

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton, on **Wednesday, 24 January 2024 at 6.30pm.**

Members present:

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Paul Ashton, Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Jan Candy, Councillor Dan Clery, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Julia Ewart, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Amanda Folley, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Katie Graham, Councillor Alan Green, Councillor Owen Grey, Councillor Toby Hammond, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Beth Keys-Holloway, Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor Debbie McCallum, Councillor Stephen Molyneux, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Sally Noble, Councillor Mark Packard, Councillor Graham Parker, Councillor Keith Patience, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Lee Reeves, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Sheryl Rumble, Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Councillor Rosie Smithson, Councillor Anthony Specca, Councillor Ed Thompson, Councillor Caroline Topping, Councillor Geoff Wakeling, Councillor Sarah Whitelock, Councillor Tim Wilson, Councillor Kay Yule

Officers present: Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Head of Legal & Democratic Services), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Katy Cassidy (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Lorraine Fitch (Democratic Services Manager), Phil Harris (Strategic Communications and Marketing Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Karen Last (Electoral Services Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Philip Ridley (Head of Planning & Coastal Management), Isabel Rolfe (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Karen Thomas (Head of Coastal Partnership East)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ceresa, Dean, Gandy, King, Scrancher and Starling.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made.

3 Announcements

Chair of the Council

The Chair updated on the upcoming Model District Council planned for the 9 February 2024. The event was oversubscribed at the close of registration. The main topic was constructed as Intergenerational Political Equity, and the Chair hoped the young people could come and explore how their voices can be heard in East Suffolk.

The Chair outlined there would be a marketplace event over lunch, a keynote speaker who was the Head of Advocacy from the National Youth Council, and a workshop on tips for public speaking. There would also be experts from departments in East Suffolk Council talking about the work they do.

The Chair advised he had attended East Suffolk Council's, Quality of Place Awards on 29 November which was the 13th year of giving out the awards in the local community. The awards took place at the Framlingham Castle Community Rooms and was a great event.

The Chair also attended Bungay Town Dinner on 1 December at Bungay Community Centre

Vice-Chair of the Council

Councillor Fisher attended the Mayor of Ipswich Charity Fundraiser which was a Cheese and Wine Evening supporting Inspire Suffolk and Brave Futures on 26 November in the Mayors Parlour, Ipswich Town Hall.

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council Councillor Topping was delighted to announce the retention of the Member Charter Plus award. Thanks was offered to Sarah Davis, Democratic Services Officer, Sam Kenwood, Communities Officer, and Stacey Ransbury Performance & Risk Officer for their work. Councillor Topping thanked all the teams, Officers and Members involved in completing the work to retain the award.

Using delegated authority as Leader of the Council the following changes had been made: From 18 December 2023 Councillor Sally Noble was appointed as Assistant Cabinet Member for the Environment and Councillor Lee Reeves became the Assistant Cabinet Member for Community Health

Councillor Topping also announced that Councillor Sheryl Rumble took over as Chair of Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth Community Partnership with effect from 16th January.

Cabinet Members

Councillor Daly updated that following the Council motion regarding the Energy (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Programme (NSIP) a letter was sent to the Secretary of State. The letter requested a response and favoured a visit in person from them. A response was received from MP Andrew Bowie, the Minister for Nuclear Networks who advised the government would continue their commitment to large scale nuclear energy.

Councillor Daly highlighted the recent press article which promoted the £1.2 billion government funding to continue forward with Sizewell C.

Councillor Yule promoted the recent awards for Local Authority Building Control, Building Excellence. East Suffolk's Building Control Team won the regional section for Best Residential Extension and Best Residential Builder categories. Congratulations were offered to the team.

Councillor Langdon-Morris reminded Member about the Procurement Workshop the following day at East Suffolk House.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive had no announcements.

4 Minutes

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

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Questions from the Public

No questions had been submitted by the electorate as provided by Council Procedure Rule 8.

6 Questions from Members

There were five questions submitted by Members.

Question from Councillor Mike Deacon to Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment

"There are parts of the District where there are regular issues of domestic and commercial waste bins being left out on pavements well after they have been emptied.

