always aim to resolve the matter as swiftly as possible. Occasionally, there were lengthy issues involving probate or beneficiaries living abroad, which delayed matters considerably. It was therefore important to be realistic about what could be achieved.

Councillor Byatt asked if additional, expert support could be provided to tackle the backlog of almost 300 empty homes? Councillor Kerry reported that the Council had

already appointed an Empty Homes Officer, who would work solely on the empty homes issue and they were an expert in their field. Reassurance was provided that the Council would recoup its costs on bringing empty homes back into use, wherever possible.

There being no further questions, the recommendation was moved by Councillor Kerry and seconded by Councillor Brooks, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the Forced Sale Policy, attached to the report to provide a standardised tool for decision making across the Council, be adopted.
2. That the Empty Homes Policy, attached to the report to provide a clear and effective framework for decision making on dealing with empty homes, be adopted.

5 Disabled Facilities Grants - Amendment to Policy

Cabinet received report **ES/1393** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, which sought approval of an amendment to the Disable Facilities Grant policy. Councillor Kerry reported that the Independent Living Service was brought back in house in May 2020, to support residents to apply for Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) to have adaptations done at home. The Independent Living Team had now completed two and half years of work and refined and developed the processes and procedures to maximise efficiency within the constraints of the grant policy that was adopted in 2020. A full review of the East Suffolk service and the wider Independent Suffolk service this autumn, had identified a number of areas where further changes could bring about an even higher number of adaptations. This report proposed introducing a revised policy to help achieve that.

It was noted that East Suffolk received a large allocation from Central Government and although the number of grants the Council was completing had significantly increased, there were still funds available. Looking at the options and the practices in place at other Councils, it was proposed that the new grant policy be introduced, which would replace three grants currently available with a single, non-means tested grant, up to a maximum value of £15k. For higher value works, the standard DFG would remain, which was means tested. There would also be a DFG repairs grant, to assist with repairing or replacing items such as through floor lifts, stairlifts and wash dry toilets. Councillor Kerry stated that the change in policy would bring the East Suffolk service more in line with the rest of the Suffolk Councils and guidelines issued by Central Government around maximising independence at home.

Councillor Smith commented that she supported this report and it was important to support people to have a good quality of life and to remain in their own homes.

Councillor Rudd stated that she had heard positive feedback about the scheme and encouraged those involved to keep up the good work.

Councillor Byatt asked about the referrals and how long it would take for the work needed to be completed? Councillor Kerry reported that West Suffolk and Ipswich

hospitals worked closely with the Council and provided referrals for work. If the work could not be completed before the person was due to be discharged from hospital, they would be moved into a half way home to stop bed blocking. They would then be moved back into their home once the works had been completed. This was known as the 'Stepping Stones' project, which had won national awards and was very positively received by all involved. Theresa Howarth reported that the Council could take referrals immediately, however, they were able to check with Occupational Health to ensure that any recommendations made, were suitable and appropriate for the individual involved.

Councillor Byatt asked if any surplus grant funding could be used to improve disabled access in public spaces? Theresa Howarth confirmed that the funding was ring fenced for home improvements only.

Councillor Rudd noted the work in the South of the District and asked if the Council was working with James Paget University Hospital, in the North of the District, too? Councillor Kerry confirmed that the Council was only working with hospitals in the South of the District at this time. Theresa Howarth clarified that the North had the 'Be at Home project', which provided a care alarm service, however, there was no half way house option available. Work was ongoing to align the two services, however, it was complex due to the different Norfolk / Suffolk Border and the different Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in place. The Leader asked Councillor Rudd if she could raise this with her health colleagues in the North, as it was important to have equal services across the district. Councillor Burroughes commented that it was vital that similar services were provided in the North of the District. Councillor Smith reported that she would also raise this at any relevant meetings that she would be attending in future.

There being no further discussion, the recommendation was moved by Councillor Kerry and seconded by Councillor Brooks and it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That the new grants policy detailed in this report be adopted as Council policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) and the policy is published on the East Suffolk website.

