

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Conference Room, Riverside,
Lowestoft on **Wednesday, 22 November 2023** at **6:30 PM**

Members present:

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Paul Ashton, Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Jan Candy, Councillor Jenny Ceresa, Councillor Dan Clery, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Julia Ewart, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Amanda Folley, Councillor Tess Gandy, 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 George King, Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Stephen Molyneux, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Sally Noble, Councillor Graham Parker, Councillor Keith Patience, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Sheryl Rumble, Councillor Myles Scrancher, Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Councillor Rosie Smithson, Councillor Anthony Specca, Councillor Jamie Starling, Councillor Ed Thompson, Councillor Geoff Wakeling, Councillor Tim Wilson

Officers present: Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Katy Cassidy (Democratic Services Officer), Martin Clarke (Licensing Manager and Housing Lead Lawyer), Lorraine Fitch (Democratic Services Officer), Phil Harris (Strategic Communications and Marketing Manager), Catherine Hickling (Lead Food and Safety Officer), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Ian Johns (Planner), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Siobhan Martin (Head of Internal Audit), Andrea McMillan (Planning Manager - Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Fiona Quinn (Head of Environmental Services and Port Health), Philip Ridley (Head of Planning and Coastal Management), Isabel Rolfe (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer), Karen Thomas (Head of Coastal Partnership East), Christine Walker (Food and Safety Manager), Ben Woolnough (Planning Development Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Deborah Dean, Beth Keys-Holloway, James Mallinder, Debbie McCallum, Mark Packard, Malcolm Pitchers, Lee Reeves, Craig Rivett, Caroline Topping, Sarah Whitelock and Kay Yule.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

3 Minutes

On the proposition of Councillor Daly, seconded by Councillor Smith-Lyte it was **RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Announcements

The Chair of the Council

The Chair outlined the upcoming Model District Council on 9 February 2024. All schools in East Suffolk had been invited to nominate pupils to participate in playing the roles of councillors. They would be recreating the current political composition and replicating a Full Council with young people drafting and moving to pass a motion. There would be other activities and talks during the day. All group leaders have been invited to participate on the day, including a question time session.

The Chair highlighted the recent Youth Takeover Day on 17 November 2023 which was held at Riverside. The participants were challenged to come up with a campaign for their own communities. They were coached on how to be politically active. The day was a great success.

Following receipt of their invitation to attend the upcoming Model District Council event, an email was received from the Head of the Benjamin Britain Academy who said 'This is some of the best work I have seen from any Council in engaging young people, well done'.

The Chair thanked the Democratic Services Team, Communities Team and Communications Team for their continued work on these projects.

The Chair advised that he had also attended the following events:

Mayor of Ipswich Afternoon Tea Fundraiser on 28 September 2023 at Chef's Whites, Suffolk New College in Ipswich

Suffolk Harvest Festival on 1 October 2023 at St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Mayor of Ipswich Civic Service on 15 October 2023 at St Mary-le-Tower Church, Ipswich

Lowestoft Service of Remembrance on 12 November 2023 at Royal Plain, Lowestoft

Bungay Service of Remembrance on 12 November 2023 at St Marys Church, Bungay

The Chair recognised the recent Remembrance Day and acknowledged that a number of members attended various services and events across the district. Note was drawn to Councillor Lee Reeves who was East Suffolk Council's, Armed Forces Champion and attended a Remembrance Parade and Wreath Laying Service at the Athenaeum in Bury St Edmunds

The Vice-Chair of the Council

Councillor Fisher advised that he had attended the following events:

BSC Multicultural Services 25th Anniversary Celebration on 1 October 2023 at Trinity Park Conference Centre, Ipswich

Mayor of Ipswich Fundraiser Thai Night on 19 October 2023 at Kwan Thai Restaurant, Ipswich

Saxmundham Service of Remembrance on 12 November 2023 at St Mary and St Peter's Church, Kelsale

ActiveLives AGM on 16 November 2023 at Kesgrave Community and Conference Centre

The Leader of the Council

On behalf of the Leader, The Deputy Leader announced the following changes which had been made using the Leader's delegated authority:

Changes to Committee Memberships:

With retrospective effect from 26 September 2023, Councillor Jan Candy was replaced on the Scrutiny Committee by Councillor Stephen Molyneux.

