

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton, on **Tuesday, 6 February 2024 at 6.00pm.**

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 Seamus Bennett, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Alan Green, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Mark Packard, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Sheryl Rumble, Councillor Tim Wilson

Officers present:

Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Katy Cassidy (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Martin Clarke (Licensing Manager and Housing Lead Lawyer), Lorraine Fitch (Democratic Services Manager), Phil Harris (Strategic Communications and Marketing Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Chirs King (Design Champion & Specialist Services Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Marie McKissock (Acting Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Fiona Quinn (Head of Environmental Services and Port Health), Lorraine Rogers (Chief Finance Officer), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration)

1 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Caroline Topping declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, as a member of Suffolk County Council, in respect of items 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Councillor Craig Rivett declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, as a member of Suffolk County Council, in respect of items 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Councillor Seamus Bennett declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, as a member of Suffolk County Council, in respect of items 7, 8, 9 and 10.

In respect of the above Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, dispensations were granted by the Monitoring Officer, under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011, for Councillors Topping, Rivett and Bennett to participate in items 7, 8, 9 and 10.

3 Announcements

Leader of the Council

There were no announcements from the Leader.

Cabinet Members

There were no announcements from Cabinet Members.

4 Minutes

On the proposition of Councillor Langdon-Morris, seconded by Councillor Candy, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 January 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 East Suffolk Council Compliance and Enforcement Policy

Councillor Candy, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, introduced report ES/1837 which related to the East Suffolk Council Compliance and Enforcement Policy. The purpose of the report was to review and approve a revised Compliance and Enforcement Policy in order to take account of updated guidance, codes of practice and new regulatory sanctions which have been introduced since the Council's Compliance and Enforcement policy was last reviewed in 2014. Councillor Candy outlined that the new policy document had been simplified and restructured to be easier to read for Members, Officers and Community Members.

If approved the policy would be added to East Suffolk Council's website and cascaded to service areas.

There were no questions from Cabinet Members, Members in attendance or Members attending online.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Compliance and Enforcement Policy be approved.

6 Endorsement and adoption of the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28

Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, introduced report ES/1838 which related to the Endorsement and adoption of the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28.

The purpose of the report was to seek endorsement and adoption of the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) (CRoW Act) placed a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a Management Plan at five year intervals. The Management Plan had been reviewed and published, and the endorsement and adoption of the authority was now being sought under the provisions of the CRoW Act (2000).

The recommendation would ensure East Suffolk Council could support and help deliver the vision, themes and management policies set out within the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-28.

Councillor Smith-Lyte advised East Suffolk Council, as a Member of the Suffolk & Essex Coast and Heaths AONB Partnership, along with other constituent Councils had been consulted on the emerging plan since June 2023 with comments and recommendations provided to help shape and deliver the updated plan. East Suffolk Council were satisfied that comments provided had been addressed.

The renewed AONB Management Plan was attached to report as Appendix A. The AONB Management Plan set out a Vision, Themes and Policies for the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths in the mid-2040s. Councillor Smith-Lyte outlined the following areas which were included:

Management Plan Vision included:

Environmental Vision
Social Vision
Economic Vision

Management Plan Themes included:

Landscape
Coast and Estuaries
Nature Recovery
Land Use and Planning
Farming
Forestry and Woodland
Landscapes for All
Climate Change
Working Together

Management Plan Policies included:

Landscape
Coasts and Estuaries
Nature Recovery
Lands Use and Planning
Landscapes for All
Climate Change
Working Together

Councillor Daly queried how the AONB, and the National Landscape connected and why the report was outlined from the AONB rather than the National Landscape.

Councillor Smith-Lyte responded to state it could be confusing. The AONB was part of National Landscape and was a rebranding of the organisation.

The Design Champion and Specialist Services Manager advised that the National Landscape was now the AONB following a rebrand at the end of last year. The AONB only referenced matters within a planning context and National Landscapes was the public face to what was previously the AONB.

Councillor Byatt referred Place Services screening report and queried if they were the only company that were approached for the work.

