

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Conference Room, Riverside, on **Tuesday, 7 January 2020 at 6.30 pm**

**Members of the Cabinet present:**

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, 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 Paul Ashdown, Councillor Jocelyn Bond, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Graham Elliott, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Caroline Topping

**Officers present:**

Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Samm Beacham (Senior Environmental Health Officer), Naomi Gould (Senior Energy Projects Officer), Cairistine Foster-Cannan (Head of Housing), Laura Hack (Delivery Manager), David Howson (Housing Strategy Manager), Andrew Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Brian Mew (Interim Finance Manager), Nicola Parrish (Infrastructure Delivery Manager), Philip Ridley (Head of Planning and Coastal Management), Lorraine Rogers (Finance Manager), Julian Sturman (Senior Accountant), Amber Welham (Senior Accountant), Ben Woolnough (Major Sites & Infrastructure Manager), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

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**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Jepson, Assistant Cabinet Member for Community Health.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor R Kerry, Cabinet Member for Housing, declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest in Item 16 - Sale of Land Adjacent to Felixstowe Ferry Gold Course, as he was a full member of Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club. He advised that he would leave the room for that item of business and would take no part in the discussions and voting thereon.

**3 Announcements**

There were no announcements on this occasion.

#### **4 East Suffolk Council Engagement During the Development Consent Order Process for ScottishPower Renewables East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two Offshore Windfarm Proposals**

Cabinet received report **ES-0239** by Councillor Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, which sought authority to fully engage with the pre-examination and examination stages of the Development Consent Order process in relation to East Anglia One North (EA1N) and East Anglia Two (EA2) offshore wind farm projects. It was noted that ScottishPower Renewables had submitted two separate nationally significant applications for offshore windfarm developments off the East Suffolk coast with onshore infrastructure from the coast at Thorpeness via a cable route to the grid connection location to the north of Friston. The applications, EA1N and EA2 were submitted to the National Infrastructure Unit of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on the 25 October 2019 and accepted on 22 November 2019.

The proposals had been the subject of pre-application consultation with the local authority, with four formal rounds of public consultation, the last ending in March 2019. The Council was a statutory consultee in the decision-making process, with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy making the final decision on the proposals based on the recommendation of the Examining Authority (appointed by the PINS) following an examination process.

The report provided background to both of the projects, a summary of the current position of the Council in relation to the projects, and the Development Consent Order (DCO) procedure and proposals. It was noted that the Council had been working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and others regarding the cumulative impacts of these proposed developments and that meetings had been held with the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth to express the Council's concerns and seek the Government's assistance. Councillor Rivett reported that the two new windfarms would bring jobs to the District, citing up to 100 jobs that East Anglia One (EA1) would create within its operation and maintenance base which has been located in Lowestoft. East Coast College had also opened its Energy Skills Centre and had entered into a partnership with Maersk to deliver training there.

Councillor Rivett stated that the Council, as a statutory consultee and not the determining authority, needed to consider the proposals with its usual rigour, highlighting that 80% of planning decisions that had been reviewed on appeal by the PINS in the last three months had been upheld. It was noted that the Council had concerns about the cumulative impact of the proposals and this matter had recently been discussed by the Strategic Planning Committee. Councillor Rivett then invited the Senior Energy Projects Officer to make a presentation to the Cabinet.

The Senior Energy Projects Officer explained that the deadline for Relevant Representations to be submitted to the PINS was 27 January 2020. The Council, as host Authority, had pre-registered as an "Interested Party", the Relevant Representation detailed a summary of the Council's issues / response to the project. The examination was expected to start between March and May 2020; once started the examination process would follow a strict six-month timetable and a decision was expected in the Spring of 2021.

The key revisions to the proposals were highlighted since the Phase 4 consultation relating to seascape, highways, substation site masterplans, National Grid Electricity Transmission works, site drainage, cable route refinement, and working hours. The Cabinet was shown a map which demonstrated the proximity of the proposed offshore locations of EA1N and EA2 to other consented or proposed windfarms within the East Anglia Zone. The Senior Energy Projects Officer highlighted that the applicant had slightly increased the distance between the two developments by reducing the area at the northern end of the EA2 zone and that EA2 would be nearer to the coast than any of the other windfarms in the zone.

Members were provided with the statistics on EA1N and EA2 relating to their operational capacity, the number of households they could power, their distance from shore at its closest point, the number of turbines, the turbine tip heights, and the number and type of offshore platforms that would be required. The Cabinet were also shown images of the types of platforms that could be used. A map outlining where cabling would come ashore at Thorpeness and its route to the proposed substation site immediately north of Friston was displayed. It was confirmed that the onshore cabling would be underground, with the export cables coming ashore at least 85 metres back from the cliff edge to compensate for potential future coastal erosion. Those present received an example layout for the substations; each substation would measure a maximum of 190 metres by 190 metres. The Cabinet was also shown a picture of the existing substation for EA1. The maximum height of substation equipment would be 18 metres and the maximum building height would be 15 metres.