On the same date, Councillor Sarah Whitelock was replaced on the Audit and Governance Committee by Councillor Lee Reeves.

Changes to a Working Group

-
_With retrospective effect from 29 August 2023, Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte was replaced on the Local Plan Working Group by Councillor Stephen Molyneux.

Changes to Outside Bodies

-
_The Leader appointed Councillor Tom Daly, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Energy and Climate Change, as the ESC representative on the Local Government Association, Special Interest Group Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeAF) with retrospective effect from 1 August 2023. Councillor Daly replaced Councillor Hammond as the Council's representative.

Councillor Dan Clery, Assistant Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Transport, as the Council's representative on The A47 Alliance, East West Rail and the Greater Anglia Integrated Transport Forum, replacing Councillor Hammond, with retrospective effect from 20 August 2023.

Councillor Jan Candy was going to be part of the Landguard and Felixstowe Conservation Trust, replacing Councillor Hammond, with retrospective effect from 29 August 2023.

Councillor Graham had been appointed to the Places Leisure Partnership Board, replacing Councillor Paul Ashton, with retrospective effect from 29 August 2023.

With retrospective effect from 23 October 2023 Councillor Tom Daly, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Energy and Climate Change, would be the ESC representative on the Police and Crime Panel, replacing Councillor Sarah Whitelock.

Councillor Sarah Whitelock had been appointed to the Everyone Active Outside Body, replacing Councillor Paul Ashton, with immediate effect.

The Deputy Leader noted the recent adverse weather conditions and the continued high water levels in the district. He hoped all those affected had their compensation matters resolved swiftly. The Deputy Leader also paid thanks to the services both official and unofficial involved in supporting communities during the storms and in the aftermath.

Cabinet Members

Councillor Ashton announced that Adrian Mills would be standing down as the Head of Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) to take retirement in the Spring of 2024. There would be a recruitment day on 11 December 2023.

Councillor Candy thanked the chamber for support regarding the statement on the Gaza conflict.

Councillor Langdon-Morris thanked East Suffolk Services and the Senior Management Team at East Suffolk Council for the response and support to residents in his ward. There was a mobilisation of the local community in supporting one another, which included a number of farmers around Framlingham who helped to rescue those in need.

Councillor Graham announced that Sarah Shinnie, Corporate Events and Commercial Projects Officer was recently honoured at the Active Suffolk Awards. She won Activity Champion of the year for her work on recent the Tour of Britain event.

The Chief Executive

The Chief Executive had no announcements to make to Full Council.

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 two questions submitted from Members

Question from Councillor Graham Parker to Councillor Toby Hammond, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport

'Supporting the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) plays a significant role in helping the UK to meet its Net Zero targets, but progress so far has been slow. While the Government estimates the UK will need 300,000 EV charge points by 2035, when the sale of new petrol and diesel cars will be banned, current figures show the UK has fewer than 40,000 publicly accessible EV charge points.

With a mere 13% of the target achieved so far, accelerating the current roll-out pace is more important than ever.

What is the plan to install sufficient EV charging infrastructure in East Suffolk, and given there are just three public charging points in our own carparks throughout the entire District, when can we see that useful facility and income stream increasing?'

Response from Councillor Toby Hammond, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport

'Thanks very much for the question which I thought was topical and well put. There is rather a lot I could say on this but I will try and keep it fairly brief as we have a lot of business to get through tonight.

