

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 03 October 2023** at **6:30 PM**

Members of the Cabinet present:

Councillor Paul Ashton, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Toby Hammond, Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris, Councillor Caroline Topping, Councillor Sarah Whitelock, Councillor Kay Yule

Other Members present:

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Julia Ewart, Councillor Alan Green, Councillor Graham Parker, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Myles Scrancher

Officers present:

Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Marlon Bruce (Interim Strategic Lead - Housing Services), Elliott Dawes (Housing Development Officer), Stephanie Duff (Strategic Lead – Housing Repairs and Maintenance), Heather Fisk (Head of Housing), Lorraine Fitch (Democratic Services Manager), Teresa Howarth (Strategic Lead – Private Sector Housing), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Helen Johnson (Culture and Heritage Programme Manager), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Bridget Law (Strategic Lead – Housing Investment), Fern Lincoln (Strategic Lead – Housing Needs), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Andrea McMillan (Planning Manager - Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services), Lorraine Rogers (Chief Finance Officer), Isabel Rolfe (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Samantha Shimmon (Strategic Lead – Housing Services), Ian Sparkes (Capital Projects Commercial Manager), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration), Ben Woolnough (Planning Manager (Development Management, Major Sites and Infrastructure))

Others present:

Chris Pegge (Centra Partnership)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jan Candy and Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte,

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Announcements

Leader of the Council

Councillor Topping thanked Councillor Ninnmey and Councillor Graham for their work as Cabinet Members.

Following a recent change Councillor Topping welcomed Councillor Candy as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health and Councillor Whitelock as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism.

Cabinet Members

There were no announcement from Cabinet members.

4 Minutes

On the proposition of Councillor Yule, seconded by Councillor Hammond it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Public Space Protection Order - Harbour Ward, Lowestoft

Councillor Topping introduced report ES/1686 which related to the Public Space Protection Order for Harbour Ward, Lowestoft and she invited the Anti-Social Behaviour Transformation Officer to present the report to the Cabinet.

Cabinet noted that the Police had requested the extension of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), which was due to expire on 23rd October 2023. The order was a discretionary power which could prohibit alcohol use in a public place, if the police believe there could be harassment, alarm or distress being caused when someone has alcohol in their possession. People with alcohol in their possession could be asked to empty their alcohol so that it could not be used in that public space.

Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) was a priority for the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Inspector Jackson was invited to outline the aims of the order and stated that the purpose was to continue to tackle and reduce ASB in the Harbour Ward of Lowestoft. Both residential and commercial premises were located the Town Centre providing a multi-use space for residents and visitors.

The Police support the order which provided a preventative tool to tackle ASB where alcohol was a factor.

Councillor Topping highlighted that the feedback considered the issue being with people in the age range of 30-50 and stressed the work was not concerning young

people. Councillor Topping echoed that the order was a discretionary power available for use when it was considered someone was feeling alarmed, distressed or harassed.

Councillor Hammond posed a question of how often had the police exercised the order and how much of a problem there was in Harbour Ward?

Inspector Jackson responded to state that there had been some research conducted and there were some issues regarding young people in the town centre. Part of the report included a general review of alcohol related incidents in the Harbour Ward, which included incidents behind closed doors. Over a 3 year period there had been a reduction in alcohol related incidents and the PSPO had contributed to the success of the reduction. Between September 2020 – the end of August 2023 there had been 73 recorded uses of the order. The police have a number of reactive methods at their disposal to respond to crime and disorder, however, the PSPO provided an opportunity for early intervention.

Councillor Yule stated that the information sounded excellent and asked if having the presence of the PCSO in the area had helped address issues?

Inspector Jackson stated it does help to have consistency and a local knowledge which helped. It also aided the approach available to the police in addressing issues.

Councillor Daly echoed support and queried how people generally react to the orders?

Inspector Jackson responded that there had not been many, if any, where someone has not complied with the order when instructed. There had been a reduction in the amount of times the order had been used. People seemed quite receptive to this 'softer' approach. If an incident did escalate then there would be further powers the police have to respond to criminal activity.

Councillor Byatt thanked the Anti-Social Behaviour Transformation Officer and the police for the work they do in the local community.

Councillor Topping asked if licenced premises have been engaged and if there was signage available?

Previous signage remained in situ, it was reported that the feedback has been that the signage was small and situated quite high. Stickers have been purchased in place of replacing all signage and there were some additional signs.

Licensed Premises have not directly been engaged with, as they would have been aware of the order previously in place. There would be some visits to support raising awareness should the order be extended.

Councillor Topping moved the recommendation in the report and there being no further questions or debate the Leader proceeded to the vote and it was unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the extension of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for the Harbour Ward for a further three years be agreed.