The Senior Energy Projects Officer noted the proximity of the Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the cable route and detailed where the cable would run alongside the areas before crossing at the narrowest point. Some works to the overhead lines would be required at the substation site in order to connect the infrastructure to the National Grid network. The indicative positions for the onshore substations were also demonstrated. There would be one substation per offshore windfarm, along with a National Grid substation which would be shared by both projects.

The Senior Energy Projects Officer highlighted the concerns raised about the impact of these substations on the settings of nearby listed buildings, discussing how the relationship between the historic buildings and their settings would be disrupted. The construction of the substations would also require the diversion of a public right of way which follows a historic parish boundary. Officers also had significant concerns regarding the impact of operational noise from the substations and considered that this was not fully addressed by the applicant's submissions. Officers had noted that it was not clear within the submissions what impact the noise from the substations would have on both the local ecology and the character of the area and that this would need to be explored further. An illustrative masterplan for the site was displayed, which highlighted the additional planting proposed around the substation site. The presentation also included several visualisations provided by the applicant within their submissions of the proposed substation site, looking from various viewpoints. The visualisations included computer-generated imagery of the substation developments superimposed on to the site and gave examples of what the applicant considered the view would be both at the first year of operation and 15th year of operation. The

visualisations were provided by the applicant to illustrate the level of screening they predicted would be present within these timescales.

The Senior Energy Projects Officer reported that there was concern that the proposed planting would not have reached the levels of maturity suggested by the applicant within the visualisations within 15 years and that the sites would not be screened from view to the degree the applicant had suggested. She outlined the issue of the cumulative impact of future projects including Sizewell C, National Grid ventures (interconnectors Eurolink and Nautilus), the Galloper extension, and the Greater Gabbard extension. Concerns were also raised about the substation site / Friston area becoming a strategic connection point for future energy projects should the National Grid substation be consented in the location proposed.

The Cabinet were reassured that officers had been reviewing the significant number of documents submitted by the applicant, in order to draft the Relevant Representations and Local Impact Reports that needed to be submitted to the PINS. The Senior Energy Projects Officer said that the Council will continue to work with the applicant to identify the means by which the impacts of the proposals could be mitigated and/or compensated.

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to reiterate that East Suffolk Council was not the planning authority in this instance, it was only a consultee during this process. He confirmed that the Council would put forward its concerns and those of local residents, however local residents needed to be prepared that the project may be permitted in the future. It was important to listen to local people's views and to open up debate about this development.

The Leader then took the opportunity to read out a recent press release about this matter:

*"While East Suffolk Council is strongly in favour of renewable energy, Cllr Gallant says he is "disappointed" with the submitted applications in their current form, which lead him to believe that the benefits will be considerably outweighed by the potential impacts of the proposals.*

*ScottishPower Renewables (SPR) have submitted two separate applications for offshore windfarm developments off the East Suffolk coast with onshore infrastructure from Thorpeness to a substation site immediately north of Friston. During Phase 4 of the consultation the Councils objected to elements of the scheme, with concerns ranging from visual impacts, to environmental concerns and the effect on tourism and visitor numbers.*

*The Council recognises the national benefit these projects will bring, but only provided this is achieved without significant damage to the local built and natural environment, local communities, and tourist economy. The local impacts of the projects and their cumulative impacts need to be adequately and better addressed.*

*While there will be positive benefits here and for the wider region, the negative impacts of the developments would be felt almost exclusively by local communities. The approach to these schemes is primarily commercially driven and until sensible and*

*appropriate mitigation and compensation packages are proposed, we will continue to object to the proposals in their current form.*

*Cllr Gallant added that the Council will continue to make the necessary approaches to Government Ministers as well as working closely with Suffolk and Norfolk Councils who are experiencing similar pressures. He also compared the issues with the SPR development to the proposals for Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station, which East Suffolk Council were also seeking to resolve.*

*With Sizewell, again, the outcome of the Stage 4 consultation failed to answer questions which we have posed and we do need them answered in the DCO submission. However, we have not objected to the proposals so far because we can see the potential for benefits regarding highway improvements, skills improvements, education benefits and jobs for the local area.*

*East Suffolk Council's Cabinet would consider a report regarding the Scottish Power Renewables Schemes on January 7 2020. Among the recommendations, the report states: "That this Council continues to engage with SPR to identify means by which the impact of the proposals can be mitigated and/or compensated if the developments do take place and seek appropriate s106 agreements to secure the necessary mitigation and/or compensation."*

The Leader then invited questions from the Cabinet and those Members present.

