

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton, on **Monday, 5 December 2022 at 10.30am.**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Chris Blundell, Councillor Jenny Ceresa, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Mark Newton, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Kay Yule

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt

**Officers present:**

Caroline Clamp (Planning Policy and Delivery Assistant), Chris King (Design Champion & Specialist Services Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Andrea McMillan (Planning Manager - Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services), Adam Nicholls (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Bethany Rance (Planner - Energy Projects), Katherine Scott (Principal Planner (Technical Lead, Development Management)), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer (Governance)), Ben Woolnough (Planning Manager (Development Management, Major Sites and Infrastructure))

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**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Norman Brooks, Tony Cooper, Mike Deacon and Debbie McCallum. Councillor Peter Byatt attended the meeting as Councillor Deacon's substitute.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**3 Minutes**

On the proposition of Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Hedgley it was by a unanimous vote

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 October 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 4 Energy Projects Update

The Committee received a presentation on energy projects in East Suffolk from Councillor Craig Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development.

*NOTE: Councillor Pitchers arrived during the presentation, at 10.36am.*

Councillor Rivett provided an overview of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) taking place in the district, noting two out of district projects that the Council had been consulted on.

The Committee received an update on the Sizewell C project; it was noted that the Secretary of State had approved a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a new nuclear power plant on the site, to be known as Sizewell C. Councillor Rivett stated this did not guarantee that a new nuclear power station would come forward on the site, as final funding was still to be agreed. Councillor Rivett highlighted that EDF Energy, at the Council's request, had established a website to publish when activity was taking place on its land and what each activity was.

The Committee received an update on the planting that had taken place at Pillbox Field, which was required as part of the planning consent to relocate facilities at Sizewell B Nuclear Power Station.

Councillor Rivett outlined the Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) offshore projects, noting the progress of East Anglia One (EA1), East Anglia One North (EA1N), East Anglia Two (EA2), and East Anglia Three (EA3). The Committee was informed that Judicial Review hearings in respect of EA1N and EA2 had been held on 15-16 November 2022, and the decision was pending.

The Committee received information on the Five Estuaries and North Falls offshore wind farm extensions, including details of informal and formal public consultations. It was anticipated that a DCO submission for Five Estuaries would be made in winter 2023 and that a DCO submission for North Falls would be made in summer 2023.

Councillor Rivett provided an update on Sea Link and the Nautilus and Euro Link Interconnectors, including details on consultation dates, the DCO submission process, proposed construction dates, and siting and routing options. Councillor Rivett also elaborated on the two out of district projects that the Council had been consulted on, which related to National Grid Network reinforcements between Bramford and Twinstead, and East Anglia GREEN.

The Chairman invited questions to Councillor Rivett and the officers.

Councillor Rivett confirmed that the Council's Energy Projects team would be able to assist any member of the public with queries about activities taking place on land not related to EDF Energy and the Sizewell C project.

Councillor Rivett and the Head of Planning and Coastal Management confirmed that the Council would be the relevant authority to monitor and enforce the conditions of the DCO and that the Council would be setting up a portal website to collate the myriad of documents relating to the Sizewell C project and allow members of the public to highlight potential planning breaches on the site. The Head of Planning and Coastal Management highlighted the significant workload of officers and encouraged dialogue between the public and landowners where possible.

In response to a series of questions from Councillor Byatt, Councillor Rivett noted that a meeting on Hydrogen East would be taking place in early 2023, highlighting the number of future options for hydrogen production in East Suffolk with Freeport East, Sizewell B Nuclear Power Station and Conrad Energy in Lowestoft. Councillor Rivett said that much consideration had been given to the Sizewell A Nuclear Power Station site but stated the site was still in the process of being commissioned and due to restrictions, there would be limited reuse of the land and it would not be a viable site for an energy projects co-ordination hub. Regarding responses to the National Grid Network informal consultation, this had not been published and more information would be available when the DCO stage was initiated.

Councillor Rivett was not aware of any intention to relocate the proposed sub-station in Friston, noting that this would require an amendment to the SPR offshore DCOs and a new offer from the National Grid for a connection point.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Rivett for his presentation.

## **5 Authority Monitoring Report 2021/22**

The Committee received report ES/1356 of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, which sought approval to publish the Council's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for the 2021/22 year.

Councillor Ritchie introduced the report and noted the AMR's importance, outlining its role in judging the implementation and effectiveness of policies contained within the two Local Plans and the numerous Neighbourhood Plans in East Suffolk. Councillor Ritchie considered that the AMR demonstrated significant progress had been made in 2021/22 and described the production of the AMR as one of the most important pieces of work undertaken by the Planning Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services team.

