

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton, on **Tuesday, 5 December 2023 at 6.30pm.**

Members of the Cabinet present:

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

Other Members present:

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Julia Ewart, Councillor Alan Green, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Graham Parker

Officers present:

Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Lorraine Fitch (Democratic Services Manager), Ben Hunter (Senior Environmental Protection Officer), Andrew Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Paul Mackie (Lead Officer - Environment and Climate Change), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Fiona Quinn (Head of Environmental Services and Port Health), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Lorraine Rogers (Chief Finance Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence from Cabinet Members.

It was noted that Councillor Rivett was unwell and Councillor Jepson attended the meeting from the Conservative Group.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Announcements

Leader of the Council

There were no announcements from the Leader of the Council.

Cabinet Members

There were no announcements from Cabinet Members.

Chief Executive

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive

4 Minutes

On the proposition of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Candy it was

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2023 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

5 Council Tax Base 2024/25

Councillor Langdon-Morris the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money introduced report ES/1752 which related to the Council tax base for 2024 / 2025.

As outlined in the report the council tax base was the total taxable value at a point in time of all the domestic properties in the council's area. It was annual calculation and represented the estimated number of chargeable dwellings after allowing for exemptions and discounts, reliefs, projected changes in the property base and after applying an estimated collection rate.

Councillor Langdon-Morris highlighted that growth in properties appears to be slowing and was less than estimated in the previous year.

At the current stage there were no significant movements from the current position was assumed in calculating the 2024 / 2025 tax base. Monitoring of the current base indicated that the current 99% collection rate used in the calculation could be maintained.

Appendix A of the report showed the estimated 2024/25 council tax base for the district of 91,018.73 Band D equivalents by parish. Overall, the tax base for the district showed an increase of 677.81, or around 0.75%, on the tax base for the current year of 90,340.92 Band D equivalents.

There were no questions from Cabinet or other members in attendance and on the proposition of Councillor Langdon-Morris seconded by Councillor Daly it was

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approve:

1. That the council tax base for 2024/25 for the East Suffolk district is 91,018.73 Band D equivalent properties.

2. That the council tax bases for 2024/25 for individual town and parish areas are as shown in Appendix A.

6 Parking Collection and National Pay Platform

Councillor Hammond the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport introduced report ES/1753 which related to the Parking Collection and National Parking Platform.

It was noted the report title referred to the Parking Platform as Pay Platform in error. The title of the report should have read: Parking Collection and National Parking Platform.

The National Parking Platform was government scheme making all the apps interoperable and that any app would work on different systems.

The report sought approval from Cabinet on changes to the terms and conditions of the RingGo contract in readiness for the National Parking Platform.

Councillor Hammond highlighted that in 2022/23 the 20p convenience fee charged by RingGo for each parking event cost the Council some £177,700. The estimated convenience fee cost for 2023/24 is £208,659.97. To date the convenience fee was absorbed by the Council. Under the new terms and conditions the fee would have to be passed on to the customer that would result in an estimated saving of over half a million pounds over three years.

Councillor Whitelock raised a query regarding whether any changes would be communicated to the public.

Councillor Hammond responded to state that there should be a broader communication regarding parking policies to residents and would consider the timing in which to do it.

Councillor Yule wanted to clarify if there were changes being made to the 30 minute limit.

Councillor Hammond responded to state that the changes related just to the RingGo app and the 20p convenience fee for using the app to park.

Councillor Daly commented that the cash option was still available for customers and parking in the district was cheaper than other local areas.

Councillor Hammond highlighted that there should be an improvement for consumers with a single route of using one app.

Councillor Jepson queried if there had been a reduction in the number of collections being made or were there no collections being made at all.

Councillor Hammond responded that there had be a huge reduction in the number coins needing to be transported around the district which had translated to tangible carbon savings calculated by the Parking Services Team.

Councillor Byatt referenced the previous administration's action to review parking tariffs across the district and queried if there had been a review regarding the accessibility of machines for community members in wheelchairs.

Councillor Hammond responded to stated that the parking review process was being undertaken on a town by town basis to deliver a more customized set of parking tariffs that are suitable to each town. A future part of the review would be the current schedule of tariffs. This would be a future piece of work.

The Head of Operations added that East Suffolk Council participates in the British Parking Association's Park Mark accreditation. As part of that the whole car park is assessed. It was not possible to have all car parks completely accessible. A good number across the district are and increasing accessibility continues to be explored when possible.

In debate Councillor Smith-Lyte added that keeping the cash element was important due to problems with using the RingGo app that could occur and not blocking people throughout digitisation.