Councillor Kerry queried the 300 metre height of the proposed turbines and how intrusive they would appear from the shore. It was confirmed that the turbines at Galloper and Greater Gabbard were approximately 180 metres high and they could be seen from land. The EA1N and EA2 turbines, which would be taller at 300 metres high, would be further away from the coast. Therefore the assessments provided within the applications have shown the turbines would appear at a smaller height to those of Galloper and Greater Gabbard when viewed from the coast. The offshore footprint of EA2 in particular however runs parallel to the coastline for a significant distance.

Councillor Burroughes raised concerns about the additional planting which was proposed, as the trees appeared to be deciduous and would therefore provide no screening or protection during the winter months. Councillor Rivett advised that there was no detail about the types of trees to be planted within the Cabinet report, however there was some disagreement regarding the suggested growth rates of the trees and the length of time required to provide sufficient cover. It was noted that these issues would be challenged robustly as part of the Council's response.

Councillor Bond commented that the proposed structures would be dominant and seen from all over that area. Councillor Rivett reported that the negotiations were ongoing, however Scottish Power Renewables were happy with the current suggested level of mitigation. He reported that there would be ongoing discussions and Ward Councillors were invited to take part in the various meetings with Scottish Power Renewables. The Leader confirmed that should there be any significant changes to any of the proposals, which could lead to the Council taking a different position on the applications, these would be brought back to Cabinet or Full Council for thorough consideration and debate.

Councillor Cackett queried which methods were being used to predict noise levels at the site and whether best practice was being followed. It was reported that there had been some ongoing disagreements between the findings of the various Noise Consultants and discussions were ongoing in relation to this matter.

Councillor Bond queried whether Scottish Power Renewables had produced any evidence regarding the benefits to the local residents of the development? It was confirmed that the main benefit was economically and related to the creation of jobs and investment through supply chains, but this was likely to be experienced in and around Lowestoft and not within the area immediately surrounding Friston.

Councillor Bond sought reassurance that the proposals would ensure that the local supply chain would receive an uplift from the development, rather than benefiting national or international companies. It was confirmed that reassurances and commitments were being sought in this respect. It was noted that the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration was working to get a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place to provide greater confidence that local companies would be used where possible. It was important for the local area, County and Region to benefit as much as possible from this development.

There being no further questions, Councillor Rivett invited those present to debate the matter.

Councillor Mallinder stated that he had driven around the local area and had concluded that we are lucky to have such beautiful countryside in our district. He reported that he felt conflicted by the proposed development, as he supported any reduction in carbon which would be assisted by this development, however he also wanted to protect the countryside and wildlife from further development. He felt it was important to look at the bigger picture including the need for clean energy and protecting the environment.

Councillor Kerry reported that while he was an advocate of renewable energy, there were pros and cons with all development, it was important to do the best for local people. This was not an East Suffolk Council decision, however the Council could give its views and represent local residents and he supported the recommendations.

Councillor Elliott reported that this matter had been debated in depth by the Strategic Planning Committee at its meeting in December 2019 and it was important for East Suffolk Council to give a robust response, given the significant impacts on that part of the district. He commented that he felt the landscaping proposals were inadequate overall. He also commented on the fragmented and competition based energy market, which was not in the national interest, and which resulted in a disjointed and piecemeal approach to energy supply in the UK. It was important not to jeopardise the development, which was low carbon, however there should be a joined up approach in order to meet the needs of the country for years to come.

Councillor Bond reported that she had a letter which had been signed by 33 parishes, which had been sent to the Secretary of State in December 2019. She queried whether the Council would support this and undertake a review of the potential impact on the

area. The Leader reported that he had been proud of the work of East Suffolk Council to date in this respect and the Council would continue to work to best represent the interests of its local residents.

Councillor Byatt felt that the development would be a blot on the landscape and he queried whether the site of Sizewell A could be redeveloped and reconfigured, instead of using proposed site? He felt that the land should be saved for future generations and that an off shore ring main should be created instead. The Head of Planning and Coastal Management reported that officers were regularly meeting with senior civil servants regarding this development and raising concerns as appropriate. He reported that Sizewell A would need to be decommissioned for many years prior to any potential redevelopment and was therefore not suitable in relation to this project. He stated that an off shore ring main would take approximately 10 years to plan and build and it would be a complex development. Therefore although it may provide a potential solution in the future, the infrastructure could not be provided in time for the current projects. The Head of Planning and Coastal Management reported that approximately 40% of the UK's off shore energy was being or was proposed to be routed through or fully accommodated in Suffolk and Norfolk and the region was receiving only limited, but important economic benefit, from these proposals whilst they would be environmentally damaging, and with it some significant community/social impacts. If these projects are to progress, further discussions with government need to take place to seek to address compensation for the disruption that would be caused.