I was once unlucky enough myself to completely run out of charge on my slightly old electric car in a live lane of the A14. This happened to me after visiting a series of broken charging stations, so I can absolutely support your point that we urgently need better charging infrastructure in our district. Government support for EV charging stations has been really poorly administered and we are woefully behind, as the numbers in your question demonstrate.

East Suffolk has not, to date, had a formal policy of installing public EV charging points in our car parks, we have just been more opportunistic, for example when we redeveloped the Waveney Valley Pool and Gym, we installed charging points while we were at it.

The main question we need to consider, and consider very carefully, is as a council do we actually want to intervene in the current charging point market and roll out our own network of charging points as a council service in our car parks and on other land we own. And are we well placed to do so on a commercially sustainable basis?

To explore this I have recently met with Anglia Car Charging Ltd, a leading business in our area. In terms of the commercial opportunities, they are now more around 50kW fast-charging equipment so you can charge your car quickly. This means that to be a successful operator, you don't just need the land, you also need a pretty high-power grid connection to run that charger.

Now Councillor Parker is quite right that there is a potential income stream here for ESC, but there is also a forward maintenance liability. These things do break down, and if residents come to rely on them to get home that is a serious thing.

I have also met with the largest employer in my ward, Clays Printers of Bungay to discuss their plans on EVs. They are promoting the UK Government's Electric Car Salary Sacrifice Scheme (a similar model to the old company car scheme) to encourage take up of EVs amongst their staff. They wanted to know if we were planning to install EV charging in our car parks in Bungay so they could take advantage. But this could also block EV car park spaces all day, if we are not careful.

I think it is also important to say that EV vehicles are not a silver bullet to the traffic volumes, safety and emissions challenges we face in our communities, and they are of course reliant on extractive practices for rare earth minerals for the batteries and have high embodied carbon. They are only as green as the electricity used to charge them. We are not saving the world by buying Teslas, whatever Elon Musk may like you to think.

Charging technology continues to change rapidly. Until this becomes mature, ESC has been reluctant to commit to large scale investments – which may quickly become obsolete. It's also important that EV chargers are considered alongside other urgent funding priorities like safer cycling provision, smaller and more responsive buses and car sharing.

We will continue to encourage communities and businesses to install EV charging points. We will also continue to support the Suffolk County Council-led Plugin Suffolk programme and will be promoting the scheme with communities across the district over the coming weeks.

This administration is keen to crack on with helping to push forward charging infrastructure in East Suffolk, and we have formed a small group with members and officers, which in fact met earlier today, to look at the options we have. One approach we are looking at is leasing any suitable ESC land we have to specialist charge point operators. This could be a good way of accelerating the rollout you want to see, without taking on the inherent liabilities.'

There were no supplementary questions

Question from Councillor Alan Green to Councillor Stephen Molyneux Assistant Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management (in absence of Councillor Yule, Cabinet Member with the responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management)

'The cost of a planning application for alterations to a domestic property is £206.00. The planning committee of the Parish of Kessingland has recently recommended for approval an application for the fitting of a heat pump. I believe this is the first stand-alone application to upgrade a heating system in Kessingland at a domestic property.

Due to the high cost of the pumps, and also the expense of installation, would the council consider waiving the cost of applications for heat pumps to encourage residents to apply? This will also support the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in its endeavour to get to Net Zero.'

Councillor Stephen Molyneux Assistant Cabinet Member with the responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management responded to state

“The planning application fees are set nationally by government and next month they are set to rise by 25% for minor and householder applications and 35% for major applications. This is a change we welcome to ensure that we can resource the planning service effectively and be financially compensated for the considerable time which officers have to put into planning applications. The planning fee for householder applications is the same for all forms of householder development, whether it is for an extension, a new fence or a heat pump and we have no ability to waive planning application fees.

However, the majority of proposals for air source heat pumps, solar panels and other forms or retrofitting of domestic properties to achieve higher standards of insulation and energy efficiency do not need planning permission.