Councillor Hammond agreed and confirmed the commitment to retain the coin operated machines and make sure they were in working order. The National Parking Platform hoped to create some competition between apps and usability could be considered a draw for people to use what they know work.

On the proposition of Councillor Hammond seconded by it was Smith-Lyte it was

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet approves Option 2 to agree changes proposed by RingGo to the terms and conditions of the current contract.
2. That Cabinet approve ESC joining the National Parking Platform ideally as part of the pilot scheme.

7 Renewal of Dog Related Public Space Protection Orders

Councillor Smith-Lyte the Cabinet Member with responsibility for The Environment introduced the Report ES/1754 which related to the Renewal of Dog Related Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO).

The report sought approval for the renewal of the 3 existing PSPOs which were dogs on lead in general, Aldeburgh Beach, Controls and restrictions on Dogs (and other activities) at Landguard Point and covered a number of areas, as outlined in the report.

Councillor Smith-Lyte highlighted that from a consultation over 80% of feedback was positive to the renewal of the PSPOs.

It was noted there was a typographical error in the report regarding the expiration date of the PSPOs which should have read 3rd January 2027.

There were no questions from Cabinet.

Councillor Byatt stated that it was good there were replies received and thank Councillor Smith-Lyte and the team for an interesting report. He enquired about the number of enforcement notices given out. Councillor Byatt also enquired if there had been any reported incidents with American bully cross dogs.

Councillor Smith-Lyte advised that she would need to find out and report back.

The Senior Environmental Protection Officer advised there had been a number of executions of the PSPOs.

The Leader added that dogs should be under control at all times and stated that it was hard to police and enforce restrictions.

Councillor Daly wished to advocate for dogs and whilst dog safety was paramount, dogs need spaces to be able to run off lead.

On the proposition of Councillor Smith-Lyte seconded by Councillor Ashton it was

RESOLVED

1. That the renewal of both the Exclusion of Dogs from Aldeburgh Beach and Dogs on Leads General Public Space Protection Orders as detailed in Appendices E and G to the report and amended to correct the typographical error in the expiration dates be approved.
2. That the proposed amendments and renewal of the Landguard Nature Reserve Public Space Protection Order as detailed in Appendix F to the report be approved.

8 Strategic Recruitment Partner Procurement

Councillor Ashton the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services – Digital, Customer Services, HR and Assets introduced report ES/1759 which related to the Strategic Recruitment Partner Procurement

The report sought approval to go out to tender for a recruitment partner to support the recruitment needs of the council. The contract would be up to five years with break clauses at years two and four.

The process will seek a recruitment partner motivated to recruit permanent staff. Recruitment had become more challenging in recent years and the number of agency contractors had increased. Agencies staff / contracts were more costly to the organisation.

Service areas had gone to agencies directly, which missed the potential for economies of scale to be achieved and made it harder to track procurement spend on agency costs.

Councillor Ashton stated that the contract set out a framework of charges which charges on a 'pay as you go basis'.

Councillor Ashton concluded that the report was at Cabinet as it was anticipated over the period of the contract the spend would likely exceed his authorisation limit.

There were no questions from Cabinet

Councillor Byatt stated he welcomed the report, highlighted PG175 contract rules and regulations and queried if it should include the procurement and contract management strategy 2022 -2025 as part of the statement for the procurement process.

The Strategic Director responded to state the strategy document was what all procurement was done by and this procurement process would be carried out in line with that strategy.

Councillor Byatt stated he was very proud of previous work undertaken.

On the proposition of Councillor Aston, seconded by Councillor Yule it was

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approves for authority to be delegated to the Strategic Director with responsibility for Corporate Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, to tender and award the contract for a strategic recruitment partner, on terms that best protect the Council's interests and after undertaking a procurement exercise pursuant to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations 2015.

9 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Councillor Whitelock the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism introduced report ES/1755 which related to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

Councillor Whitelock stated that it was an ambitious document with focus on the 10 protected characteristics. The action plan was developed through two workshops with staff from all teams in the Council. Centred around equal outcomes for everyone in East Suffolk with a set of principles to tackle inequalities.

The Council stated to be an:

- Inclusive employer
- Community leader

- Think equality in all things it does

There were no questions from Cabinet or members in attendance.

During debate Councillor Daly stated he was glad to see socio economic disadvantages highlighted in the document. He queried if asylum seekers and refugees were considered. There was an implication however the group were not specifically highlighted.

Councillor Whitelock agreed it was implied within the document.

The Head of Communities responded to state that asylum seekers and refugees would be picked up under the race element of the action plan and that it was important to add the socio economic disadvantage element for consideration.