How many Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued under this Administration for breaches of regulations related to this?"

Response from Councillor Smith-Lyte

Since the Contract Management Team took over the complaints process for bins being left on pavements in July 2023, they have received around 30 reports. These reports are allocated to one of the two Waste Street Scene officers to investigate by visiting each case, however no evidence of persistent issues has been identified. The first approach to residents and businesses will always be to persuade and educate before moving on to taking legal action. As such, no legal action has been taken thus far, showing that education helps residents and businesses take responsibility and ensure they are considerate to their neighbours and visitors to the area.

The Contract Management Team work closely with the Environmental Protection Team, who are authorised to issue fixed penalty notices to householders and businesses. This process has been recently reviewed to take into account up to date legal advice and make sure it is fit for purpose.

Supplementary question from Councillor Deacon

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Councillor Deacon stated that there was confusion over refuse collections during the recent festive season. There were reports of overflowing bins and it was felt information was buried on the website and unclear for residents.

'What measures will be taken in the lead up the 2024 festive period to avoid the same happening again.'

Councillor Smith-Lyte responded to state she would take the question back to the service area and find out any additional information regarding the festive period just gone and look to ensure learning is applied to the next festive period.

Councillor Smith-Lyte added that she found the website information clear and did not feel it was buried in the website.

Question from Councillor Janet Craig to Councillor Jan Candy, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health

"Recently it was revealed in the Future Health Report, 'Hiding in Plain Sight', that the Norfolk and Waveney ICB area has the highest rate of malnutrition in the entire country. It means around one in 15 people in the region, including the northern part of our District, are not getting enough of the right foods to live healthy lives.

This shameful statistic was reported in the Eastern Daily Press on January 8th, 2024.

Given the strong correlation in the Report between malnutrition and deprivation, what more can we do to address malnutrition in the 20% most deprived wards in our District?"

Response from Councillor Candy

Thank you for your question. I couldn't agree more that this is a shocking statistic. However I am pleased to say that East Suffolk Council has a range of support in place to ensure that individuals and families can access low-cost nutritious food, with several specifically focussed on areas of deprivation, including:

- Our Community Help Hub takes referrals for help with the rising cost of living, including food. Community Help Officers triage referrals and provide immediate practical support e.g. connect people to food banks, emergency food vouchers or essential household items or make referrals to other services and support. Our Financial Inclusion Officers work with residents on their money – to increase their income (including through grants and benefits) and reduce expenditure
- We have used our UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grant to fund a Food Network Coordinator at Community Action Suffolk to support and enhance local food pathways, with a particular focus on ensuring sufficient supply of food to food banks, pantries, fridges and other food 'pop-ups' in the district
- We have a Community Pantry grant scheme and supported five pantries to date
- We have a stock of energy efficient cooking equipment (electric hobs, slow cookers, microwaves) and recipe books
- We have funded Abbeycroft Leisure to deliver 32 'cooking on a budget' classes to help families to learn to cook low-cost, nutritious and tasty meals (classes include demonstrations, samples and meal packs to try at home)
- We provided 1,600 Field to Fork Growing Kits with planters, compost plugs, seeds, gardening gloves and tools, plus growing instructions and an online community to share hints and tips, through our most deprived primary schools. To date we have supported 15 community growing spaces with grants across the district
- East Suffolk Council co-ordinates the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) provision aimed at families on free school meals. At Christmas we provided healthy multi-meal kits to our most vulnerable families to ensure that they could access good quality, nutritious food over the Christmas break and provided vouchers for Christmas dinners at Morrisons to some of our most vulnerable Lowestoft families
- Funding from Suffolk County Council has enabled us to run Cost of Living Community Grants last winter and this, with a focus on community-led projects that enable residents to stay warm and well fed over the winter months.