6 Fees and Charges for the Financial Year 2023/24

The Cabinet received report **ES/1390** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which sought approval of the Fees and Charges for the financial year 2023/24. It was noted that the income from fees and charges was an integral part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which generated essential funding for the Council to help minimise Council Tax increases and/or service reductions. The annual income to the General Fund from Fees and Charges was in the region of £22 million per annum to the General Fund, including the Port Health.

Councillor Cook explained that Appendix A of the report set out the proposed Discretionary Fees & Charges for 2023/24 and areas to highlight were in Paragraph 2.3 of the covering report. This included further details on Environmental health, parking services, beach huts & chalets, waste collection, S106 monitoring, and Recreation and

outdoor sports. The date for implementation of the Discretionary fees at East Suffolk Council would be 1 April 2023, unless otherwise stated.

The Statutory Charges were for noting and were in Appendix B. These were set by Government statute and councils usually had no control over service pricing. For some statutory fees there were no set review dates and some areas such as licences, had not been increased for a number of years. Where review dates were known, these were provided in the relevant sections of the schedule. It was noted that the high rate of inflation could not be ignored, however, the average increase in fees had been set at 5%.

Councillor Mallinder commented that the fees for the collection of bulky items of waste had been kept low and that the fee was good value for money. It was important to encourage the public to use this service, as this would help to protect the environment from fly tipping.

Councillor Byatt asked about the charges for the replacement of household wheelie bins, if they had been stolen? Councillor Mallinder reported that developers were always asked to contribute towards the provision of bins for new properties, however, the replacement of stolen wheelie bins were dealt with on a case by case basis.

Councillor Byatt asked about the Eastern Edge Beach Huts, he wanted to know how many had been sold and the income achieved from renting them. He also queried why the rental beach huts were not fitted out, as they were literally empty inside. Councillor Rivett stated that he would provide figures about the Eastern Edge Beach Huts outside of the meeting, as he did not have the information immediately to hand. He stated that the beach huts were under constant review and they could be fitted out to some degree, if there was the demand for it.

There being no further questions, Councillor Cook moved the recommendations within the report and he was seconded by the Leader and it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the discretionary Fees and Charges for 2023/24, attached as Appendix A to this report, be approved.
2. That the statutory Fees and Charges for 2023/24, attached as Appendix B to this report, be noted.
3. That the Head of Environmental Services and Port Health be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, to determine the Port Health discretionary charges for 2023/24, once regulatory information is made available.

7

Southwold Harbour Management Committee – Fees and Charges 2023/24

The Cabinet received report **ES/1394** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which sought approval of the Fees and Charges for Southwold Harbour in 2023/24. It was noted that in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the

Southwold Harbour Management Committee (SHMC), the Committee reviewed and then recommended an annual schedule of charges and dues for the Harbour to then be determined by Cabinet.

The Council continued to encourage a commercial approach to setting fees and charges, subject to any statutory restrictions. The Harbour, and the Caravan site and Campsite fee proposals for the next financial year, had taken into consideration the Council's key principles when reviewing fees and charges. This included benchmarking and an expectation to increase fees by at least 5% to ensure some level of cost recovery, when inflation was currently running at 11.1%.

Councillor Cook explained that income generation from the Harbour and the Caravan site and Campsite, was ringfenced for the Harbour account, and was an important element to ensure the effective running and investment into the Harbour. At its meeting on 24 November 2022, the SHMC had considered the proposed fees and charges and had resolved for them to be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

The Leader thanked the Harbour Management Committee and all those involved, in producing the fees and charges for consideration.

Councillor Ritchie reported that he was the Chairman of the HMC and he thanked Councillor Cook and Lorraine Rogers, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, for their ongoing hard work for the HMC. He stated that the fees and charges and all of the Harbour's finances were transparent and easy to understand.

Councillor Byatt queried the ring fencing of the funds and asked if there was a time limit involved? Councillor Ritchie provided reassurance that the Harbour funds were ring fenced for the Harbour in perpetuity, they could not be used for any other purpose. Councillor Cook stated that the Council had recently applied for a Harbour Revision Order (HRO) and this would provide further protections in law, in relation to the ring fencing and Harbour funding.

