

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Monday, 08 July 2019 at 6:30pm**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett

Other Members present:

Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Graham Elliott, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Ed Thompson

Officers present:

Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Cairistine Foster-Cannan (Head of Housing), Rupert Grass (Asset Management Consultant), Angela Haye (Housing Needs Service Manager), Sean Hays (Interim Housing Development Programme Manager), Kathryn Hurlock (Asset and Investment Manager), Andrew Jarvis (Strategic Director), Jack O'Sullivan (Housing Enabling Officer), Philip Ridley (Head of Planning and Coastal Management), Lorraine Rogers (Finance Manager), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration), Angus Williams (Junior Surveyor) and Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Rudd and L Smith.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 4 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Announcements

The Leader of the Council wished to record his thanks to the staff who attended the recent LGA Conference and manned the East Suffolk Council stand. It had been a good opportunity to engage with a wide range of people and to update them on the final

part of the journey to create East Suffolk Council. There had been lots of interest in the Council's work and the event had been extremely positive.

5 Rapid Rehousing Pathway Grant Funding - Rough Sleepers

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report, which sought approval to accept Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) grant funding of £292,316 to support the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub and Supported Lettings. Members were pleased to note that the costs of the Supported Lettings Project had reduced by £300 since the meeting papers were published, therefore the figure contained within the report needed to be revised slightly.

The Government was particularly committed to assisting rough sleepers or people who were at risk of rough sleeping, with the goal of halving the numbers of people sleeping rough by 2022. The MHCLG had therefore invited local authorities to apply, within a short time scale, for Rapid Rehousing Pathway grant funding, to address some of the gaps in homelessness service provision for rough sleepers.

East Suffolk Council was successful in its application to this fund, which would be paid by MHCLG directly to East Suffolk Council, via a Section 31 Grant Determination. The total funding for the financial year 2019/20 was £292,316 to be paid in 2019, comprising of £5,000 capital funding and £287,316 revenue funding. This would be used to deliver the two projects. The MHCLG had also emphasised the need to deliver both of the projects at pace.

With regards to the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub Project, the Council planned to commission emergency bed spaces in 'hubs' for rough sleepers in both Felixstowe and Lowestoft, with associated 24 hour staffing cover. The average length of stay would be 72 hours to ensure churn, although this would be flexible. The role of both hubs would be to provide a safe place to stay for people that were on the edge of homelessness and were likely to sleep rough. The hub would not necessarily be for entrenched rough sleepers, as they would require a more joined up approach.

In respect of delivering the Supported Letting Officers Project, East Suffolk Council planned to recruit directly employed Supported Lettings Officers to source and support service users in move-on accommodation.

The Leader stated that he welcomed this, as it was important to provide assistance to people at an early stage, before their homelessness became entrenched and long term. The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that he wished to deliver these projects quickly and that recruitment for the posts was already underway and it was hoped that the hubs would commence in September 2019.

A Member queried whether those people rough sleeping in Lowestoft originated from Lowestoft or whether there had been inward migration to Lowestoft from elsewhere. He was concerned that providing additional support could attract people to the area and that the Council could become a victim of its own success. The Housing Needs Service Manager advised that there was to be a bi-monthly count of rough sleepers in the District, commencing on 17 July 2019, which would allow the team to monitor numbers more effectively over time. The team would assist rough sleepers with a local connection to the area, whilst assisting those from out of the area to return

home, if they wished. She stated that there were 14 entrenched rough sleepers in Lowestoft currently, with 2 or 3 other people moving through, at any given time. There were robust procedures in place regarding re-connection to their home areas, however some people would have valid reasons for not being re-connected and these needed to be respected. It was noted that the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator Post would be working across the whole of East Suffolk.

A Member asked if specific accommodation had been identified for rough sleepers? The Housing Needs Service Manager confirmed that the Council had significant experience in providing temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, due to the Thin Ice Project, which had been very successful. Accommodation could be provided at short notice in a variety of ways - temporary accommodation, supported housing, private rented accommodation and Social Housing. It was easier to provide such accommodation at short notice in Lowestoft, it was much more difficult in Felixstowe, due to the higher costs involved. Should a rough sleeper be identified, the Housing Needs Officer would undertake a rapid assessment of them, using a holistic approach, including their mental health, to try and find out what had caused their homelessness. Help would then be provided wherever possible to try to reduce their being made homeless again.

A Member commented that homelessness was a wide ranging problem and they were particularly concerned about people being homeless in the rural areas. It was noted that the bi-monthly count would help to identify any people who were rough sleeping and then the appropriate help could be offered to them, wherever they were in the District.

Clarification was sought about how this project would be evaluated and how the outcomes could be measured. The Housing Needs Service Manager reported that the team had been working to support rough sleepers and the homeless for a long time and there were some people (approx 30%) who had returned to rough sleeping, despite receiving help in the past. The Team would be visiting Gloucestershire Council, as they had a well-established rough sleeping prevention team in place and they were keen to share their knowledge and experience with other Councils. Monthly reports would be provided, in order to analyse progress made at East Suffolk Council and the effectiveness of this support would be closely monitored.