Ideas about what Councillors could do to directly contribute to this work include:

1. Allocate unspent Enabling Communities Budget funding to Ease the Squeeze to enable us to fund more community pantries, cooking on a budget classes, low-energy cooking equipment and Field to Fork growing kits
2. Identify new locations for community pantries and/or Field to Fork Growing Spaces in your wards

3. Sign up to Suffolk 500 Reasons – the aim is to get 500 members who pay a minimum of £1 a week which is awarded as £500 grants to individuals and families in need - Who are we and how does it work? – 500 Suffolk Reasons. Several cases through the Help Hub have been supported through 500 Reasons.
4. Promote the Cost of Living leaflet to residents: Cost of Living Support - East-Suffolk-2023 (pagetiger.com)
5. Refer any residents in need of help and support with money or access to food and other essentials through the Cost of living referral - My East Suffolk.

Supplementary question from Councillor Craig

Councillor Craig Queried where figures for the rest of East Suffolk could be viewed.

Councillor Candy responded to state she would find out and let Councillor Craig know.

Question from Councillor Alan Green to Councillor Kay Yule, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management

Councillor Green withdrew his question.

Question from Councillor Paul Ashdown to Councillor Ashton Cabinet Member for Corporate Services - Digital, Customer Services, HR and Assets

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The question had been submitted to Councillor Toby Hammond, however it was agreed prior to the meeting that the question would be answered by Councillor Ashton Cabinet Member for Corporate Services - Digital, Customer Services, HR and Assets

"I was pleased to see the press release on the Nexus project - the new industrial development on Newcombe Road at Lowestoft's PowerPark.

Some will recall the Local Procurement Task and Finish Group which was established in 2020 to recognise procurement as an arm of economic development and post COVID-19 recovery.

The cross-party Task and Finish Group was convened to explore local procurement proposals. At the conclusion of its work, one of the recommendations of the Group was that wherever possible, this Council would engage local businesses for goods and services.

Why have we chosen Bycroft Commercial in Great Yarmouth to market the units for the Nexus project when there are local commercial estate agents who have the same expertise?"

Response from Councillor Ashton

East Suffolk Council sought three quotes from suitably qualified firms before awarding this contract. The three quotes process is set out in the Council's procurement rules as a compliant procurement route for lower value contracts.

The Council was seeking to contract with a company that was suitable qualified to market these types of commercial units and would offer the council best value.

There are a limited number of commercial agents within the district, and just one based in Lowestoft where the Nexus site is located. Therefore, on occasion we needed to look outside of the district to appoint a suitable contractor.

Bycrofts are based close to us in Great Yarmouth, covering the Lowestoft area. Bycrofts are also able to offer us advice from a qualified surveyor as part of our contract with them, providing us with sound advice around specific lettings such as Nexus.

It is worth noting that in a pure agency role, as opposed to valuation work and lease advice, we have instructed the agents based in Lowestoft on four occasions in the last twelve months and have also worked with that same agent on two acquisitions.

- **Supplementary question from Councillor Ashdown**

Councillor Ashdown stated it was great competition and queried how many local agents were asked to quote for the contracts?

Councillor Ashton responded to state he would find out and let Councillor Ashdown know.

- **Question from Councillor Mark Jepson to Councillor Caroline Topping, Leader of the Council**

"The previous leader of East Suffolk Council took it upon himself to visit every Councillor in their elected ward to get to know the Councillor and as an opportunity for them to update him on local and strategic issues directly affecting them and their residents.

Will our Leader agree to adopt a similar approach and confirm she is open to learning more about the district she is leading?"

Response from Councillor Topping

I recall very fondly the 2 hours spent with the former leader in Beccles. It was a time when the term 'Covid' was mainly reserved for scientists. I was able to show Steve the bright lights of the town and talk to him about some of the challenges – it was a very pleasant afternoon.

When I look at what changed as a result of that meeting, unfortunately it was very little. More was achieved when I was able to speak to Steve about specific issues and present specific challenges.

I am very open to learning more about the district I am leading, and would say that in my first 9 months I have learned a great deal and visited places I have not seen before. These have been purposeful visits with local councillors, partners and the local communities and I have taken the time to listen and learn about the issue and the wider context.

I would add that East Suffolk has an amazing group of Officers and Councillors, including a talented set of Cabinet Members, who are out and about every day meeting local communities and addressing local and strategic issues. This is central to the success of East Suffolk.