There being no further questions, Councillor Cook moved the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Ritchie, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the annual schedule of charges and dues for Southwold Harbour for 2023/24, in Appendix A of the attached Southwold Harbour Committee Report, be approved.
2. That the Fees and Charges for Southwold Caravan Site and Campsite for 2023/24, in Appendix B of the attached Southwold Harbour Committee Report, be approved.

8

General Fund Budget 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Cabinet received report **ES/1395** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which sought approval to take the General Fund Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy to the Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Cook stated that the report

provided a further update on the draft MTFS, as at December 2022. The MTFS provided a baseline forecast of income and expenditure and looked at the overall financial climate, including public finances and the local government financial environment. The report took into account new and revised risks and presented an initial draft of the Council's General Fund Budget for 2023/24.

It was noted that since the previous MTFS update to Cabinet on 1 November, there had been several announcements from Government, which gradually released more detail on the local government settlement funding for next year. There was the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 17 November, followed by DLUHC's Policy Statement on the Local Government Finance Settlement on 12 December, and more recently, on 19 December, the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24. Councillor Cook explained that due to the timing of the Provisional Settlement and the publication of this report, the figures presented in Appendix A did not reflect the funding updates from the Provisional Settlement. However, details of the Settlement and the implications for the Council were provided in Appendix B. The 2023/24 referendum limit for Council Tax had been increased from 2% to 3%, but the £5 threshold for Shire Districts in two-tier areas remained. An increase of £4.95 for 2023/24 would equate to a District Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk of £181.17. This was an increase of 2.81%. Growth in the tax base was currently estimated at 1.33%, slightly higher than the original budget assumption of 0.92%.

Councillor Cook reported that the implementation of Business Rates reform continued to be delayed, and it was now assumed this would not take place until 2025/26. The financially advantageous position of the Council, under the current system, had been reported in previous years, and this delay had improved the budget position of the Council in the region of £5m for each of the next two financial years.

Members noted that key areas of the budget were still to be finalised and this included, Business Rates, use of reserve, Operations, revenue implications of the Capital Programme and the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24, which was expected in late January/early February.

Councillor Cook explained that this update of the MTFS did present a balanced budget for the current year and next year, by proposing to use the In-Year Savings Reserve to address the currently projected funding shortfall of £0.786m in this year and £2.629m in 2023/24. The use of reserves for 2023/24 was now expected to change following the Provisional Settlement for East Suffolk, with a reduced need for reserve support. It was noted that reserves were currently projected to remain healthy at around £40m by the end of the MTFS, but this did not include use of reserves beyond 2023/24 to fund future projected budget gaps. It was also noted that there were prospective activities not yet factored into the MTFS, which had the potential to make inroads into the budget gap towards the end of the MTFS period. These included the Council Tax Premium on second homes and expected efficiencies from East Suffolk Services Ltd. However, despite these factors, and the uncertainty due to local government finance reforms, the range and scale of expenditure and income pressures, indicated that a combination of actions would be needed to ensure a longer term sustainable position including a phased use of reserves, maximisation of income, and the achievement of significant levels of savings.

Councillor Cook stated that the Scrutiny Committee would receive this report at its meeting on 19 January and the report would be updated for the Provisional Settlement funding changes, as detailed in Appendix B. The Cabinet would then consider the 2023/24 Budget report at its meeting on 7 February, at which point the final key areas of the budget would have been finalised, before Cabinet recommending the budget to Full Council on 22 February.

Councillor Cook took the opportunity to thank the Finance Team for all of their hard work in relation to the budget. The Leader acknowledged their hard work in these challenging circumstances.

Councillor Byatt asked how the Council would manage given that the amount of New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding had been significantly reduced? Councillor Cook invited Brian Mew, Chief Finance Officer, to respond to this query. Mr Mew commented that the national amount of NHB may have been reduced, however, the provisional settlement confirmed another one year NHB allocation for the 2023/24 year. He stated that he would check that this position had not changed and confirm outside of the meeting.

Councillor Cook then moved the recommendations within the report, which were seconded by the Leader and upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the updated draft Medium Term Financial Strategy, attached as Appendix A including the draft 2023/24 General Fund Revenue Budget summarised in Appendix A5 for review and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee as part of the Budget process, be approved.
2. That an initial proposed Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk Council of £181.17 for 2023/24, an increase of £4.95 or 2.81% be approved.