Air Source Heat Pumps only tend to only require permission when they are larger than a normal domestic pump, when they are placed within 1 metre of the boundary of a property, are on a Listed Building or in some circumstances in a Conservation Area. When we do receive planning applications for heat pumps they will often require some additional consideration of noise and visual impacts, therefore justifying the fee and the officer time which has to go into that.

The nationally set householder fee for such installations is proportionate and overall not something that East Suffolk has the power to waive.”

There were no supplementary questions

7 Petitions

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

8 Notices of Motion

The Chair reported that one Notice of Motion had been accepted prior to the meeting.

On the proposition of the Chair, seconded by Councillor Gandy it was **RESOLVED** to debate the motion at the Full Council meeting, by a unanimous vote.

Councillor Gandy was asked to read out the motion.

The Council noted that:

1. The Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012 allows the Council to take into consideration, in the award of procurement contracts, any offer of additional community benefit which is over and above the specified requirements where these meet the Council’s priorities.
2. Since 2022 East Suffolk’s ‘Procurement and Contract Management Strategy’ has embedded Social Value as a key consideration, with a positive weighting, into its

procurement decisions. Beyond considering price alone, its spending power is now used to produce wider benefits that directly improve local communities, the local economy, and the environment.

3. Around 17.5% of public procurement contracts in the UK with a combined value of £37.5bn have been won by companies with links to tax havens, harming our economy by extracting tax receipts and significantly reducing the contributions that support vital public services.

The Council resolved to:

1. Promote and expect transparent, exemplary tax conduct from its suppliers and their supply chains;
2. Use the Social Value Act to integrate tax status further into our procurement process by giving weighting, as appropriate, based on a supplier's ethics and how and where they pay their tax when undertaking a buying decision, alongside considerations on other social value offers, value for money and the quality of service provided and
3. Report on the implementation and progress of social value benefits gained through procurement decisions on an annual basis.'

Councillor Gandy added that the motion was seeking to ask for transparency in potential suppliers regarding their tax status. Tax status would be considered alongside other factors when purchasing decisions were being made. Suppliers would be aware that the Council consider paying tax a social responsibility and would look to seek suppliers who pay their fair share of tax where possible.

Suggestions for implementing the motion were outlined which included adding additional questions in tender documentation or adding relevant information into terms and conditions of contracts.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Byatt who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Smith-Lyte thanked Councillor Gandy for the pertinent motion and added that she would also like to see, as much as possible local traders and business considered first in tender processes, extending further to countywide options then onto regional / national level businesses.

Councillor Jepson reflected that consideration was needed to the legalities of implementing a process where local businesses are considered first.

Councillor Jepson asked if any work had taken place already, recognising the potential impact on officer time.

Councillor Langdon-Morris noted there was an upcoming Procurement Strategy workshop in January 2024 and the motion could be discussed there.

Councillor Byatt stated that the issue was sent to the Audit and Governance Committee in the previous administration. Due to running out of time, the matter was being brought back for consideration.

Councillor Byatt highlighted the issue of billions of pounds being lost in corporate tax revenues due and stated that whilst some loopholes have been closed there was no national policy to fully address this.

He touched on the need to take separate legal advice. Councillor Byatt outlined an example from the National Auditing officer regarding PPE contracts and questionable procurement processes being undertaken.

Councillor Byatt concluded that the Council should make their position clear to suppliers and the public and urged members to support the motion.

Councillor Gandy responded to the points raised. Including local business was always a consideration. The legal framework around the process could be discussed at the procurement workshop as mentioned. The principles behind the motion work within the constitution and the over arching principles of the council.

Following debate it was **RESOLVED** by unanimous vote to pass the motion.

9 **Our Direction 2028**

The Deputy Leader introduced the 'Our Direction 2028' Strategic Plan and summarised that since the elections in May 2023 work had taken place on the next Strategic Plan for East Suffolk Council. In developing the plan, the GLI group considered what had been achieved previously, what needed to change to reflect GLI priorities, what could be built on and whether anything was missing. There was significant consultation with drop-in sessions for staff across all our operational sites, CEO briefings, and an all-Member briefing.