I am always open to an invite to look at a specific topic / issue which needs the Leader of the Councils attention, but would add, in a post Covid world, that if any Councillor needs to contact or meet with me, I am always willing to respond quickly through Teams to make the best use of everybody's time.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jepson

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Councillor Jepson followed up his question to state he looked forward to meeting with the Leader in Felixstowe.

7 Petitions

No petitions had been received as provided by Council Procedure Rule 10.

8 Notices of Motion

No notices of motion had been made as provided by Council Procedure Rule 11.

9 Proposed changes to East Suffolk Council's Constitution

Full Council were presented with report ES/1827 which related to the Proposed changes to East Suffolk Council's Constitution. The report was introduced by The Chair of the Council, Councillor Anthony Specca, who was the Chair of the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG), alongside Councillor Peter Byatt, Member of the CRWG.

The report set out a series of proposed changes to East Suffolk Council's Constitution, by the cross-party CRWG, which Full Council was asked to consider and adopt.

The CRWG was convened by the Chair of Council to carry out a fundamental review of the Constitution to ensure East Suffolk Council's (ESC's) Constitution was complete, accurate, up to date, clear, lawful, fit for purpose and democratically sound.

On 11 December 2023, Audit and Governance Committee considered the proposed changes and resolved to recommend to Full Council that the changes to the Constitution be adopted, pending the CRWG's completion of its full review of the Constitution.

The Chair outlined that the group wanted the constitution to be accessible to members and be based in democratic soundness. The Audit and Governance Committee voted unanimously the recommendations should be accepted by Full Council.

The Chair highlighted 3 points regarding the group outcomes, firstly work had been completed as a group with cross party recommendations. Secondly all decisions that had been taken were moved on the full consensus of the group. In addition, there were officers participating in the CRWG. Thirdly there was the intention to provide accessibility and democratic soundness to the constitution.

The Chair stated that in his role as the 'Neutral Umpire' as Chair of the Council there was an area of change he had advocated for, this regarded the current requirement to vote on whether to debate a Notice on Motion that comes forward to Full Council.

In future if a motion comes forward and was in order, it would be debated.

A further change was that written into the Constitution, the Chair of Overview Scrutiny Committee had to be a member of opposition.

The Chair read out a statement from Councillor Starling, who could not attend the meeting.

'It is my belief that the constitutional changes recommended are an improvement to the current governance document and will serve this council and the constituents that we represent well in the future. These modifications have come about from a cross party desire to both govern efficiently and to acknowledge that circumstances in society constantly change, and to survive in such a world, we must proactively adapt our governance arrangements.

What is proposed to you today promotes the first part of an in-depth review and updating of the active document that is are first principal document that all other documents we create flows from. Our approach to this review endeavours to not only simplify our procedures but also make them more inclusive to all parties and allow for an increase to the accessibility and understanding of the local government process, that many view as a confusing labyrinthine structure.

I conclude my statement with thanks to all members of the constitution review group that contributed to this excellent document, and I look forward to working with you in the year to come'

Councillor Byatt added the following statement in support of the work he had completed with the CRWG.

'Our current Constitution was created from the necessary combination of those of the former Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Districts Councils for the new East Suffolk District in 2019.

During the initial four years of this Council it became clear that there were elements of the Constitution that needed to be re-visited and reconsidered.

Our Group welcomed the decision to establish a cross-Party Working Group for that purpose.

The Working Group has carried out a forensic assessment of the existing Constitution, with the principle of creating a document that was easy to understand, modern and relevant to how the Council operates.

This clarity will benefit Councillors and Officers alike, as well as assuring our 'customers' that we will deliver fair governance.

All these proposed changes are brought with the intention of making this a living and practical document.

I thank colleagues on the Working Group, under your Chairmanship, and with the advice of Chris Bing, for their dedication to their task, and endorse the recommendations.'

The Chair invited questions from the Chamber:

Councillor Bennett added his support for the group, which he was a part of and represented the Liberal Democrat group. He thanked the Chair for the opportunity to participate and looked to continued work with the group.

