

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 09 April 2024 at 6.00 pm**

Members of the Cabinet present:

Councillor Paul Ashton, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Jan Candy, 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 Dan Clery, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Alan Green, Councillor Sally Noble, Councillor Lee Reeves, Councillor Craig Rivett

Officers present: Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Jason Beck (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Ruth Bishop (Senior Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Heather Fisk (Head of Housing), Phil Harris (Strategic Communications and Marketing Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Fern Lincoln (Strategic Lead – Housing Needs), Andrea McMillan (Planning Manager (Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services) and Interim Head of Planning & Coastal Management), Lorraine Rogers (Chief Finance Officer), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer), Nicola Wotton (Member Support and Civic Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Tom Daly, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Energy and Climate Change.

2 Declarations of Interest

Mr Jarvis, Strategic Director, and Mr Khan, Strategic Director, both declared a local non-pecuniary interest that they were Directors of ESSL. Their declarations related to Item 6 - East Suffolk Property Investments Limited - Revised Business Case and Item 7 - Acquisition of new Refuse Collection Vehicles.

3 Announcements

There were no Announcements.

4 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document

Councillor Yule, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management introduced report **ES/1912** which related to the adoption of the Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). As an update from the published report, Councillor Yule reported that, from 1 April 2024, the Head of Service role was being covered by Ben Woolnough and Andrea McMillan, as Interim Joint Heads of Planning and Coastal Management.

East Suffolk had 2 Local Plans – the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and the Waveney Local Plan, both of which contain a range of planning policies that relate to the delivery of development in rural areas. It was noted that the SPD provided guidance on a range of topics including rural worker dwellings, rural annexes, rural residential curtilage expansion, rural building and barn conversions, economic development, equestrian development, tourism accommodation, small scale renewable energy generation, and wastewater management in rural areas.

The document had been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The Council had engaged in two rounds of consultation with external stakeholders and then the public. The initial consultation was carried out between 1st February to 16th March 2023. In total 26 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation.

The second consultation, with the Draft Rural Development SPD ran between 15th November 2023 and 10th January 2024. In total, 14 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation. Between them they made 40 comments. The full consultation responses were published online.

It was noted that changes were made, to address many of the comments received from respondents during the consultation. Changes were also made to update the document, improve the clarity and understanding of the guidance, and improve the format for adoption.

On adoption, the Rural Development SPD would be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Councillor Yule moved the recommendations within the report and they were duly seconded by Councillor Ashton.

Those Members present took the opportunity to thank the officers involved with the

creation of the report. It was noted that this SPD would be particularly useful, as many Members had received queries involving developments of this nature. Upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document be adopted.
2. That the Head of Planning and Coastal Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, be authorised to make any presentational or typographical amendments to the Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document prior to it being published.

6 East Suffolk Property Investments Limited – Revised Business Case

Councillor Beavan, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing introduced report **ES/1913** which outlined a proposal to present a revised business case for East Suffolk Property Investments Limited (ESPIL) and sought Cabinet's support to progress with its development.

East Suffolk Property Investments Limited (ESPIL), a subsidiary of East Suffolk Holdings Limited, was incorporated in October 2019. The company sits within a Group structure and was one of the five Local Authority Trading Companies (LATCos) owned by East Suffolk Council. Despite having an approved business plan, development of ESPIL had not been pursued for several reasons.

Sustainable Housing was one of the four priorities of the Council's Strategic Plan 'Our Direction 2028', and as such provided a greater focus and a new impetus to find innovative ways to provide more quality homes that people in East Suffolk can afford to live in. As a LATCo, 100% owned by the Council and under its full control, ESPIL was one approach that could contribute significantly to the delivery of this priority.

It was proposed that ESPIL, funded by the Council initially to the tune of up to £5m (subject to approval of a business case) to enable it to set itself up, would purchase some five residential properties within the district, which it will then rent at open market rent for a financial return.

The company will be designed to operate with minimal fixed costs and will be evaluated at the end of the first year. If operating successfully and demonstrating proof of concept, the intention would then be to provide further finance to enable the company to purchase additional properties on the same basis.

Unlike the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), homes owned by ESPIL would not be subject to Right To Buy and would charge social rent, not market rent. Each property that was bought would have a full business case to ensure it would provide value for money for the Council and in due course, this would help to reduce the amount of funding spent on temporary accommodation.

Councillor Langdon-Morris stated that he had discussed this matter in great deal with Councillor Beavan and the Chief Finance Officer. They had undertaken research and he looked forward to receiving the detailed business case.

Councillor Candy asked about the type of properties that would be purchased. Councillor Beavan stated that it was not yet known what types of property were needed. However, the business cases produced would need to demonstrate sufficient demand, the level of rent and any retro fitting work that may be needed.

Councillor Candy stated that she had seen an initiative in Grimsby, where derelict houses were bought at auction, at much cheaper prices, which were then renovated and rented to local people. Councillor Beavan stated that he would be open to that initiative, however, care would need to be taken regarding the costs involved in any renovation.