A Councillor stated that they were glad that the Council had been awarded the grant funding and they queried whether East Suffolk Council would be providing any additional resources or funding to supplement the grant received. It was confirmed that no additional funding was being provided in this respect and all those present took the opportunity to thank the Housing Team for all of their efforts for the rough sleepers in the district.

It was then moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

That the grant of £292,316 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be accepted to fund the following projects:

- a) Somewhere Safe To Stay Hub - £171,368
- b) Supported Lettings - £120,948

6 Asset Management Strategy

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development presented the report which sought approval for the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy for the plan period 2019 - 2023. It was noted that the Asset Management Strategy had been prepared for the management of the Council's non-residential property portfolio. The strategy aimed to guide officer and Member decision making over the next four years, in relation to the day to day management, acquisitions and disposals and commercial investment. The strategy also aimed to align the non-residential property portfolio with the East Suffolk Business Plan to help manage community assets such as playgrounds, to maintain operational property, invest in areas for economic growth and to set parameters for commercial investment to assist with financial self sufficiency.

Members noted that Appendix A to the report was the Strategy, whilst Appendix B contained the list of around 1500 non residential properties which were owned by the Council. Members were updated that the Council held over 23,000 deeds and Members took the opportunity to thank officers for their hard work in collating the list and checking so many records. It was noted that the new lists would assist when dealing with queries from the public and the information would also feed into the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the Council.

A Member commended the work undertaken to date and the need for accurate records. He then took the opportunity to query paragraph 5.5 within the report, which stated that all investment decisions would be made through the Asset Management Group (AMG) which consisted of Heads of Service. He queried the democratic balance, as there were no Councillors on this Group and he felt that Councillors had a detailed knowledge of their Wards, which would be beneficial to the decision making process, particularly when assets were being considered for disposal. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development reported that the Terms of Reference of the Group had been based upon the RICS guidance and all recommendations for acquisitions or disposals had to be brought to the Cabinet for approval, therefore he felt that there was ample opportunity for Member input. The Asset and Investment Manager reported that the internal group was the first port of call regarding all assets, as some assets may have multiple interests eg housing, which needs required further input and consideration. Clarification was provided that the Assets Team was equally spread across the north and south of the district and they sought regular contact with Ward Members, for their local knowledge and valuable input.

A Member queried whether there was any mechanism in the process for a Ward Member to halt a proposed disposal or acquisition in their Ward, if they felt it was detrimental to their local residents. Reassurance was provided that there was a rigorous process with regards to disposals and the appropriate Portfolio Holder would be kept apprised of all developments, however it would ultimately be a Cabinet decision and the Cabinet would take account of all views that were presented. The Head of Operations stated that the strategic context was considered regarding all asset transactions, to ensure that they were in the best interests of the Council, as well as

looking at the relevant KPIs. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development stated that there was an implicit responsibility for all Councillors to treat information about potential transactions with the utmost confidentiality, and there was implicit trust that such information would not be shared with the public.

Two Members raised concerns that there were some errors contained within Appendix B, which listed all of the non-residential assets owned by the Council. It was reported that any concerns regarding accuracy should be sent to the Asset and Investment Manager in the first instance, for further investigation. It was confirmed that some assets had multiple deeds, as some parts were transferred to the Council individually, rather than as a whole, and that the deeds were therefore registered separately.

It was therefore moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

That the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy for the plan period 2019 - 2023 be approved.

7 East Suffolk Performance Report - Quarterly Performance Quarter 4 2018-19

The Leader of the Council presented the report which provided an overview of East Suffolk's Performance during Quarter 4 in 2018/19. It was noted that Suffolk Coastal District Council had 25 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and that Waveney District Council had 29 KPIs. A summary of the performance highlights was shown below:

- * Income Generation (fees income) for both Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) and Waveney District Council (WDC) had exceeded the end of year targets, which was very positive.
- * Business Engagements exceeded end of year targets for both Councils.
- * There had been an increase in Leisure participation. Membership sales at Deben Leisure Centre had increased by 45% due to the refurbishment.
- * Days taken to process Housing Benefit (new claims) were both below target - 4.5 days for SCDC and 4.8 days for WDC. (The target was 8 days).
- * No Local Ombudsman complaints had been received by either Council during the year.
- * 98% of food hygiene ratings were at 3 to 5 stars.
- * Major and Minor planning application determinations exceeded the end of year targets of 60% and 65% respectively.

The Cabinet Member for Planning reported that WDC had exceeded its target for the number of dwellings built during the year, whilst SCDC had been slightly under target however, overall the Council was in a very healthy place in terms of building much needed housing for local residents. It was noted that the Planning Team were now fully staffed and it was hoped that this would improve performance for the coming year.

The Leader reported that the format of the Performance Report was currently being reviewed for the new Council, to ensure that it linked fully with the East Suffolk Business Plan and KPIs, and provided meaningful information.

RESOLVED

That the East Suffolk Performance Report for Quarter 4 in 2018/19 be received.

8 Suffolk Coastal District Council Draft Outturn Report for 2018-19

The Leader of the Council presented the report which provided an overview of Suffolk Coastal District Council's draft outturn position for 2018/19. It was noted that the final outturn position was subject to the audit of the Statement of Accounts.