Councillor Deacon spoke as Chair of Overview Scrutiny Committee and provided thanks the Chair of the Council for seeking his comments. He queried a scenario where there could be a Cabinet decision which was deemed to be exempt from 'call in' and what would happen if the Chair (of Cabinet – the Leader of the Council) and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny could not come to an agreement.

The Chair responded that it was impossible for the Chair not to be involved and as the neutral umpire, providing the parity of esteem between Scrutiny and Cabinet he would not be able to proceed without Scrutiny approval. The Chair advised that it was challenging to write that specifically into the constitution from a legal standpoint. He advised that the group could revisit this and find a way to specify what would happen when an agreement could not be reached. This could include consideration to involving a third party.

The Chair concluded that he would not want to proceed without the agreement of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Topping requested the Chair read out recommendation 2 twice, so everyone was clear.

Councillor Specca confirmed that all changes would take effect from the 25 January 2024.

Councillor Gooch was delighted to see gender neutral language in the constitution.

The Chair highlighted the proposed change to speeches and questions going forward. The proposer would introduce their item, read out the recommendation (s) and then

the chamber would go into debate and discussion. It was hoped the new approach would allow for more free flowing debate during Full Council.

The Chair moved the recommendation, seconded by the Vice Chair Councillor Fisher, who added that he was part of the working group and a tremendous amount of work had gone into the bringing the document for consideration. He requested all Members to support the recommendations.

Councillor Jepson stated he respect what everyone has said during the discussion. He was concerned about the reduction in document size and wanted to ensure that process and procedure had not been lost.

Councillor Byatt assured that there had been extensive examination of the length of the main document and that all the information was present, however had been simplified and adopted into appendices.

Councillor Daly was very welcoming of the proposals, and it was a great step forward.

The Chair addressed Councillor Jepson's point regarding the reduction in page numbers by adding that the information had been put into appendices which would be hyperlinked. In addition, there would be a plain language guidebook to support Officers and Members in working to the new Constitution.

The Chair drew the debate to a close and on it was by unanimous vote.

RESOLVED

1. That the changes to East Suffolk Council's (ESC's) Constitution, as proposed by the cross-party Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) and as reviewed and supported by the Audit and Governance Committee (as detailed in Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C to the report), be adopted as East Suffolk Council's Constitution pending the CRWG's completion of its full review of the Constitution in Spring 2024.
2. That it be agreed that these changes to the Constitution will take effect and come into force from, and including, Thursday 25 January 2024.

10 Calendar of Meetings 2024 / 2025

Report ES/1828 related to the Calendar of Meetings 2024 – 2025 Municipal Year and was introduced by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Topping.

The Calendar of Meetings provided the framework for the democratic and decision-making processes that would underpin the delivery of the key priorities identified within the Council's East Suffolk Strategic Plan.

It was noted that the the Chair of the Council / Chair of the Committees have the power to call additional or 'Extraordinary' meetings when required, to accommodate

urgent or unscheduled items of business or to change a meeting date to reflect unexpected circumstances for example, bad weather.

The Calendar would be published on the Council's website via CMIS. The meeting papers for Full Council, Cabinet and the Committees were also available to view on the website.

The meeting dates for the Community Partnerships and the Community Partnership Board would be populated as soon as practicable and would be shared with Members.

In addition approval was sought to change the start time of Cabinet meetings from 6.30pm to 6.00pm with effect from, and including, Cabinet on 6 February 2024. Approval was also sought to change the date of April 2024's Cabinet Meeting.

The Chair invited questions from the Chamber.

Councillor Byatt stated that he did not see a problem with the change in time. He sought assurance on whether Members would still be able to access the meetings remotely.

Councillor Topping responded to state there was no intention of taking it offline.

Councillor Rivett raised a concern regarding a previous paper attempting to change the Cabinet start time. He highlighted the same issue of train times and being open and inclusive to Members who work or members who might be thinking about becoming a Councillor.

Councillor Rivett suggested an amendment to the recommendations which removed recommendation 2 which sought approval to change the time of the meeting to 6pm.