Councillor Smith-Lyte commented that the Grimsby initiative sounded very positive and she queried whether local apprentices could be used to gain skills during any future redevelopment works. Councillor Beavan stated he would be receptive to this and would explore it further.

Councillor Whitelock sought reassurance that the new properties purchased would not be subject to Right To Buy. Councillor Beavan confirmed that was correct.

Councillor Candy queried if there was funding available from the Community Housing fund. Councillor Beavan confirmed that there was a small amount of funding still available however there were significant criteria and paperwork involved. Councillor Langdon-Morris commented that house prices were currently stable or may even dip slightly in the future, with borrowing costs falling, therefore, it was a positive time to look at purchasing properties.

Councillor Byatt commented that it would be useful to purchase empty properties in the district. He also stated that Waveney District Council had had a scheme where homeowners in arrears with their mortgage could sell the property to the Council and rent the property back from them. He asked if that scheme could be resumed? Councillor Beavan stated that he would look into this further.

Councillor Beavan moved the recommendation in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Langdon-Morris and upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That Cabinet considered the proposal to produce a revised business case for ESPIL and supported its production on the timetable set out in section 3.4 of this report.

7 Acquisition of new Refuse Collection Vehicles

Councillor Smith-Lyte, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, introduced report **ES/1920** which related to the procurement of 10 Refuse Collection Vehicles, at a total cost of £2.3 million.

As part of the transition from Norse to East Suffolk Services Ltd (ESSL) an operating agreement with Norse for several vehicles, including 10 Refuse Collection Vehicles

(RCV's) will expire on 31 December 2024, and as a result these vehicles will no longer be available for ESSL's use.

Therefore, an alternative arrangement needs to be in place from the 1 January 2025 to ensure continuity of service. The Council has been working with ESSL to understand the best way to resource these vehicles from the 1 January 2025.

Lead in timescales to purchase fleet were long, to ensure that new RCV's were operationally available to ESSL from the 1 January 2025, an order needed to be placed by the end of April. The procurement process to enable the purchase of these vehicles was already underway, although no final order would be made until Cabinet considered this paper.

Councillor Langdon-Morris asked if leasing the vehicles had been considered instead of purchasing? The Head of Operations stated that a full analysis had been undertaken, which showed that purchasing provided the best value and further information could be found in the table in section 6 of the report. He stated that the new RCVs would also be suitable for when the new recycling requirements came into force.

Councillor Hammond queried about the maintenance of the vehicles. It was reported that the vehicles would be maintained at one of the depots, in the north and south of the district, and they could provide same day repairs, which helped with operational continuity.

Councillor Langdon-Morris sought reassurance that the procurement of the vehicles would be completed in time. It was reported that the Council would be using UK based suppliers and confirmation had been received that the vehicles would be provided when required. It was noted that there was some uncertainty regarding the future implementation of food recycling and the Council would be working with other Suffolk Authorities to find a way forward.

Councillor Byatt asked whether it would be possible to reduce emissions further, by using EV. The Head of Operations reported that 44 new light fleet vehicles would be purchased in due course, which would be EV, and that he was working with ESSL to look at sustainability and reducing emissions, wherever possible.

Councillor Smith-Lyte took the opportunity to thank the officers involved in the report and noted that EV was not a silver bullet, as electricity had to be produced from somewhere. She commented that localised street-based collection points were a consideration for the future.

Councillor Smith-Lyte moved the recommendations within the report, which were seconded by Councillor Langdon-Morris. Upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the virement of £300,000 from the capital budget 24/25 Bath Tap Terrace allocation to the £2 million capital budget allocated to operational vehicles and equipment for 24/25 be approved.

2. That the expenditure of £2.3 million from the 24/25 capital programme for the purchase of 10 new RCV's from the operational vehicles and equipment budget be approved.

8 Housing Regulation – Quarterly Update

Councillor Beavan, Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing introduced report **ES/1914** which related to the Housing Regulation – Quarterly Update. The Deputy Leader was pleased to present the report and update on the significant progress being made in the area. It had been complex and challenging work to move from non-compliance to compliance. As of 29 February 2024, the level of compliance was almost at 100% across the board and the overpayments of rent were in the process of being repaid. It was noted that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) was content with the action taken.

Councillor Beavan took the opportunity to thank the Head of Housing and her team for all of their ongoing hard work in this respect, which was in addition to their normal workload.

Councillor Beavan moved the recommendations within the report and they were seconded by Councillor Yule.

Those Members present also thanked the Head of Housing and commended her for the work that had been undertaken. Upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained within this report be noted and Cabinet endorsed the actions set out to ensure the Council is compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer 'Home Standard'.
2. That the information contained within this report be noted and Cabinet endorsed the actions set out to ensure the Council is compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing 'Rent Standard'.
3. That the next quarterly update will be presented to the Cabinet Meeting to be held on 9 July 2024.

9 Exempt/Confidential Item

On the proposition of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Ashton, 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 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

10 Procurement of Temporary Accommodation to enable the Council to fulfil its duties under Housing and Homelessness Legislation

- 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).

The meeting concluded at 19:11

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Chair