Councillor Rivett proposed the recommendations contained within the report and these were duly seconded by Councillor Gallant. Upon being put to the vote it was

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the Head of Planning and Coastal Management in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development be granted authority to fully engage with the Pre-examination and Examination stages of the Development Consent Order process in relation to EA1N and EA2 offshore wind farm projects. This will include:

- Submission of Written Representations to expand upon the Relevant Representation where necessary,
- Submission of Statements of Common Ground between the applicant and the Council,
- Attending/authorising technical officers to participate at Preliminary Meetings/hearings/accompanied site visits,
- Responding to Examining Authority's questions and requests for further information,
- Commenting on other interested parties' representations and submissions as appropriate,
- Signing planning obligations if required.
- Any other requirements not yet identified.

2. That the Head of Planning and Coastal Management in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development be authorised to make amendments to the draft Relevant Representation and early draft

Local Impact Report as agreed with appropriate representatives of this Council prior to their submission to PINS.

3. That following agreement by the Cabinet of East Suffolk Council, the draft Relevant Representation set out in Appendix A and summarised below, subject to any agreed amendments, be submitted to PINS.

4. That PINS be informed by the Relevant Representation that East Suffolk Council recognises the national benefit these projects will bring in meeting the renewable energy targets and creating sustainable economic growth in Suffolk provided this is achieved without significant damage to the local built and natural environment, local communities and tourist economy. Notwithstanding this, the Council has significant concerns on the following matters:

- Landscape and Visual Effects
- Noise
- Design and Masterplan
- Traffic and Transport
- Seascape and Visual Effects
- Cumulative Impacts
- Measures to address residual impacts of the projects

The Council also has concerns or wishes to make representations in a number of additional areas which have been outlined below:

- Socio-Economic Impacts
- Heritage
- Air Quality
- Public Rights of Way
- Flood Risk
- Ecology
- Coastal Change
- Archaeology
- Construction Management

East Suffolk Council is supportive of the principle of offshore wind development, recognising the strategic need for zero carbon energy and the contribution the industry can make to sustainable economic growth in Suffolk. This must however be achieved without significant damage to the environment, local communities and tourist economy of East Suffolk. The projects as designed to date will result in significant impacts as set out above, particularly in relation to the environment around the substation site and significant effects on the designated landscape. Based on the current submissions East Suffolk Council objects to the overall impact of the onshore substations and raises significant concerns regarding the significant effects predicted from the offshore turbines on the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

5. That following agreement by the Cabinet of East Suffolk Council, the early draft Local Impact Report set out in Appendix B, subject to appropriate amendments, be submitted to PINS by the relevant deadline.

6. That this Council continues to engage with SPR to identify means by which the impact of the proposals can be mitigated and/or compensated if the developments do take place and seek appropriate s106 agreements to secure the necessary mitigation and/or compensation.

7. That Cabinet notes the continued work with Government, namely MHCLG and BEIS with regards to the cumulative impacts on East Suffolk of the numerous energy projects existing and forthcoming.

## **5 Housing Development Strategy 2020-2024**

Cabinet received report **ES-0240** by Councillor Kerry, Cabinet Member for Housing, which sought approval of the Housing Development Strategy for 2020-2024. It was noted that the Housing Development Strategy had been written to provide structure to the Council's intention to build new Council homes and redevelop existing housing stock. The Strategy addressed the approach the Council will take to help achieve its objectives and bring transparency to the process. It also recognised the Council's recent declaration of a climate emergency, by addressing the issues of sustainability and the environment and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan had a target to develop 50 properties each year to 2023.

The number of new developments and the large sum involved (£47m budgeted for between 2017 – 2023) required a greater strategic approach to housing development in East Suffolk, particularly when the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan identify development as one of the Council's key priorities. The design of new developments and the procurement of contracts was considered, as well as the important role of communication and tenant involvement in the development process. As well as developing new properties and redeveloping existing properties, the Council would also investigate the feasibility of buying back former Right to Buy Council housing.

Those present took the opportunity to thank the Housing Team for their work on the strategy, which included a robust section on the environment and sustainability.