Councillor Langdon-Morris wished to second Councillor Daly's comments and had spotted asylum seekers and thanked him for the point made.

Councillor Whitelock concluded the debate to confirm it would be picked up within the action plan.

On the proposition of Councillor Whitelock, seconded by Councillor Smith-Lyte it was

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approve the new East Suffolk Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and that all Councillors and officers of the Council play an active role in embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in all that we do as a Council.

10 Environment Task Group - Quarterly Update

Councillor Smith-Lyte the Cabinet Member with responsibility for The Environment introduced report ES/1756 which related to the Environment Task Group – Quarterly Update.

Councillor Smith-Lyte outlined that the group has been re-established with a collaborative cross group full of members passionate about the environment. A wide range of topics were being considered. The group were looking forward to bringing recommendations to Cabinet in the future as well as receiving tasks from Cabinet.

There were no questions from Cabinet.

Councillor Byatt thanked Councillor Smith-Lyte and the team for the report and noted there were a number of matters considered for discussion. Councillor Byatt highlighted that it would be good to know the timelines for the work programme.

Councillor Byatt also highlighted the task and finish group established from the recent Full Council motion and that the two groups should link with each other.

Councillor Byatt queried if the previous motion for the Ocean would be brought back for consideration. It was appreciated the motion was from the previous administration.

Councillor Smith-Lyte thanked Councillor Byatt for raising the questions and would take it to the next meeting for review.

Councillor Jepson sought clarity on the areas being considered, direction and what action the group would be taking.

Councillor Jepson highlighted a previous motion brought by Councillor Smith-Lyte in 2019 regarding Citizen Assemblies, and queried if that would come under lobbying.

Councillor Smith-Lyte stated that Citizen Assemblies were not strictly about lobbying and they were something she continued to feel passionately about. Citizen Assemblies were complicated to implement correctly. Councillor Smith-Lyte reflected that the group started with a massive wish list of important areas to look at and they have been working on reducing these to a more focused list. But recognised this was a huge area to consider, with so much to do.

The Leader stated that the group needed to be a deep dive task and finish group, rather than a lobbying group.

Councillor Jepson responded that he was not entirely convinced about the direction of the group and queried what the group would be focussed on, what an action plan would look like and hoped that after the next meeting there would be clearer perspective.

Councillor Yule stated there were Community Partnerships (CPs) in place and wondered if there was a link to be made to include a topic on an agenda for discussion at a CP.

Councillor Smith-Lyte responded to state that a Community Partnership would be one part of it. However the idea of Citizen Assemblies you hear from experts, however the people in the room are randomly selected to be there and drew comparison to the jury service system to highlight her point.

Councillor Candy responded to Councillor Jepson's point to state that the group were trying to address topics with great clarity and form a clear way forward.

Councillor Langdon-Morris highlighted point H in the report which was to consider the best ways of engaging the key partners of the council on environmental issues. Councillor Langdon-Morris highlighted the excellent work set up by Councillor Mallinder regarding weeds and bees. He felt it could do with a tweak, and if the Environmental Task Group could give a clear steer to Parish Councillors on how parks are managed. That would include involving them in the allocation process of areas for re-wilding and which areas should be left, as there can be clashes between Parish Councillors and the public.

Councillor Langdon-Morris stated that this would reduce the amount of mowing that would need to be done. This would have time and cost saving implications.

The Leader requested some rebranding, guidelines and a steer on increasing community engagement regarding the rewilding (Pardon the Weeds) scheme from the Task and Finish group.

Councillor Langdon-Morris supported the rebranding and highlighted the support that could be offered to Parish councillors in liaising with the public to understand park management more comprehensively.

Councillor Byatt stated he would like to see Citizen Assemblies be discussed further. He wished to apologise if the impression was given that the Task and Finish Group were not making progress. There have been a couple of good meetings, with a direction which needs to tie into the Environmental Task Group.

Councillor Smith-Lyte added that she was aware there needed to be some rebranding and there were some ideas going around. The work of the previous group was being built on and recognised the need to support Parish Councils and public communications.

On the proposition of Councillor Smith-Lyte, seconded by Councillor Hammond it was

RESOLVED

1. That the report from the Environment Task Group be accepted and approved.
2. That Cabinet confirms that the Group is to continue to deliver the task it was set.

11 Exempt/Confidential Items

On the proposition of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Ashton it was

RESOLVED

That it was recommended 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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 Community Asset Transfer of Public Open Space to Rushmere Parish Council

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

The meeting concluded at 7.45pm.

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