The Design Champion and Specialist Services Manager responded that the commissioning of the report was from the National Landscape Partnership. There would have to be an assumption that a suitable a tender process was completed.

On the proposition of Councillor Smith-Lyte, seconded by Councillor Beavan, it was by a unanimous vote.

RESOLVED

That the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2023-2028 ("the AONB Management Plan"), as attached at Appendix A to the report, be endorsed and adopted by East Suffolk Council.

7 General Fund Budget and Council Tax Report 2024/25

Councillor Langdon-Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money, introduced the report which related to the General Fund Budget and Council Tax Report 2024/25.

At the end of the 2024/25 budget process, the Council was required to approve a balanced budget for the following financial year and set the Band D rate of Council Tax. The report set out the context and initial parameters in order to achieve that objective and contribute towards a sustainable position for the next financial year.

The report brought together all the relevant information to enable Members to review, consider and comment upon the Council's General Fund revenue budgets before making recommendations to Council on 21 February 2024.

There were no questions from Cabinet Members, Members in attendance or Members attending online.

Councillor Beavan congratulated the portfolio holder and the finance team from bringing the report with a balanced budget and hoped that it would be approved at Full Council.

On the proposition of Councillor Langdon-Morris, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That it be recommended to Full Council that it approves:

1. The 2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget as set out in this report and summarised in Appendix A5 to the report and notes the budget forecast for 2025/26 and beyond;
2. The reserves and balances movements as presented in Appendix A6 to the report;
3. A proposed Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk Council of £186.57 for 2024/25, an increase of £5.40 or 2.98%;
4. That the following Council Tax premiums be applied, following the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on 26 October 2023:
 - the 100% premium for properties which have been empty and unfurnished for a period of between 1 and 2 years from 1 April 2024, an
 - the 100% premium for second homes from 1 April 2025; and
5. That the Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer be granted delegated authority to implement the introduction of the additional Council Tax premiums.

8 Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28

Councillor Langdon-Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money, introduced report ES/1841 which related to the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28.

As part of the budget setting process, the Council was required to agree a programme of capital expenditure for the coming four years. The capital programme plays an important part in the delivery of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which in turn supports wider service delivery. The report set out the Council's capital programme including revisions to the current programme for the financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28. The report also formed the basis of Scrutiny Committee's review of the Budget at its meeting on 18 January 2024 as required under the Budget and Policy Framework.

There were no questions from Cabinet Members, Members in attendance or Members attending online.

Councillor Langdon-Morris thanked the Finance team for their work in preparing the reports and for their work on preparing the budgets for consideration.

On the proposition of Councillor Langdon-Morris, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the General Fund capital programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28 including revisions as shown in Appendix B to the report be approved, and recommended for approval by Full Council.

2. That the Housing Revenue Account capital programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28 including revisions as shown in Appendix G to the report be approved, and recommended for approval by Full Council.

9 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Report 2024/25 to 2027/28

Councillor Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, introduced report ES/1842 which related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Report 2024/25 to 2027/28.

The report provided the relevant information to enable Cabinet to review, consider, and comment upon the Council's proposed 2024/25 to 2027/28 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, before making recommendations to Council on 21 February 2024 as required under the Budget and Policy Framework.

Councillor Beavan talked through some of the financial information provided in the attached report. The report detailed how rents and service charges are determined, and the proposed increases for 2024/25 were set out for approval.

Councillor Beavan highlighted the 2020 Rent Standards which permitted the Council to increase its rents for at least five years to 2024/25 by up to CPI for September of the previous year, plus 1%.

Due to high inflation, CPI was 6.7% in September 2023, which resulted in social housing landlords having the ability to increase rents by up to 7.7% (6.7% CPI + 1%). In line with government guidance a 7.75% increase was being proposed for 2024/2025 and was deemed necessary for the HRA to meet its' required investment in the housing stock and delivering the required services tenants.