6 Building Capacity within the Private Sector Housing and Housing Needs Services

Councillor Beavan summarised the report ES/1674, which sought approval for three new roles to support teams to deliver on key priorities. The roles included one post in Housing Needs and two posts in Private Sector Housing. The posts would be permanent positions.

Councillor Langdon-Morris queried whether there was funding available for the posts longer term. The Head of Housing responded that there was sufficient funds available in the current budget and the posts would be built into future budgets.

Councillor Beavan moved the recommendation in the report and there being no questions or debate the Leader proceeded to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That an increased budget within the General Fund be approved to enable the permanent recruitment of staff for the new roles of:

1. Business Support Administrator – Private Sector Housing
2. Licensing Officer- Private Sector Housing
3. Housing Enabling Officer- Housing Needs

7 Housing Regulation - Quarterly Update

Councillor Beavan introduced the report ES/1675, which provided a quarterly update on Housing Regulation.

The Head of Housing added that the quarterly update followed on from reports heard at Full Council in January 2023 and the update provided in July 2023. Since July, work had focussed upon the compliance of housing stock and the rent audit, which covered the return of overpayments to tenants.

Councillor Byatt posed the following questions summarised below:

- Who were Eastern Procurement?
- Could the total of £8,620,294 outlined in the report, impact on the future plans of the council?
- Will the housing health and safety group report to Cabinet and, if so, how often?

The Head of Housing responded that Eastern Procurement were not in house. They worked with multiple agencies and authorities to support effective procurement opportunities.

Regarding the refunding and the final figures, there was confidence the figures were as close to accurate as could be. There had been 9000 tenancies reviewed, which was a huge amount of work.

Regarding the Business Plan, the Head of Housing was conscious there would significant impact on the current and longer term financial picture. There was a review of the business plan underway. Regulatory changes were due, there were plans to retro fit stock and build more council houses. There were lots of competing priorities. Specialist Financial Experts have been engaged to support this work.

It was planned to write and present a new business plan to Full Council in March 2024 along with a refreshed asset management strategy.

The Housing Health and Safety board meets monthly. The Corporate Leadership Team had been discussing how information was shared to Members and assurance provided regarding the housing stock and how compliant it was. It was important Members have knowledge of housing legislation changes and receive updates on progress.

Councillor Beavan stated he had every confidence in the team and that it would successfully conclude the refund work. He was also confident the authority would be able to build new housing in the future.

Councillor Rivett echoed that the team had done exemplary work. He asked if there was consideration to the potential for 'scammers' and how would residents be protected from any malicious schemes.

The Head of Housing responded to state specialist legal advice was sought to ensure everything had been done appropriately. There was awareness of vulnerable people within the housing stock and where refunds were due over a certain monetary value home visits would be conducted. The team were working with corporate audit governance and fraud. It was noted that Direct debit payments would be easier to process.

With regard to former tenants, there would be address and ID checks to safeguard and mitigate risks of any fraudulent activity. The refund process was planned to commence late October / early November to ensure all steps were taken to safeguard tenants and the Council.

Councillor Topping thanked the Head of Housing and the wider team for their undertaking such a huge piece of work.

Councillor Beavan moved the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor Ashton

There being no questions or debate the Leader proceeded to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained within the report be noted and the actions set out to ensure the Council is compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer 'Home Standard' be endorsed.

2. That it be noted that the next quarterly update will be presented to January 2024's Cabinet Meeting.

8 Southwold Harbour Management Committee – Draft Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 4 2022/23 and Mid-Year Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24

Councillor Langdon-Morris introduced report ES/1676, the purpose of which was to outline:

1. The draft outturn position for the year ending 31 March 2023, and
2. The mid-year budget monitoring position for 2023/24

The Interim Chief Finance Officer outlined that the terms of reference stated that the committee were required to monitor performance against budget and to report to Cabinet.

Appendix A – Outlined the financial position. There was a budgeted surplus of £100k.

Appendix B – The midyear position was showing as under budget projection for income, however, the forecast for the end of the year will reposition to see a surplus income.

Both reports had been considered by the committee and were approved to be brought to Cabinet. Councillor Langdon-Morris moved the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor Beavan.

There being no questions or debate the Leader proceeded to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Budget Monitoring Quarter 4 Report for 2022/23 and the mid-year budget monitoring position for 2023/24 as reviewed by the Southwold Harbour Management Committee be noted.

9 Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy – Collaboration Agreement - Heads of Terms

Councillor Yule introduced the report ES/1678, which sought authorisation to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Ipswich Borough Council, to take forward existing and long-standing joint working to manage the implementation of mitigation required under the 'Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy', hereafter referred to as 'the Suffolk Coast RAMS'.

The project was moving in to an implementation phase where monies collected from the tariff could be spent on mitigation projects.