The amendment was Seconded by Councillor Jepson who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Byatt stated he was happy to attend remotely and respected what Councillor Rivett had raised. He suggested a 6-month review and report back on how it was going. Councillor Byatt suggested a flexible approach to giving it a try.

Councillor Bennett highlighted that an earlier start would mean an earlier finish.

Councillor Robinson stated that the earlier time would preclude anyone who works 9-5 hours from the South of the district attending meetings in the North and vice versa depending how the meetings fall.

Councillor Hammond added there was a number of Councillors who were working parents as well working part / full-time. He highlighted that lots of companies offer flexible working arrangements and felt that the change of time would work well for the Cabinet.

Councillor Ashton appreciated the sentiment behind the suggested amendment and added that it was challenging for full time employees to be in Cabinet Member positions. Councillor Ashton stated he would not support the amendment.

Councillor Smith-Lyte added to Councillor Bennett's point that when considering an earlier finish, it would also mean that Officers would be get to finish earlier as well.

Councillor Topping concluded that she wanted to be inclusive. Cabinet Members had been consulted and were happy with the proposed new start time.

Councillor Jepson highlighted that there had been discussion in the previous administration about changing the start times of meetings. He felt that it was a good approach to consider flexibility to reflect the dynamic Chamber, however agreed it was important not to deter anyone who might want to become a Councillor. He stated he was in support of the amendment.

Councillor Rivett concluded to reiterate his concern that the change in time could preclude people from wishing to become a Councillor.

By a majority vote against the amendment, the amendment did not pass.

There being no further speeches on the recommendations, and on the proposition of Councillor Topping, seconded by Councillor Whitelock it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Calendar of Meetings for the 2024/2025 Municipal Year, at Appendix A of the report, be approved.
2. That the changing of the start time of Cabinet meetings from 6.30pm to 6.00pm, with effect from, and including, Cabinet on 6 February 2024, be approved; and
3. That moving the Cabinet meeting scheduled for Tuesday 2 April 2024 to Tuesday 9 April 2024 be approved.

11 Adoption of Member Development Strategy 2023-2027 and Member Development Programme 2023-2027

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Topping introduced the report ES1829 which related to the Adoption of Member Development Strategy 2023-2027 and Member Development Programme 2023-2027.

On behalf of the cross-party Member Development Steering Group, Councillor Topping was pleased to be able to introduce the report which asked Full Council to adopt the Member Development Strategy and the Member Development Programme.

Learning and Development activities were stated to be an integral part of the support provided to Councillors throughout their term of office to enable them to serve the residents of East Suffolk.

The Strategy included an Action Plan with a number of activities that would be developed and overseen by the Steering Group over the remainder of the current term of office (see appendix A of the report). The Member Development Programme set out the training and development programme for Councillors and this would be supplemented, each year, by an Annual Training and Development Schedule.

Councillor Topping added that an underpinning element of both the Strategy and the Programme was the retention of the Local Government Association's Charter Plus status for Councillor Development. Councillor Topping was extremely pleased to report that, following a rigorous external inspection, East Suffolk Council was successfully reaccredited Charter Plus status in December 2023.

Councillor Topping offered her thanks to the Steering Group, partner representatives and all the Officers that pulled together the Charter submission which had well over 100 pieces of evidence.

There were no questions.

Councillor Topping moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Byatt who added that it was a pleasure to work on the group and thanked Sarah Davis, Democratic Services Officer. Councillor Byatt urged Members to consider their own training needs and encouraged Members to complete their skills audit.

Councillor Jepson supported Councillor Byatt's point and encouraged members to attend training that was offered.

Councillor Gooch congratulated the team on the report and award. She added that the Member training programme was excellent, interesting, and inclusive with a remote option to attend and engage in training.

Councillor Topping concluded that she would like all members to complete the skills audit and reiterated that it was important to have the right people in the right places.

The recommendations were put to a vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Member Development Strategy 2023-2027 and Member Development Programme 2023-2027 be adopted.

12 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2023/24

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Topping introduced report ES-1830 which related to the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2023/24

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced the requirement for all local authorities to conduct a review of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places.