9

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Report 2023/24 to 2026/27

Cabinet received report **ES/1396** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which sought approval to take the Housing Revenue Account Budget to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. It was noted that the report brought together the Housing Revenue Account Budget for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27, with a forecasted position for 2022/23 and a summary of its reserves and balances. The HRA budgets were fully funded from existing funds to meet the Council's HRA spending plans, including the Capital Investment Programme and reserve balances, as per the HRA Financial Business Plan.

Councillor Cook stated that under the 2020 Rent Standard, Local Authorities could increase rents by up to CPI +1%. The September CPI value must be used, which for 2022 was 10.1%. To protect current tenants, the Government had applied a 7% rent increase cap for 2023/24, which struck a balance between the pressures social housing providers were faced with and affordability for tenants. East Suffolk Council was proposing a 6% rent increase for 2023/24. This rent increase had been deemed necessary for the HRA to meet its ambitions within its Capital Programme, deliver

required services to tenants and continue to repay the debt.

Members noted that social rents were based on a formula rent set by government and affordable rents although they could be up to 80% of market rent, were set based on the Local Housing Allowance. The Council continued to collect rent and service charges on a 50-week basis, unless being let as Temporary Accommodation. The proposed rent gave an average weekly rent of £96.28 for 2023/24, which was an increase of £3.89 when compared to 2022/23. It was noted that service charges could only recuperate the cost of providing a service. The proposed average weekly General Service Charge for Grouped Homes for 2023/24 was £16.10, which was an increase of £1.53 when compared to 2022/23.

Councillor Cook advised that the budget proposals gave a forecast HRA working balance for 2023/24 of £2.982 million, which maintained it above the minimum acceptable limit of 10% of total income.

Councillor Kerry commented that he supported the proposed increases within the report and he stated that it was important for planned maintenance to continue, to ensure high standards for the Council's tenants.

Councillor Byatt congratulated all those involved with the report and stated that he was pleased that the Housing Team had taken on 7 apprentices and 2 graduate officers this year.

Councillor Cook moved the recommendations within the report, which were seconded by Councillor Kerry and it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approved the following for review and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee as part of the Budget process:

1. The draft HRA budget for 2023/24, and the indicative figures for 2024/25 to 2026/27;
2. Movements in HRA Reserves and Balances;
3. Proposed rent increase of up to 6%. 1% less than the Government 7% rent Cap for 2023/24 rent setting.
4. Service charges and associated fees for 2023/24;
5. Rent and Service Charges to be charged over a 50-week period unless being used for Temporary Accommodation when a 52-week period will be applied.

Cabinet noted the following:

6. Revised outturn position for 2022/23;
7. Changes affecting public and private sector housing and welfare to be noted;
8. Effects of the cost-of-living crisis to the HRA to be noted.

Cabinet received report **ES/1391** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which sought approval to take the Capital Programme to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Councillor Cook reported that, as part of the annual budget setting process, the Council was required to agree a programme of capital expenditure for the coming four years. The report set out the East Suffolk Council General Fund Capital Programme at Appendix B and the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme at Appendix G for the financial year 2023/24 to 2026/27 and incorporated revisions to the 2022/23 financial year.

The capital programme had been compiled, taking account of the following main principles, to:

- maintain an affordable four-year rolling capital programme.
- ensure capital resources are aligned with the Council's Strategic Plan.
- maximise available resources by actively seeking external funding and disposal of surplus assets; and
- not to anticipate receipts from disposals until they are realised.

It was noted that the general fund capital programme included £260 million pounds of external contributions and grants towards financing the Council's £383 million of capital investment for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period. This represented 68% of the whole general fund capital programme.

Councillor Cook stated that the capital programme had completed a thorough and rigorous process, following initial input from project officers through to review and scrutiny by the Asset Management Group. The Housing Revenue Account capital programme totals £83 million for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period and would benefit from £2.5 million of external grants and contributions, which was 3% of the programme.