Councillor Ritchie invited the Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery) to address the Committee. The Principal Planner gave a presentation on the AMR which summarised the impacts of COVID-19, the progression of the Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Local Plans, climate change and sustainability, the Lowestoft Tidal Barrier, major infrastructure, health and wellbeing, Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Agreements, neighbourhood plans, employment uses, town centre vacancy rates, housing (statistics, completions, affordable housing completions), housing land supply, planning appeals, site allocations, and the natural and historic environment. The presentation also gave an overview on the next steps for finalising and publishing the 2021/22 AMR and provided a summary of the Council's Open Data Portal.

The presentation highlighted that several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) had been adopted during 2021/22, and that the Cycling and Walking Strategy developed during that period had been adopted by the Cabinet in October 2022. The Principal Planner noted that five neighbourhood plans had been made during 2021/22 in Bredfield, Kesgrave, Reydon, Beccles, and Southwold, and that several other neighbourhood plans were progressing well.

The Committee was advised that the Council had a five-year housing land supply, with the presentation detailing that there was a 6.47-year supply in the former Suffolk Coastal area, a 5.78-year supply in the former Waveney area, and a 6.15-year supply for the East Suffolk area as a whole.

The Chairman invited questions and comments to Councillor Ritchie and the officers.

In responses to several questions from Councillor Byatt, the Principal Planner advised that he would be able to provide him with a further breakdown on life expectancy in his Ward and additional information on free Wi-Fi in East Suffolk outside of the meeting. The Head of Planning and Coastal Management responded to Councillor Byatt's question on the proposed Two Villages bypass, explaining that it had been consented as part of the Sizewell C Development Consent Order (DCO) and the programme for delivery, subject to the final investment decision, anticipated the bypass being constructed in the first two years of the project.

Councillor Ritchie, in reply to Councillor Byatt's query regarding the brownfield site at Kirkley Waterfront, noted the history and current work in attempting to develop this site and the significant issues faced, including flooding, contaminated land, multiple land ownerships and viability. Councillor Ritchie considered the delivery of the Lowestoft Tidal Barrier to be pivotal in bringing Kirkley Waterfront forward as viable site for development.

On the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Pitchers, it was by a unanimous vote

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the East Suffolk Authority Monitoring Report covering the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 be published.
2. That the Head of Planning and Coastal Management Service, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, be given delegated authority to make any necessary minor typographical or presentational changes to the document prior to formally publishing it.

## **6 Planning Policy and Delivery Update**

The Committee received report **ES/1357** of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, which provided an update on key elements of the current work programme, including the preparation of supplementary planning documents, neighbourhood plans and strategies on specific topics such as cycling and walking, and on housing delivery. The report also provided updates, as appropriate,

for specialist services (Design and Conservation, Arboriculture and Landscape (including Rights of Way) and Ecology) that form part of the Planning Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services team. An update was also provided on the delivery of infrastructure to support growth through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Councillor Ritchie introduced the report and highlighted the significant work programme of the Planning Policy and Delivery team, including the Specialist Services team, noting this had been outlined by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) received by the Committee earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Ritchie highlighted the adoption of the Cycling and Walking Strategy by the Cabinet in October 2022, considering that it put the Council in an advantageous position to receive funding for cycling and walking projects in Suffolk. The Committee was advised that the production of this strategy had been a significant piece of work undertaken by the Council alongside Suffolk County Council and expressed his thanks to all involved in the task.

Councillor Ritchie outlined that work was ongoing to reappraise the Aldeburgh and Saxmundham conservation areas and highlighted that a report would be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on Tuesday 6 December 2022 to seek the addition of five historic parks and gardens to the Council's Local List of Park and Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest. Councillor Ritchie noted the neighbourhood plans made, as set out in the AMR earlier in the meeting, highlighting the praise received from examiners on the quality of the plans being produced in the district.

Councillor Ritchie invited the Planning Manager (Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services) to address the Committee. The Committee was informed that the Bungay and Worlingham Neighbourhood Plans had been made by the Full Council at its meeting on 23 November 2022; the Examiner's report for the Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham and Ellough Neighbourhood Plan had been published and concluded that, subject to modifications, the plan could proceed to referendum.

The Planning Manager drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7 of the report, regarding supplementary planning documents (SPDs). The Committee was informed of the role that SPDs play in the planning system, recognised by legislation and the government to provide detailed advice on policies in adopted local plans. The Planning Manager noted that once adopted, SPDs become material planning considerations and were important in providing clear guidance to support decision making, and it was completely appropriate to provide further guidance in this format.

The Chairman invited questions and comments to Councillor Ritchie and the officers.