Councillor Topping queried how the Council could make the public aware that the Council would like to buy back former Right to Buy Council housing, as she was aware that there were currently 4 ex-local authority properties for sale in Beccles. The Head of Housing reported that the Council had been reactive in the past and had been contacting sellers or their solicitors directly. However the new Strategy would enable the Council to become more proactive, which could include contacting all the owners of former Right to Buy Council housing, to inform them that should they think about selling the in the future, the Council would be interested in making an offer for their property.

Councillor Elliott reported that he welcomed the report and would encourage the Council to build more houses for rent. He queried whether the Council would bring back the scheme whereby the Council could buy back the homes of people who had got into difficulties with their mortgages and then rent them back from the Council. The Housing Strategy Manager reported that 10-12 houses had been purchased under the old Mortgage Rescue Scheme, which had been funded by the

Government. It was confirmed that offering a scheme similar to the old Mortgage Rescue Scheme could be considered for its potential in a future scheme.

Councillor Elliott sought clarification about whether monies raised by the sale of Council properties were ringfenced for use in the same area? It was confirmed that monies received from these sales went into the HRA and were ringfenced to deliver new housing and/or business as usual services to tenants. Further information was provided about Avenue Mansions and it was confirmed that the site had not yet been disposed of, as it had only recently become fully void. It had taken some time to find suitable alternative sheltered accommodation for the former residents and this process could not be rushed.

Councillor Byatt sought reassurance that the funds from the sale of the properties in Cleveland Road, Lowestoft, would be ringfenced for the HRA and it was confirmed that this was the case. There followed some discussion in this respect and it was confirmed that the Council was looking to build some single occupancy dwellings as there was significant need for this type of housing in the district. New dwellings would also be built with the environment and sustainability in mind, wherever possible.

There being no further questions or debate, it was

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Housing Development Strategy 2020-2024 be approved.

## **6 Acceptance of Grant Funding**

Cabinet received report **ES-0243** by Councillor Kerry, Cabinet Member for Housing, which sought retrospective permission to accept the award of £62,000 for the West Suffolk Stepping Home project. It was noted that in November 2018, the Cabinet had approved the award of funding to deliver the Stepping Home pilot for Ipswich & East CCG, working with patients at Ipswich hospital and in the local community, to facilitate their discharge and prevent admission. The pilot looked to solve housing problems that prevented patients going home or put them at risk of admission. The scheme had proved so successful that the Warm Homes Service had been asked to develop a similar programme with West Suffolk hospital, as Warm Homes was delivered by East Suffolk Council, as a Suffolk-wide service. Due to the urgency of winter pressures, the Head of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, had provisionally agreed to carry out this work, which would be fully funded by the award. This report sought retrospective approval of that decision.

Members were advised that a bid had also been prepared to deliver a pilot scheme, working with the voluntary sector to pilot a new approach to hoarding and self-neglect. The funding was from the Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities (MHCLG). The Council would be informed if the bid had been successful, by the end of December, and the funds must be spent by the end of March 2020. This report also sought retrospective approval to accept the funding.

Those present commended the work of the Housing Team in submitting bids for funding to support these important areas of work.

Councillor Byatt commented that the group 'Lofty Heights' had been very successful in developing best practice around decluttering and he queried whether Access Community Trust (ACT) would have similar skills in order to assist tenants affected in this way. The Head of Housing reported that ACT were a longstanding partner of the Council, which had significant experience in supporting vulnerable people with a variety of mental health issues. ACT would work closely with Lofty Heights to share their good practice around decluttering and the Head of Housing was confident that those tenants in need of support in relation to decluttering issues would receive it. The additional funding would make a significant improvement to many tenants' lives.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the award of £62,000 for the West Suffolk Stepping Home project be accepted retrospectively.
2. That the Private Rented Sector Enforcement and Innovation Award of £56,950 be accepted.

#### **7 Parking Services: Parking Management and CPE**

It was agreed that consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet, to be held on 4 February 2020.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Parking Services: Parking Management and CPE report be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet on 4 February 2020.

#### **8 Fees and Charges for 2020/21**

Cabinet received report **ES-0241** by the Leader of the Council and presented by Councillor M Cook, Assistant Cabinet Member for Resources, which sought approval of the Discretionary and Statutory Fees and Charges for 2020/21, which would be implemented from 1 April 2020. It was noted that fees and charges were a significant source of income for councils. The Local Government Act 1989 gave councils the power to set these fees and charges, to offset the cost of their services. A widely accepted public sector pricing principle was that, fees and charges should be set at a level that recovers the full cost of providing the services, unless there was an overriding policy or imperative in favour of subsidisation. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 enabled local authorities to charge as they choose to for discretionary services; provided they are not restricted by other legislation and they do not make a profit. In setting fees and charges, councils must apply principles of sound financial management and need to consider a range of 'Best Value' principles including service cost and quality standards, value-for-money, as well as balance the affordability and accessibility of their services. Members were informed that other Discretionary Fees and Charges, have been increased by the Retail Prices Index (2.9%, June 2019), subject to rounding.