An online consultation for residents and stakeholders took place which was promoted by a press release. Stakeholders were written to informing them about the consultation. There were 380 responses were received to the consultation and incorporated into the finalisation of the 'Our Direction 2028' plan.

The document reflected the political ambitions of the new Administration but also contained wider collaboration which embedded the feedback from councillors, staff, stakeholders and local people within the final document.

The Deputy Leader concluded to state that the GLI group want to 'work with and empower communities and individuals, to protect what we love about our District, improve services where we need to, and adapt to our changing environment. We want the district to be in the best place possible by 2028, focusing on Environmental Impact, Sustainable Housing, Tackling Inequalities and a Thriving Economy as our four themes'.

The importance of outcomes was highlighted and the Deputy Leader stated there would be an action plan developed to measure what was being done and what had been achieved.

Councillor Smithson referenced the 380 responses in relation to the total population of East Suffolk and asked if the Deputy Leader could tell the chamber more about how communities would be engaged in other ways than just online.

The Deputy Leader responded to state he felt there were a good number of responses, and the group would look to other ways to increase engagement.

Councillor Jepson raised a concern around the lack of financial detail included in the plan and queried when it would be provided.

Councillor Jepson also queried there being no mention of Sizewell C in the plan.

The Deputy Leader responded to state the group welcomed scrutiny and the budget would be coming in the New Year. He added that consultation was sought with all staff, stakeholders and with Members. The group was open to all suggestions.

Regarding Sizewell C the Deputy Leader responded to say that it was out of the council's hand and that the focus would be on getting the best deal possible going forwards.

Councillor Deacon referenced PG49 of the plan and queried the number of KPIs presented and if they were the most up to date.

The Deputy Leader thanked Councillor Deacon for raising the point and stated the KPI's referenced were historic and needed to be amended.

Councillor Gandy queried the meaning of the statistics provided around Universal Credit in the plan.

Councillor Beavan responded to state that it was a comparison of East Suffolk to other areas in respect of Universal Credit being claimed.

Councillor Byatt referenced the previous version of the Strategic Plan where in 2019 there was a 3 day 'Hot House' event where all members were invited to consult on the plan.

Councillor Byatt asked why had the GLI group had not invited all Councillors to be involved in the formation of the current plan.

The Deputy Leader responded to state that there was still an opportunity to take on board comments and suggestions. He stated that members had been engaged with and there was consultation. It was judged that repeating the 'Hot House' was not the right thing to do but that did not mean the group were not open to hearing views of others.

In moving the recommendation the Deputy Leader stated he was delighted to have housing as a portfolio which had its own dedicated theme, underlining the vital importance of there being a secure, safe and affordable home for the residents of East Suffolk.

The key priorities were to deliver the right sustainable housing for community need, reduce and prevent homelessness, tackle fuel poverty, and support new heating technologies.

The housing emergency was referenced with regard to an increase in homelessness, private rent and the cost of building materials.

The Deputy Leader referenced the Chancellor's response to unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance which was started by an East Suffolk Council Officer earlier in the year.

The current housing benefit was only enough for 5% of private rents. It would be updated to 60% of present average rents covering 30% of private rents next year.

The Deputy Leader concluded to state that the Council had an innovative and dedicated housing team working to meet the challenges faced and that 'Our Direction' meant every member of the Council working together.

On the proposition of the Deputy Leader, it was seconded by Councillor Plummer, who reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Daly outlined his portfolio area the would continue to support, promote and implement green technologies to create energy across the district, contributing to local and national energy infrastructures.