The current review must have been started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

The purpose of the report was to ask Council to approve the recommendations contained in the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations for 2023/24.

The formal review notice was published on 3 October 2023 and the consultation period ran from 3 October to 30 November 2023.

There were no questions from Members.

Councillor Topping moved the recommendation, which was duly seconded by Councillor Hammond

Councillor Byatt thanked Councillor Topping for bringing the report and offered thanks to electoral services team for their ongoing work.

Councillor Gooch offered thanks to the electoral services team in responding to changes made in respect of Pakefield and Kirkley and the rename of Pakefield North, to Lowestoft Pakefield Park and that the area would be moved to Carlton and Whitton

Councillor Topping concluded to thank the team for their on-going work.

It was by unanimous vote.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

13 Amendment to the Constitution: Planning Committee Member Call In Process

Councillor Kay Yule, Cabinet member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management to introduce report ES/1832 which related to the Planning Committee Call in Process.

Strategic Planning Committee had recommended that a 'Planning Committee Member Call In' process be introduced to East Suffolk Council's Referral Panel arrangements and consequential amendments be made to the Constitution.

On 2 March 2023, Scrutiny Committee considered the matter of democratic accountability within the Planning process and made a series of recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee.

On 3 July 2023, the Strategic Planning Committee resolved that Audit and Governance Committee considered and recommend to Full Council the approval of the introduction

of a 'Planning Committee Member Call In' process and an amendment to the scheme of delegations.

On 11 December 2023, Audit and Governance Committee resolved to recommend to Full Council that the Council's Constitution be amended as per Strategic Planning Committee's proposals of 3 July 2023, to introduce a Planning Committee Member Call In process and to amend the scheme of delegations, as detailed at sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the report.

Audit and Governance Committee also resolved that the Planning Committee Member Call In process should be reviewed 6 months after implementation to monitor progress.

On the proposition of Councillor Yule, the recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillor Fisher.

Councillor Hedgley proposed an amendment to the recommendation to make the review process at 12 months rather than 6 months.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Rumble.

There was a debate in the chamber regarding the suggested amendment. It was highlighted that the planning process could have a lot of interest from residents and could be contentious. A number of Members stated they understood Councillor Hedgley's point of view. There was some discussion regarding the number of applications received in some rural areas and that 12 months would be more suitable for a full review to take place. There were counter views that 6 months would be adequate and there would be on-going review of the process.

The amendment was put to a vote and with a majority vote against, the proposed amendment did not pass.

Members continued to debate the original recommendations. There had been some positive feedback from some parishes where the changes had been discussed. A feeling of disconnect from some parish areas was noted. Councillor Whitelock highlighted that it would be good to bring planning processes into the open and to encourage parishes to engage with Officers if there were questions that arise. Councillor Whitelock also encouraged members to engage with their local parishes and they need to be engaged to make the system work.

RESOLVED

That the Council's Constitution be amended as per Strategic Planning Committee's proposals of 3 July 2023, to introduce a Planning Committee Member call in process and to amend the scheme of delegations, as detailed at sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the report.

Full Council received report ES/1832, which was presented by Councillor Topping, the Leader of the Council, and provided individual Cabinet Members' reports on their areas of responsibility, as well as reports from those Members appointed to represent East Suffolk Council on Outside Bodies. The Leader stated that the written reports could be taken as read and she invited relevant questions on their contents.

The Chair invited questions which were directed to the relevant Cabinet member through the Leader of the Council, Caroline Topping

Councillor Jepson wanted to congratulate Jemima Shaw who recently qualified as a Solicitor with East Suffolk Council. Congratulations was offered to Ms Shaw from Members.

Councillor Patience asked Deputy Leader, Councillor Beavan how many people had taken the offer to leave St Peters Court.

Councillor Beavan responded to state he did not have the figure to hand and would report back, however the process itself was underway.

Councillor Mallinder thanked Councillor Smith-Lyte for the report and queried if there was any proposal to change glass collection to curb side collection.

Councillor Topping responded to state there had been a presentation from the Head of Operations which outlined new government legalisation to have curb side collection implemented by 2026.