There had been a memorandum of understanding in place in the past, however, moving forward it was desired to enter into a more formalised collaborative agreement to which East Suffolk Council will be host authority, which would include managing the day to day activity of the Suffolk Coast RAMS Delivery Officer and taking responsibility for holding the collected the Suffolk Coast RAMS funds. Decisions on mitigation spend would take place by the Suffolk Coast RAMS Executive Group.

Natural England were involved and on board with the proposed way forward.

Councillor Daly stated that the it was good to be on the cusp of spending money and questioned if there was any work planned in the pipeline for spend.

Councillor Yule responded that the first expenditure would be a salary and looking at staffing to move things forward. There was £942k to spend of which £553k could be spent on mitigation.

Councillor Daly sated it would be good to start collecting ideas on mitigation now. Councillor Yule welcomed ideas to be sent directly to her to review.

Councillor Beavan asked if there was anything on light pollution and the affect it had on habitats?

The Planning Manager added that mitigation measures were key elements of the strategy and delivery. There would be rangers appointed, who would be out advising and educating the public about the habitats.

There would also be work conducted on the ground, such as fencing, signage and obtaining educational materials. The details would be picked up when the Delivery Officer was in post.

The Planning Development Manager stated that the nature of mitigation was very specific and addressing recreational impact in protected areas. The predominant issues were poor practice with dog walking and paddleboarding in estuaries where there were protected sites. The work would consider how to educate and inform users of the spaces, to reduce the culminative impact on habitats and protected sites.

Councillor Byatt queried if there was any involvement from Parish Councils?

The Planning Manager responded to state that where mitigation work was taking place there would be opportunity to engage Parish Councils to work alongside and update on activity.

The Planning Development Manager added that there were good stakeholder relationships of which there was a variety and there would be opportunities to include Parish Councils where mitigation work was taking place.

Councillor Yule moved the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor Ashton

There being no questions or debate the Leader proceeded to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That it be approved for the Council to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Ipswich Borough Council to facilitate the delivery of the Suffolk Coast RAMS.

2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management to agree the Collaboration Agreement.

10 To transfer land on a concessionary basis to Bucklesham Parish council for continued use as allotments

Councillor Ashton introduced the report ES/1679 and outlined the proposal that the Freehold disposal of the allotment site off Green Crescent Bucklesham be passed to Bucklesham Parish Council.

Councillor Ashton highlighted that the Parish Council intend to continue the use as allotments. This area was the last allotment site that East Suffolk manages. The Parish Council had approached East Suffolk regarding the transfer of the land.

Councillor Daly queried the legal part of the transfer document to ensure the continued use as an allotment site.

Councillor Ashton responded to state that is the intention of the Parish Council.

Councillor Langdon-Morris questioned that the site did not currently have a connection to mains water and was there any consideration for investment?

Councillor Ashton responded that many allotments do have a mains water supply, and this should be part of the discussion with Bucklesham Parish Council to see what the plans were and if they had the means to fund themselves or raise funding.

Councillor Rivett highlighted that the report made reference to the Asset Management Strategy which was due to expire and queried if there were plans to update this?

Councillor Ashton responded to state that there were plans to update and in due course this would be shared.

Councillor Byatt observed that it was great to see allotment usage was being encouraged and mentioned a motion in the previous administration which sought to engage with Parish Councils to acquire more allotment land.

Councillor Ashton moved the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor Langdon-Morris

There being no questions or debate the Leader proceeded to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That it be agreed to transfer the Council's freehold interest in the allotment site to Bucklesham Parish Council.
2. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services - Digital, Customer Services, HR, and Assets to complete the disposal.

11 Exempt/Confidential Items

Before moving into the exempt session Councillor Beavan provided a short statement to outline that the Cabinet would be considering the future of St Peter's Court. He confirmed that letters would be sent to residents the following day regarding the decision reached.

Councillor Beavan stated that the matter would be considered with sensitivity and the Cabinet would be having a robust discussion relating to the detailed report provided.

Councillor Beavan described the building a brief history. He concluded by outlining the options under consideration. He confirmed a decision would not be made on finance alone but would take in to consideration the views and feedback from residents.

Councillor Topping added thanks to the Housing team for their work and for facilitating a recent site visit and tour of St Peters Court.

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

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 Exempt Minutes

- Information relating to any individual.
- Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter

arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

13 Asset Review – St Peters Court, Lowestoft

- 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.

14 10-22 Avenue Mansions, Royal Avenue, Lowestoft

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

15 To agree to a five-year lease to house the Port Health staff at Felixstowe docks

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

16 Leasing and management arrangements for Gunton Warren, Lowestoft

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

17 Match funding for the restoration and redevelopment of the former Lowestoft Town Hall

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

The meeting concluded at 8.46pm

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Chair