Councillor Cook reported that the proposed fees for Parking Services would not be included within the recommendation to this report, as the earlier report on Car Parking had been deferred to the next Cabinet meeting on 4 February 2020.

It was noted that some statutory fees were set by Government statute and councils usually have no control over service pricing. In some cases, such as licences, the charges have been prescribed in the original legislation and have not been increased for a number of years.

Councillor Ritchie commented that he supported the report and that it was important for the fees charged by the Council to cover the costs of providing the service.

Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, moved the recommendations, including the amendment that the Parking Services fees would be deferred to the 4 February 2020 Cabinet meeting. This was duly seconded and upon being put to the vote it was

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the Discretionary Fees and Charges set out in Appendix A be approved for implementation from 1st April 2020, with the exception of Parking Services in Sections 3.1 to 3.3, which are to be considered as part of a separate report to Cabinet, which has been deferred to February 2020.

2. That Cabinet notes the level of the fees and charges set by statute and the timing of any increase in these as set out in Appendix B.

## **9 Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24 including Revisions to 2019/20**

Cabinet received report **ES-0246** by the Leader of the Council and presented by Councillor M Cook, Assistant Cabinet Member for Resources, which set out the Council's Capital Programme for the financial years 2020/21 to 2023/24, including revisions to 2019/20. It was noted that the report included the main principles applied to set the programme and provided details of the expenditure and financing for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to 2023/24. The total General Fund Capital investment for the period was anticipated to be £152.612 million. In addition to the use of its internal resources and both internal and external borrowing, the Council would be benefiting from receiving £94.546m of external grants and contributions.

Councillor Cook reported that the total Housing Revenue Account capital investment for the period was anticipated to be £59.077 million and benefiting from receiving £8.977 million of external grants and contributions. The Cabinet was asked to review the Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24 including revisions to 2019/20 and recommend its approval to Full Council. It was confirmed that the Council would not anticipate receipts and that external funding was only included when it had been received. Reassurance was also provided that the Council would not require external borrowing for the Capital Programme.

Councillor Topping queried whether there was a list of assets for disposal. The Head of Operations reported that should an asset be identified for possible disposal, the preferred option was to transfer assets to the appropriate Town or Parish Council and it was noted that discussions took place with the Town and Parish Councils at an early stage of the process. Reassurance was provided that transfers of assets had to be agreed by the Cabinet and as such all Councillors were made aware of the proposals. Such transfers happened on an ad hoc basis, as appropriate.

Councillor Topping reported that she was concerned that some assets could be missing from the list and were therefore being overlooked. Councillor Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development reported that a new Asset Management Strategy had recently been completed, which included an updated Asset Register. Significant work had been undertaken to ensure that the list of assets was correct. As part of the new strategy, a revised process for the transfer or disposal of assets had been created and Ward Councillors were kept informed of developments. The Strategic Director reported that the asset register was available for Councillors to view online and the Head of Operations would circulate a link to the asset register to all Councillors outside of the meeting, for information.

Councillor Rudd, Cabinet Member for Community Safety commented that she was pleased that the Coastal Protection work had been completed within the district, in order that it may prevent a significant landslip, as a large land slip had been experienced in nearby Norfolk recently. Councillor Ritchie, Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Protection, reported that when there had been an extended period of rainfall, the land becomes saturated and a landslip could not be prevented.

Councillor Elliott reported that Normanston Bridge had been included in the Capital Programme last year, however it was not mentioned this year and he queried why this was. The Strategic Director reported that there was no specific funding available for the bridge at this time, therefore the bridge had been placed on another list. It had not been forgotten and officers were continuing to bid for funding to complete this important development.

Councillor Burroughes, Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships and Customer Services, queried how often the coastline was inspected, so that problems could be identified at an early stage. It was confirmed that inspections took place on a regular basis and the Council was working closely with Coastal Protection East.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, and it was duly seconded by Councillor Burroughes. On being put to the vote it was

## **RESOLVED**

That the Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and revisions to 2019/20 be recommended for approval by Full Council.

## **10 Housing Revenue Account Budget Report 2020/21**

Cabinet received report **ES-0249** by the Leader of the Council and presented by Councillor M Cook, Assistant Cabinet Member for Resources, regarding the Housing Revenue Account Budget for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24, with a forecasted position for 2019/20 and a summary of its reserves and balances. It was noted that 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.