*NOTE: Councillor Blundell left the meeting room as questioning commenced, at 11.37am.*

The Head of Planning and Coastal Management advised the Coastal Partnership East, although working primarily with East Suffolk Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council, was not boundary blind and worked well with West Norfolk District Council and Essex County Council on coastal matters. Councillor Ritchie

concurred that it was important that Coastal Partnership East worked with its neighbours where appropriate.

On the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Yule, it was by a unanimous vote

**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**7 Planning Performance Report - October to Mid-November 2022**

The Committee received report **ES/1358** of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, which provided an update on the planning performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the timescales for determining planning applications.

Councillor Ritchie introduced the report, highlighting the continuing work of the Development Management team to meet both national and local "stretch" targets.

Councillor Ritchie invited the Planning Manager (Development Management, Major Sites and Infrastructure) and the Principal Planner (Technical Lead, Development Management) to address the Committee. The Principal Planner drew the Committee's attention to the figures at paragraph 2.4 of the report, relating to the six-week period of the current quarter.

There were no questions or comments to Councillor Ritchie or the officers, and on the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Ceresa, it was by a majority vote

**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

*NOTE: Councillor Blundell returned to the meeting room immediately prior to the vote, at 11.42am, and therefore did not vote on the item.*

**8 Enforcement Performance Report - July to September 2022**

The Committee received report **ES/1358** of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, which provided information on the performance of the enforcement section of the Development Management Team.

Councillor Ritchie introduced the report; the Committee was advised that in the period July to September 2022, more enforcement cases had been closed than opened, particular in the latter part of the monitoring period. Councillor Ritchie added that more cases were now being resolved in shorter time periods and considered this reflected the work being done to improve the enforcement process.

The Chairman invited the Planning Manager (Development Management, Major Sites and Infrastructure) to address the Committee. The Planning Manager updated the Committee that since the last meeting, where an action plan to improve the enforcement section had been agreed, officers had worked with colleagues in ICT and Internal Audit to progress the actions in a timely manner.

The Planning Manager highlighted the enhanced enforcement update report which was now in use for both the Planning Committee North and Planning Committee South and added that the Council would be recruiting to vacant posts in the coming month, including the additional Enforcement Officer post that had been created.

The Chairman invited questions and comments to Councillor Ritchie and the officers. The Head of Planning and Coastal Management, in response to Councillor Plummer, said it was too early to determine if the recent significant drop in enforcement cases identified a trend, highlighting that there had been a significant increase in reported enforcement breaches during the national lockdowns. The Head of Planning and Coastal Management said this would be kept under review and reported on at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman congratulated officers for their hard work to develop the enhanced enforcement update report being presented to the Planning Committee North and Planning Committee South, considering it much easier to read and understand.

On the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Pitchers, it was by a unanimous vote

#### **RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

### **9 Appeals Performance Report - 20 September to 11 November 2022**

The Committee received report **ES/1360** of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, which provided an update on the planning performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the quality and quantity of appeal decisions received from the Planning Inspectorate following refusal of planning permission by the Council.

Councillor Ritchie introduced the report and considered that the appeal outcomes received were highly satisfactory. The Committee was advised that there was a significant backlog of appeals to be heard by the Planning Inspectorate.

The Chairman invited the Planning Manager (Development Management, Major Sites and Infrastructure) to update the Committee on an appeal decision received after the production and publication of the report.

The Committee was informed that an appeal decision had been received on 22 November 2022 in respect of a scheme for a care village, including an 80-bed care home, at Land Off Yarmouth Road, Melton, which had been refused planning permission under delegated powers. The Planning Manager advised that the appeal

had been heard in a public inquiry earlier in the year and there had been an eight-month delay in receiving the Inspector's decision.

The Planning Manager was pleased to report that the appeal had been dismissed, considering that the Council had put forward a robust defence of its refusal, which had been heavily disputed by the appellant. The Planning Manager set out the reasons given for the initial refusal of planning permission and noted that positive feedback had been recorded in the Inspector's decision regarding the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan identifying a supply of land for such developments, meaning that development on unsuitable sites such as the one in question can be resisted.

The Committee was informed that the Council had strongly defended the refusal on landscape and character impacts, which had been supported by the Inspector, who had weighed the benefits of the scheme against the potential harm that would be caused and concluded that it was proper to dismiss the appeal. The Planning Manager noted this decision may influence the outcome of another appeal, for a scheme at Norwich Road, Halesworth, which had been heard in a public inquiry during November 2022; the decision of this appeal was expected within the next month.

There were no questions or comments to Councillor Ritchie or the officers, and on the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Ashdown, it was by a unanimous vote

**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**10 Strategic Planning Committee's Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme. No amendments were made to the Work Programme at this time.

The meeting concluded at 11:53am.

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Chairman