Councillor Beavan outlined that every five to six years there were 53 Mondays in the rent year and 2024/25 was a 53-week rent year. It was proposed to continue to collect rents over the weeks as normal and still provide two rent free weeks over the Christmas period. To cover the Christmas period, rent would be increased to an

average weekly social rent of £96.78 for 2024/2025 an increase of £6.92 compared to the previous year.

Councillor Byatt queried whether there would local companies would be used where possible for future works and would there be a list of who had been commissioned to complete work in the past available.

Councillor Beavan responded to stated that local companies would be used where possible, and a list could be provided if required.

On the proposition of Councillor Beavan, seconded by Councillor Langdon-Morris, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That it be recommended to Full Council that it approves:

1. The draft HRA budget for 2024/25, and the indicative figures for 2025/26 to 2027/28;
2. Movements in HRA Reserves and Balances;
3. Proposed rent increase of up to 7.7%. In line with the Rent Standard September 2023 CPI + 1%.
4. Service charges and associated fees for 2024/25;
5. Rent and Service Charges to be charged over a 51-week period unless being used for Temporary Accommodation when a 53-week period will be applied, due to 2024/25 being a 53-week year.

That the following be noted:

6. Projected outturn position for 2023/24;
7. Changes affecting public and private sector housing and welfare;
8. Effects of the cost-of-living crisis to the HRA.

10 Southwold Harbour Management Committee - Budget 2024/25

Councillor David Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, introduced report ES/1843 which related to the Southwold Harbour Management Committee – Budget 2024/25.

Councillor Beavan stated that moving forwards there would be more activity in the Harbour area and Caravan Site with an intention to generate income. There would be a consultation process to ascertain what people wanted from the Harbour and Caravan site.

There were no questions from Cabinet Members or Members in attendance.

Councillor Byatt offered thanks officers and the Deputy Leader for bringing the report and stated it was good to see the work concentrated in Southwold to improve the Harbour area.

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

RESOLVED

That it be recommended to Full Council that it approves the 2024/25 Budget for Southwold Harbour, and the Caravan Site and Campsite in Appendix A to the report, as recommended by the Southwold Harbour Management Committee, as part of the overall Council budget at its meeting on 21 February 2024.

11 2023/24 Quarter 3 Financial Performance Report

Councillor Langdon-Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money, introduced report ES/1844 which related to the 2023/24 Quarter 3 Financial Performance Report.

The report provided an overview of Council's Financial performance, comparing the actual expenditure and income position at the end of Quarter three (April – December 2023), to the approved General Fund budget for 2023/24 for both Revenue and Capital.

The report provided a summary of the Housing Revenue Account's (HRA) Revenue and Capital Position at the end of December 2023, which includes a forecast position of reserves.

The report summarised details of the key risks highlighted within 2023/24, which may lead to future General Fund and HRA financial implications over the duration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

There were no questions from Cabinet Members, Members in attendance or Members attending online.

Councillor Topping offered thanks to the Finance Team, Councillor Langdon-Morris and Councillor Tim Wilson for their ongoing work.

On the proposition of Councillor Langdon-Morris, seconded by Councillor Whitelock, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the Council's financial position for the period April – December 2023 against the profiled General Fund budget, and the forecast position for the end of the year, be noted.

2. That the approved budget change variations following the original 2023/24 budget approval in February 2023 and the impact on the General fund for 2023/24 be noted.

3. That the areas of financial risk identified, the impact of which is reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, be noted.

12 The Suffolk Coast Business Plan 2024-27

Councillor Sarah Whitelock, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure & Tourism, introduced report ES/1845 which related to the Suffolk Coast Business Plan 2024-27.

East Suffolk Council jointly established The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation (DMO) with representatives of the local tourism sector in 2012. Since that time the Council had agreed rolling 3-year funding agreements to support the delivery of the DMO's Business Plan which has contributed significantly to sustainably growing the visitor economy in East Suffolk. The current business plan was due to expire in March 2024 and the purpose of the report was to present to Cabinet the new plan which will cover 2024-27 period.