In February 2019, the Government set out a new Policy Statement for social housing rents. The Policy Statement will take effect from 1st April 2020 and would be implemented through the 2020 Rent Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing. This

would be the first time Local Authorities would be governed by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Under the new 2020 Rent Standard, Local Authorities can increase rents by up to CPI +1% for 5 years. The September CPI value must be used, which was 1.7%, giving the Council the option to increase rents by up to 2.7%. Rents would be based on a formula rent set by government. The Council continued to collect rent and service charges on a 50-week basis. The proposed rent gives an average weekly rent of £84.95 for 2020/21. An increase of £1.90 compared to 2019/20. Service charges could only recuperate the cost of providing a service. The proposed average weekly General Service Charge for Grouped Homes in 2020/21 would be £12.85. A decrease of £1.02 compared to 2019/20.

The HRA Repairs & Maintenance (R&M) programme was split between Capital and Revenue; the capital element was to be funded by the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) and the revenue element was to be funded from the income derived from rents. The 2020/21 housing R&M revenue budget had been set at £4.318 million. This was considered sufficient to allow the Council to carry out all necessary works to maintain the decent homes standard in all its properties. The budget proposals gave a forecast HRA working balance for 2020/21 of £4.958 million, maintaining it well above the minimum acceptable limit of 10% of total income.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, and was duly seconded. Councillor Kerry, Cabinet Member for Housing, confirmed that the HRA had been debated in detail by the Scrutiny Committee at its recent meeting on 16 December 2019. On being put to the vote it was

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council to:

1. Approve the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2020/21, and the indicative figures for 2021/22 to 2023/24;
2. Note the forecast outturn position for 2019/20;
3. Approve the movements in Reserves and Balances as presented in Appendix D;
4. Approve the average weekly rent for 2020/21 of £84.95 over a 50-week collection year, an average weekly increase of £1.90 or 2.3%;
5. Note the new Rent Policy Statement and Rent Standard for 2020 with effective from 1st April 2020;
6. Approve the Service Charges and associated fees for 2020/21, Appendix B; and
7. Note the changes affecting public and private sector housing and welfare.

Cabinet received report **ES-0247** by the Leader of the Council and presented by Councillor Cook, Assistant Cabinet Member for Resources, which provided an update on the findings of the 2019 annual review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS); the consultation on these findings; and the resultant proposals for changes to the LCTRS scheme, to take effect from April 2020 to introduce a tolerance level of £15.00 per week (or £65 per month) before the Anglia Revenue Partnership (ARP) would action any council tax adjustment to an individual's account.

Since the introduction of Universal Credit, the ARP have experienced a 72% increase in revised Universal Credit awards, which is causing customers to become confused as to what amount they are supposed to be paying the Council as the amount of benefit award was continuously changing. It has also had a knock-on impact with regards to the Council's collection rates, with the amount of money collected from Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants reducing.

It was noted that the table in paragraph 3.7 of the report showed the reduction on the number of reassessments for tolerance limits between £5.00 and £25.00. The recommended limit of £15.00 would result in a 32% reduction of reassessments needing to be undertaken. Table 3.12 showed the impact of a £15 tolerance limit on a sample of cases. For a typical claimant currently having 12 monthly reassessments and 12 amended council tax bills, a tolerance limit of £15.00 would reduce this to four monthly reassessments and the weekly difference in support would be £0.27p per week.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, and it was duly seconded by Councillor Brooks. The Leader took the opportunity to thank Councillor Cook and the Finance Team for their ongoing hard work and support on behalf of the Council. On being put to the vote it was

## **RESOLVED**

1. That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that the Council retains the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 as the 8.5% benefit scheme, i.e. the maximum benefit to working age claimants is 91.5%.
2. That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that the Council introduces a tolerance to the treatment of Universal Credit income in the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme as detailed in this report.

## **12 Beccles Lido Ltd Improvement Bid - Exceptional CIL Funding Request**

Cabinet received report **ES-0244** by Councillor Ritchie, Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, which sought approval for an exceptional case award of District CIL funding of £75,000 to make improvements to Beccles Lido. It was noted that in 2010, Waveney District Council had handed over the ownership of Beccles Lido to Beccles Lido Ltd, a company with Charitable status, without additional cost to that group. Improvements were made to Beccles Lido over time and it provided an amenity that benefits Beccles, East Suffolk and wider communities. In 2018 a record 48,000 visitors used the Lido, however in 2019 there was a reduction to 45,000 visitors. It was considered that the reduction in numbers was due in part to a deterioration in the main pool and its water quality.

