

Unconfirmed



Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton, on **Wednesday, 2 November 2022 at 7.00pm**

Members present:

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Chris Blundell, Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Jenny Ceresa, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Ray Herring, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Carol Poulter, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith, Councillor Ed Thompson, Councillor Steve Wiles, Councillor Kay Yule

Officers present:

Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Heather Tucker (Head of Housing)

Others present:

Mr Chris Bally

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Ashdown, Stuart Bird, Judy Cloke, Janet Craig, Tom Daly, Mike Deacon, Tony Fryatt, Tess Gandy, Andree Gee, Tracey Green, Colin Hedgley, James Mallinder, Debbie McCallum, Frank Mortimer, Trish Mortimer, Keith Patience, Sarah Plummer, Russ Rainger, Mick Richardson and Caroline Topping.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3 Appointment of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Council received report **ES/1318** of the Leader of the Council, which sought approval of the recommendation of the Appointments Committee that the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service be offered to Mr Chris Bally.

The Leader introduced the report and noted that the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (the Act) requires local authorities to have in place three statutory officers, a Head of Paid Service, a Monitoring Officer, and a Section 151 Officer, and that the Council's Head of Paid Service was also its Chief Executive. The role and duties of the Head of Paid Service set out in Section 4 of the Act were outlined.

Council was informed that the current Chief Executive, Mr Stephen Baker, had given notice in July 2022 that he intended to retire from the role at the end of December 2022. The Leader explained that following this notification the Council had engaged the services of Tile Hill, an executive company who had recently assisted in the recruitment of a Managing Director for East Suffolk Services Limited and were also running the recruitment campaign for a new Strategic Director.

The Leader outlined the process undertaken by Tile Hill to conduct the recruitment campaign, supplemented by the Council's HR team, in which a dedicated microsite showcasing the Council was created alongside professional recruitment advertising and an executive search function.

The Leader confirmed that both opposition Group Leaders were given the opportunity at the outset to speak with Tile Hill to help shape the recruitment campaign; the Leader expressed his gratitude to Councillor Byatt for availing himself of this opportunity and engaging in the process.

Council was advised that the vacancy went live on 1 August 2022; in addition to the usual channels, it was also advertised via both the Tile Hill and Local Government Association (LGA) websites, and an interview with the Leader and Mr Baker conducted by the Municipal Journal appeared as a wider editorial piece to supplement the advert.

The Leader explained that Tile Hill had focussed its search on senior leaders in local government and related agencies, particularly looking for candidates with a commercial approach who would espouse the ambitions of the Council and who had strong place-making and regeneration backgrounds along with an excellent track record of corporate working and partnership building. The search for a new Chief Executive had been at a national level, with the benefits of East Suffolk being highlighted throughout the process.

It was noted that 14 applications had been received by the advert closing date of 9 September 2022; longlisting had then taken place on 16 September 2022, and it was agreed that eight of the candidates would move to the next stage of the process, involving a more forensic discussion with Tile Hill. Following a further shortlisting discussion, it was agreed that four candidates would move forward to interview.

The Leader detailed that between the shortlisting exercise and the interviews, which took place over 13 and 14 October 2022, all the candidates were offered the opportunity to meet individually with him and Mr Baker; all four candidates took up this opportunity. During this period, the Leader explained, various forms of testing applicable to the appointment were conducted, including psychometric testing.

The Leader summarised the interview process, which involved a Stakeholder Panel on the first day which included representatives from the public, private, voluntary and

community sectors in East Suffolk, where candidates were asked to prepare a presentation on the following topic: "In a resource constrained, increasingly digital and post-pandemic world, how could East Suffolk Council work more smartly with partners and communities to improve outcomes for residents."

The first day also saw the candidates appear before a panel of members of the Council's Corporate Management Team, which was run as an open forum, as well as an invitation to lunch with Cabinet Members and Opposition Leaders.

The Leader stated that the second day took the form of a more traditional interview panel, formed of Members and Officers. The Leader reiterated that the two opposition Group Leaders were invited to be part of this process and thanked Councillor Byatt for his engagement. Each interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours per candidate. As part of the interview, the candidates were asked to deliver a presentation on the following topic: "Against a challenging socio-economic backdrop, how would you ensure that East Suffolk Council delivers its priorities? What challenges do you think are most significant and how would you navigate these?"

Following the interviews, the Appointments Committee was convened, and Members unanimously agreed that Mr Chris Bally should be recommended to Full Council as the appropriate successor to Mr Baker. The Leader confirmed that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Cabinet Members were given an opportunity to raise any material or well-founded objections to the recommendation, and none were received.

The Leader hoped that Members agreed the recruitment process had been both thorough and rigorous, noting the close scrutiny of the candidates on the run to interview. The Leader considered that the four candidates had all been of the highest calibre, but that Mr Bally had particularly impressed the Panel with his passion for and knowledge of the area, along with the huge wealth of experience he had amassed during his 30 years of public service.