It was reported that all capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (Government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves, and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing and leasing). Debt was only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, and this was therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which was known as "Minimum Revenue Provision" (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance.

Members noted that the Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance was measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This increased with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduced with MRP. The CFR was expected to increase by £77 million between 2022/23 and 2026/27, which was due to capital projects potentially being financed through borrowing. Councillor Cook stated that Cabinet should note that external funding was still to be secured in respect of the Tidal Barrier budget of £170m contained within the Capital Programme. This budget was revised following the report on the Tidal Barrier to Full Council on 23 November 2022.

Councillor Byatt thanked the Cabinet for the funding for the coastal protections works at Pakefield, they were very much appreciated. He also referred to the cost of the cladding removal at St Peters Court in Lowestoft and he asked if the Council had to pay for all of the removal costs? The Leader reported that it was important for the Council

to do the right thing by the tenants. Reassurance was provided that the costs of the removal of the cladding would be recouped, from the cladding providers, if possible. Andy Jarvis, Strategic Director, confirmed that work in this respect was already in hand.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Cook and seconded by Councillor Rivett and it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the General Fund capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27, including revisions as shown in Appendix B for review and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee as part of the Budget process, be approved.
2. That the Housing Revenue Account capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27, including revisions as shown in Appendix G for review and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee as part of the Budget process, be approved.

11 Exempt/Confidential Items

The Leader reported that in exceptional circumstances, the Council may, by law, exclude members of the public from all, or part of, an executive decision-making meeting. The Council should, unless there are urgent circumstances, give notice of its intention to do so via the Forward Plan, which was updated and published on its website 28 clear days prior to the meeting.

There were various reasons that the Council, on occasions, had to do this and examples were because a report contained information relating to an individual, information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, or information relating to any consultations or negotiations.

There were five substantive exempt matters to consider this evening, as outlined on the published agenda – items 12 to 16.

Item 12 related to a land transfer in Felixstowe and outlined plans to improve the streetscape, parking and amenity at Felixstowe Ferry. The project would improve the physical environment in a heavily visited area by improved car parking and turning, transforming an area which was in a poor condition.

Item 13 related to a proposed sale of land at Rotterdam Road in Lowestoft which was owned by East Suffolk Council. The proposal would make best use of the Council's assets and would be supported by gaining income for an asset which currently does not serve any useful economic, environmental or community purpose. The proposal would also support entrepreneurs in the form of a neighbouring land user.

Item 14 related to the acquisition of premises at Newcombe Road in Lowestoft and the report outlined the proposed acquisition of an industrial premises. This project aimed to purchase a strategic industrial premises within the PowerPark which could be re-designed or redeveloped to help build the right commercial environment in East Suffolk in line with the PowerPark Design Vision published by the Council. The financial

investment in the site will ensure investment into a key location within East Suffolk and help regenerate an area to attract offshore renewable energy companies.

Item 15 related to the Freeport East Memorandum of Understanding. The report sought approval for East Suffolk Council, in its role as the Freeport East Lead Authority and as one of the three billing authorities, to be a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Freeport East Governing Body and other billing authorities. The MoU would commit the Council, and other co-signatories, to deliver the aims and objectives set out within the Freeport East Full Business Case. The MoU had been issued to East Suffolk Council (and other Freeport East partners) following approval of the Full Business Case and would come into effect upon the signature of all parties and remain in effect until it was terminated by the parties, by full mutual agreement.

And lastly, item 16, East Suffolk Property Developments Limited Business Case, sought approval for a Business Case which summarised the trading objectives of the company; it highlighted the Council's strategic ambition to provide new homes that were affordable and local to communities. East Suffolk Property Developments would also deliver social value on behalf of the Council.

On the proposition of Councillor Gallant, seconded by Councillor Rivett, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 Land Transfer, Felixstowe

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

13 Proposed Sale of Land at Rotterdam Road, Lowestoft

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

14 Acquisition of Premises at Newcombe Road, Lowestoft

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

15 Freeport East Memorandum of Understanding

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

16 East Suffolk Property Developments Ltd Business Case

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting concluded at 8.20 pm

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Chairman