A project had commenced in October 2019, to undertake robust repairs and improvements in order to create a modern and efficient swimming pool, able to be operated for longer opening hours and a longer season, for many years to come. Beccles Lido Ltd had been successful in securing £423,000 of external funding, in order to allow the project to commence. Beccles Lido Ltd had also applied for £75,000 from the District Community Infrastructure Funding (CIL) as they were short of this amount, which equated to 18% of the total costs, which would enable the pool to be open by May 2020.

It was noted that whilst all applications for District CIL funding had been closed during the current review of the CIL spending processes, exceptional bids have been considered. Due to the urgent nature of the request, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management and the Major Sites and Infrastructure Team had agreed to put this bid forward for Cabinet to consider, as an exceptional case. It was reported that a response was still awaited from HMRC regarding the VAT position of the project (£86,000). The project would help to ensure the long term sustainability and viability of Beccles Lido for the future.

Councillor Byatt queried whether the project would help to reduce the carbon footprint of Beccles Lido. It was confirmed that once the work had been completed on the heat exchanges, this would improve the carbon footprint of the Lido.

Councillor Mallinder queried the timescales when other bids could be accepted for CIL funding. It was reported that bids would be accepted between April and May 2020.

Councillor Elliott took the opportunity to thank all of the officers involved in this report. The Lido had been in a poor condition when it had been transferred to Beccles Lido Ltd. Hard work had seen the loss making Lido making a profit and become a valuable asset, which was used and enjoyed by many people. The Lido also created 40 jobs over the summer and it was important to celebrate and publicise the success that the Lido had become. He felt that this example of Community Outsourcing was probably one of the most successful in the UK and the Council should publicise it widely.

Councillor Ritchie moved the recommendations contained within the report and they were duly seconded by Councillor Smith. Upon being put to a vote it was unanimously

## **RESOLVED**

1. That this exceptional case for an award of District CIL funding of £75,000 for the improvements to Beccles Lido is approved by Cabinet, as the CIL spending process review means bidding for District CIL funds remains closed for this year.
2. Where HMRC feedback or other research confirm that VAT could be applied to the project at 5% or £0 rate, the offer of £75,000 District CIL funding should be treated as recoverable forward funding pending final confirmation of the VAT position.
3. That the CIL funding is released to Beccles Lido Ltd on receipt of copy invoices confirming the full construction and plant (equipment) costs related to the funding gap.

### **13 Infrastructure Team Service Improvements and CIL Spending Strategy**

Cabinet received report **ES-0245** by Councillor Ritchie, Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, which sought approval of additional staffing resource for the team to undertake two key tasks - the implementation of new software (Exacom) to manage the Developer Contributions and the implementation of the new CIL Spending Strategy informed by collection and priorities for spending.

It was noted that the Council retained 5% of the CIL collected to cover its administration and further monitoring and pre-application charges were still being explored to cover the costs of providing the service. The majority of housing developments now required CIL to be paid and where it was liable, it still required a process of administration. The pot of CIL the Council holds had now reached £13 million and this increased the need for a new evidence led strategy to spend this on the necessary infrastructure across the District.

Councillor Ritchie reported that the Government had recently introduced new CIL legislation which provided for greater transparency around the recording and reporting of developer contributions for CIL and S106, including how it was spent. The legislation also included a data standard and the requirement for an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement for developer contributions that required information to be recorded, presented and shared in a set format. The additional staffing resource and the implementation of the new software would meet these requirements.

Members noted that a draft CIL Spending Strategy had been produced and was attached as Appendix A to the report. The strategy was based on an evidence led approach, to be informed first of all by plan-led infrastructure spending priorities to ensure that the infrastructure recognised in the Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans was delivered. This would also be guided by the infrastructure delivery timings of key infrastructure providers eg County Education Authority, Highway Authority and the NHS.

The Leader commented that this work was extremely positive and would greatly improve access to information regarding CIL and future developments. Councillor Ritchie proposed the recommendations contained within the report, which was duly seconded by Councillor Rivett. Upon being put to the vote it was

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the introduction of the Exacom software be noted and that the staffing resource required to implement the Exacom project and service improvements over a two-year period (as set out at paragraph 2.22) be agreed.
2. That the Draft CIL Spending Strategy and Terms of Reference for the CIL Spending Working Group be agreed, to enable the governance of spending District CIL funds and receive recommendations for the projects to be funded and reported in the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement.

## **14 Exempt/Confidential Items**

### **RESOLVED**

That under Section 100(a)(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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## **15 Purchasing of eight Section 106 Properties in Darsham**

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

## **16 Sale of Land Adjacent to Felixstowe Ferry Golf Course**

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

## **17 Disposal of Property in Wrentham**

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

## **18 Transfer of Assets in Melton**

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

The meeting concluded at 8.45 pm

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Chairman