Council was advised that Mr Bally had joined Suffolk County Council in 2008, having previously held roles with Tendring District Council and the Audit Commission, and was presently its Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Corporate Services. The Leader described Mr Bally as working hard to develop policy and strategic direction that improves the lives of Suffolk residents, leading development of Suffolk County Council's strategy and working with its Chief Executive to shape and deliver the local and national agenda for public services. Council was informed that Mr Bally was also Suffolk County Council's Chief Information Officer and had provided leadership for corporate policy, transformation, programme management, planning and performance, as well as business development.

The Chairman invited questions to the Leader on his report. Councillor Goldson noted that the Leader of the Council had only referred to the Leader of the Labour Group being involved in the recruitment process and asked if he was correct to assume that the Leader of the Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent (GLI) Group had not participated.

The Leader confirmed that, despite both opposition Group Leaders being invited to engage in the recruitment process, only Councillor Byatt, the Leader of the Labour

Group, had chosen to do so. The Leader expressed disappointment that Councillor Beavan, the GLI Group Leader had not wished to be involved and detailed his withdrawal from the interview panel stage of the process. The Leader cited a statement on Councillor Beavan's Facebook page later that day alleging that he had withdrawn from the process as he had been unable to ask questions about the offered salaries and would have only been able to ask questions dictated by the Leader of the Council and stating his concerns about the remuneration offered for the post compared to others in the Council.

The Leader stated that this was not the case and reminded Council of the motion proposed by Councillor Beavan at its last meeting of 28 September 2022, relating to flattening the officer wage structure, which had been debated and rejected by the Council. The Leader considered that the formal interview process for a new member of staff was not the place to seek or circumnavigate or undermine the will of the Council and considered that to ask an interview candidate for their thoughts on doing the job they had applied for, for a reduced remuneration package, to be inappropriate.

Council was informed by the Leader that the questions prepared for the interview had been formed in consultation with Tile Hill, the Council's HR team, Mr Baker and himself and construed to gain the best possible insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. The Leader expressed his disappointment that Councillor Beavan had withdrawn from this process, suggesting it served no purpose in representing the Council, local communities or indeed the remainder of the GLI Group.

There being no further questions, the Chairman invited the Leader to make his recommendation. Councillor Gallant proposed that the recommendation of the Appointments Committee to offer the role of Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive to Chris Bally be approved by Council; this was seconded by Councillor Rivett, who reserved his right to speak. The Chairman invited Council to debate the proposal.

Councillor Robinson said that he had worked with Mr Bally at Suffolk County Council for a several years and found him to be personable, competent and on top of his brief. Councillor Robinson considered that employing Mr Bally as the Council's Chief Executive would be a great gain for East Suffolk and noted that Ms Nicola Beach, the Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, had said to him that she was sorry to be losing Mr Bally.

Councillor Beavan stated that the GLI Group welcomed the appointment of Mr Bally as the Council's Chief Executive and would be supporting the proposal. Councillor Beavan said that he looked forward to working closely with Mr Bally. Councillor Beavan said he did not want to get into a debate with the Leader about his withdrawal from the recruitment process but expressed his concern about the priorities of the Council; he went on to compare the cost of the new Strategic Director post to that of the wage claim submitted by refuse collectors.

Councillor Byatt welcomed Mr Bally to the Council on behalf of the Labour Group, assuring the Council the whole group supported this appointment and looked forward to working with Mr Bally.

Councillor Goldson noted he had known Mr Bally from his time as a Suffolk County Councillor and considered him to be a very honourable man.

Councillor Rivett thanked Tile Hill and the Council's HR team for making the recruitment process a smooth one, highlighting that all the candidates had considered it to be a fair process which gave them the opportunity to best represent themselves. Councillor Rivett said that the recruitment process had reinforced the importance of what the Council was doing in East Suffolk and was of the view that Mr Bally was the best fir for the Council's aspirations. Councillor Rivett added that he had also worked with Mr Bally at Suffolk County Council and considered his appointment to be a great gain for the Council.

On being put to the vote, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the recommendation of the Appointments Committee to offer the role of Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive to Chris Bally be approved by Council.

Through the Chairman, the Leader invited Mr Bally to address Council.

Mr Bally thanked Council for its kind words and said he was delighted to be taking up the role of Chief Executive of East Suffolk Council. Mr Bally said he was Suffolk born and bred, lived in Felixstowe and had raised his family in the local area. Mr Bally considered the role to be his dream job and said it would be very special to lead a Council such as East Suffolk. Mr Bally expressed his gratitude for the Council's confidence in him and said he was very excited to get underway. Mr Bally referred to Mr Baker, having known him for some time, considering it an honour to follow in his footsteps and wishing him the best for his retirement.

The meeting concluded at 7.23pm.

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Chairman