Councillor Deacon referenced page 441 of the report and queried the use of external consultants and if that would have undermined internal Officers.

Councillor Ashton stated there were excellent staff, who had advised the best course of action was to employ external consultants. The scope of the review concerned the customer experience when telephoning the Council. Councillor Ashton also referenced the wider work reviewing the end to end experience for customers engaging with the Council that was on-going.

Councillor Craig highlighted that there was only one mention in the current Play Strategy of an inclusive roundabout in Ringsfield. Councillor Craig questioned if assurance could be provided for more provision for 'disabled children so they can play alongside their peers and siblings – wheelchair swings for example.'

Councillor Craig conclude to that that there was talk a about equality and diversity and 'we don't want to be seen to be falling short in this area'.

Councillor Whitelock responded to state that she was not aware of the specific details of that playground, but would have a look into and report back to Councillor Craig.

Councillor Green referenced page 449 of the report which referred to the Annual External Audit and questioned whether 'East Suffolk Council should be reviewing the use of Ernst and Young, given the fact they were responsible for auditing the Post

Office between 1986 and 2018 giving them a clean 'bill of health' – the entire period of the Horizon scandal.'

Councillor Langdon-Morris thanked Councillor Green for the question. He advised he would have to explore further and would come back to Councillor Green with a written response.

Councillor Smithson referenced page 444 of the report concerning Freeport East and queried how many jobs had been created so far, and how many of them have helped address deprivation in communities around Felixstowe and Harwich.

Councillor Beavan responded to state there had not been many created to date and it had been taking a while to get off the ground. There were hopes for good employment opportunities in the future.

Councillor Pitchers referenced page 434 of the report which mentioned engaging a specialist retrofit designer for a project in Beccles. He queried why the designer was used and not the skilled in-house team, or experts from the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership or Groundwork East.

Councillor Beavan responded to state that he would have to go back to the service area and to respond, he added that he was aware there was a skill shortage in the retrofit area, however, would report back when he knew more.

Councillor Gooch referenced page 451 concerning the approved incinerator on the Ellough Industrial Estate and queried what the radius and hours of operation would be.

Councillor Hammond responded that it would be a 24-hour model of operation. He advised there was detailed information available on the modelling of radius air impacts which he would be happy to share and discuss further.

Councillor Parker referenced page 433 and the new mobile scheduling solution. There had been contact with some tenants who reported significant delays in the reporting system which was affecting their health and wellbeing. It was also reported there was a shortage of staff. Councillor Parker questioned if Councillor Beavan would agree that there was urgency in the area, and the Council were letting tenants down.

Councillor Beavan stated it was concerning to hear and would like to hear the cases where delays have occurred. Councillor Beavan had spent some time in the area to gain further understanding and hoped that the new system would be more efficient, work better and provide more effective monitoring.

Councillor Beavan reported that there continued to be new regulations coming into force which the Council is endeavouring to respond to. Councillor Beavan reiterated that he would like to know where there are issues and wanted to ensure the Council are looking after their tenants.

Councillor Byatt referenced page 433 of the report which referenced the Memorandum of Understanding with the London School of Economics and the 'Zurich

Tool' and another set of Consultants, Icarus Collective Ltd, from Derbyshire. 'What sort of economic data will you be measuring and at what cost and over what time scale.'

Councillor Topping responded to state that she would have to go back to the service area to find out and would get back to Councillor Byatt.

Councillor Patience raised a question when the parking review would be undertaken in Lowestoft.

Councillor Hammond thanked Councillor Patience for his continued work representing residents views on parking issues. There was an ongoing bespoke parking review arrangement, Felixstowe has been completed with Beccles and Bungay underway. Councillor Hammond recognised the demand for the review to consider Lowestoft and stated it would go next on the list. He concluded that it would likely be at least a couple of months before work could begin in Lowestoft.

There were no further questions.

15 Exempt/Confidential Items

On the proposition of the Chair, Councillor Speca, seconded by Councillor Fisher, 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

16 Lowestoft Tidal Barrier Project Update

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

The meeting concluded at 9:26

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Chair