Members noted that the General Fund outturn position was a surplus of £639,000 and this had been transferred to the in-year savings reserve, in addition to a planned transfer of £1.3 million. The total balance on the Council's General Fund earmarked reserves had increased by £2.4 million to £33.1 million and the General Fund balance had been maintained at £4 million. The 2018/19 Capital Programme expenditure for the General Fund was £6.7 million. It was reported that the Capital Programme was underspent by £2.2 million, mainly due to the re-phasing of projects to 2019/20.

The Leader advised that the External Auditors had highlighted the risk of the audited Statement of Accounts not being approved and published by the 31 July 2019 deadline, due to the resourcing issues of the External Auditors. The Finance Manager confirmed that the Council had met all of the deadlines and legislative requirements and that the Council's outturn position for 2018/19 was very positive.

There being no questions, it was duly moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

1) To note the Council's draft outturn position for 2018/19, together with reserves and balances as at 31 March 2019.

2) To note the risk of the audited Statement of Accounts not being approved and published by the 31 July 2019 deadline, due to resourcing issues of the External Auditors.

9 Waveney District Council Draft Outturn Report for 2018-19

The Leader of the Council presented the report which provided an overview of Waveney District Council's draft outturn position for 2018/19. It was noted that the final outturn position was still subject to the audit of the Statement of Accounts.

It was reported that Revenue Budget carry forward requests in excess of £30,000 required Cabinet approval and there was one request for 2018/19, which related to a grant agreement to the Marina Theatre Trust. The associated work totalled £60,000 to finalise this was delayed towards the end of 2018/19 and would therefore fall into the 2019/20 financial year.

Members noted that the General Fund outturn position was a surplus of £94,000 and that this had been transferred to the in-year savings reserve. It was confirmed that the total balance on the Council's General Fund Earmarked Reserves had increased by £0.7 million to £12.2 million and the General Fund balance had been maintained at £4 million. The Capital Programme expenditure for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was £3.2 million and £7 million respectively, showing year end underspends, mainly due to project delays. The HRA ended 2018/19 with a healthy HRA working balance of £4.8 million, a decrease of £0.3 million on the previous year.

Members noted that the External Auditors had highlighted the risk of the audited Statement of Accounts not being approved and published by the 31 July 2019 deadline, due to resourcing issues of the External Auditors.

The recommendations in the report were duly moved, seconded and it was

RESOLVED

- 1) To note the Council's draft outturn position for 2018/19, together with reserves and balances as at 31 March 2019.
- 2) To note the risk to the audited Statement of Accounts not being approved and published by the 31 July 2019 deadline, due to resourcing issues of the External Auditors.
- 3) To approve the 0.060 million 2018/19 year end budget carry forward request, in relation to a grant agreement to the Marina Theatre Trust, as per paragraph 2.6 in the report.

10 Level 3 Planning Technician Apprenticeship Programme 2019-2021

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management presented the report, which sought approval to appoint two Level 3 Planning Technician Apprentices for the Planning Team. Members noted that the recruitment of all planners continued to be a challenge, as there was a national shortage of planners, at all levels of experience. As a result, during 2016-2018, all of the Suffolk authorities had taken part in a successful programme to provide a cohort of 10 Level 3 Apprentices with the necessary skills and experience to complete their apprenticeships. The two former Councils had each appointed an apprentice and upon completion of the apprenticeship, one of the appointed apprentices was successful in attaining a permanent role as a Planning Officer and they were now studying for their Town Planning degree.

The Suffolk authorities again wanted to provide a joint Level 3 programme and were looking to recruit a cohort of a further 10 Level 3 apprentices for a September 2019 intake, with East Suffolk Council potentially appointing 2 of these. The provision of this apprenticeship programme would help to build capacity and skills for the future.

The Head of Planning and Coastal Management apologised that the Appendix to this report, which was the Recruitment Brochure for Level 3 Apprentices, had not been included when the meeting papers were published. He confirmed that this would be circulated outside of the meeting, for information.

A Member queried whether not having the guarantee of permanent employment, at the end of the apprenticeship, would deter candidates from applying. It was reported that this had not proved to be the case with the last cohort, as there was a natural turnover of staff and vacancies for planning staff arose throughout the year. The apprentices would therefore be able to apply for any vacancies that arose, as appropriate. The Suffolk authorities system of working together, sharing training and development opportunities for the cohort, had worked very well. It was noted that those apprentices who had not found employment with the Suffolk authorities had been successful in finding employment elsewhere.

There being no further questions it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

That the funding of up to £50,000 to support the appointment of 2 Level 3 Planning Technician Apprentices, for the 2 year programme, commencing in September 2019, be approved.

11 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 item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 Former Lowestoft Post Office - Development of New Affordable Houses and Commercial Unit

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

13 Purchasing Section 106 Properties

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

14 Transfer of Assets in Bungay

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

15 Lowestoft Full Fibre Project

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

16 Exempt Minutes

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

The meeting concluded at 7:55pm

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Chairman