The DMO provided brand and destination marketing services, performed well delivering excellent visitor information website services, a growing membership base, engaged in energy projects tourism mitigation, and highly effective individual and joint marketing campaigns. It continues to provide advice and guidance to the sector as it recovers from the unprecedented economic shock that pandemic trading restrictions caused.

There were no questions from Cabinet Members or Members present in the room.

Councillor Byatt queried if an impact assessment was required to review the impact on tourism from Lowestoft not getting the flood barrier and if that would deter people from going to Lowestoft. Councillor Byatt queried if there was a plan to increase tourism to the North of the district.

Councillor Whitelock responded to state that there were two separate issues, uplift of funding and increasing tourism into Lowestoft. The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration responded to state the tidal barrier was not expected to have a negative impact on tourism in Lowestoft.

In connection to wider tourism in the area, there was the First Light festival and wider investment into the Town Centre which expected to see an increase in visitor numbers to Lowestoft.

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration concluded that the DMO had significant social media activity build into it and a wider marketing plan. He believed that tourism was still recovering from COVID and it was hoped it would pre COVID levels would be re established.

Councillor Jepson questioned how confident the team were in the delivery of the company doing what was expected and was there evidence regarding delivery outcomes available.

Councillor Whitelock responded to state that in another capacity she had found the DMO to be highly effective and whilst anecdotal she believed it was deserving of the uplift in funding and concluded that there had not been an increase in funding since 2015.

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration concluded that the membership was part of a wider story and whilst 250 was not the majority in terms of businesses there was a plan to grow the figure to 300.

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration highlighted that the work of the DMO was to benefit the whole of the business and economy and the DMO was funded to deliver on behalf of tourism for the whole district. He confirmed there were KPIs in place.

On the proposition of Councillor Whitelock, seconded by Councillor Candy, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That funding of £182k to support the delivery of The Suffolk Coast's new 3 year business plan covering the period April 2024 to March 2027 be approved.

13 Application for Taxi Fare Increase for the south of the District

Councillor Candy, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, introduced report ES/1846 which related to the application for Taxi Fare increases in the south of the District.

Councillor Candy outlined that a proposal was received from a group of licensed hackney carriage drivers in the South of the East Suffolk district for an increase to the hackney carriage fares tariff for the South of the district.

Councillor Candy outlined the proposed changes:

In relation to Tariff 1 for journeys carried out between 5.30am and 10.30pm - A 20p increase in the minimum fare and a reduction to 700 yards in distance. The increase would result in a minimum fare of £3.80, the current minimum fare is £3.60.

A reduction in the subsequent distance from 220 yards to 200 yards.

In relation to Tariff 2 for journeys carried out between 10.30pm and 5.30am - A 30p increase in the minimum fare and a reduction to 700 yards in distance. The increase would result in a minimum fare of £4.50, the current minimum fare is £4.20.

There should be a reduction in the subsequent distance from 196 yards to 180 yards.

In relation to additional charges Councillor Candy outlined the following proposed increased charges

Extra passengers an increase to the charge for extra passengers in excess of 3 from 20p to 30p

Luggage an increase to the charge for use of the luggage compartment from 20p to 30p.

There were no questions from Cabinet Members or Members present in the room.

Councillor Byatt queried where Uber services fall within the provision of taxi services.

The Licensing Manager and Housing Lead Lawyer advised that Uber were a private hire organisation and did not currently operate in East Suffolk. If Uber was to come into operation the company would be able to set their own fares.

On the proposition of Councillor Candy seconded by Councillor Hammond it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the proposal for the increase to the hackney carriage fare tariff for the south of the district be approved.
2. That authority be delegated to the Licensing Manager and Housing Lead Lawyer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, to determine any objection to the proposal arising out of the public consultation.

14 Exempt/Confidential Items

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

15 Exempt Minutes

- 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.

16 Procurement of Planned Maintenance Contract

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

17 70 Shed, Oysterbed Road, The Docks, Felixstowe, Suffolk

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

The meeting concluded at 7:20pm

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Chair