He stated that a number of projects were underway which included the roll-out of solar PV on private households. 1,800 solar panels were installed in East Suffolk in the last year. Regarding 'Suffolk Warmer Homes, Healthy People' grants were being provided and support to lower income homes to reduce their energy use and fit solar PV wherever possible.

Councillor Daly continued to reference that solar PV had been installed in leisure centres and buildings in the district. Work would continue to increase solar installations as part of the estates decarbonisation programme, alongside new solar car ports, heat pumps and battery storage.

Regarding the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, East Suffolk Council was working with partners to develop feasibility studies for heat networks and new community energy projects.

Councillor Daly discussed the ambition to work towards the net zero target and over the period from 2016–22, ESC's emissions had reduced by 35%.

Councillor Daly concluded to summarise the ongoing activities within portfolio.

Councillor Robinson referenced that on 8 November he was dismayed by the statement regarding money from oil and gas companies not being welcome. Councillor Robinson stated that the GLI group did not have representation with councillors in the Lowestoft area and were prepared to put jobs at risk by stopping investment in the town.

Councillor Robison said oil and gas would continue to be used in households, business and over 1000 jobs are reliant on oil and gas.

Councillor Candy offered support to 'Our Direction' and discussing the Tackling Inequalities theme outlined the 'Feel Good Suffolk' initiative which was launched in October 2023. Including three priorities, weight loss, beginning and continuing to exercise and smoking cessation.

Councillor Candy also highlighted support for the wellbeing hubs in operation in the District. In the New Year practical and lifestyle support would be a focus.

Councillor Gooch thanked everyone for the work on the plan and highlighted that whilst her colleagues were sympathetic to the general tone there was a query regarding the linguistic element with statements in the document that lacked clarity.

Councillor Gooch highlighted the process under the previous administration which included the opportunity for members to suggest amendments to the previous plan and have measurable information for on-going review.

Councillor Gooch stated that the group had discussed alternative thematic titles and offered the suggestions of:

- Reducing Negative Environmental Impact
- Promoting Sustainable Housing
- Developing a Thriving Economy

These alternatives would provide more clarity and produce clear measurable performance indicators with themes and priorities. Councillor Gooch supported the language use in the Tackling Inequalities theme.

Councillor Gooch concluded to reference the financial sustainability of local authorities given the current climate and risks posed to some local authorities regarding section 114 notices, and that financial sustainability should be included in 'Our Direction'. Further to having clear directional language to feed into KPIs which would be used to measure against future plans and proposals.

Councillor Jepson queried the reference to the KPIs being in development and added that it would have been helpful to have had some knowledge of what the KPI's might look like.

Councillor Jepson added to the discussion regarding the value of having a 'Hot House' and raised his disappointment that one was not organised. Councillor Jepson supported that everyone would like residents to benefit from whatever the administration delivers and noted members from the Conservative group understand the importance of being more 'green'.

Councillor Jepson concluded to state that the ambition was recognised, however the detail was lacking and whilst the administration was still relatively new in position, the detail was needed for support to be offered in delivery of the plan.

Councillor Hammond added that he was really pleased to see changes in language regarding Economic Development policy.

Councillor Hammond discussed the climate emergency being faced and the 2023 temperature rises being recorded. The UK government continue to explore opportunities for new oil and gas. Councillor Hammond highlighted his concern regarding this.

Councillor Hammond stated that the administration believed in the prosperity of Lowestoft and the the district was in in low carbon business and supported transition. He highlighted that Councillor Robinson made a good point regarding how tenants would be determined in the future.

Councillor Hammond outlined that all business interested would be treated with an open mind. He highlighted RMI renewables as a great example of a growing business and tenant in the Power Park who were originally 100% oil and gas. RMI renewables now have over 90% of their growing business in low carbon and renewables.

Councillor Byatt recognised the emotive subject and could agree on principles of the plan. He echoed points made in the chamber regarding the detail included in the current version of 'Our Direction' and whilst supported the overall aims there needed to be a more definitive outline of how the 4 strategic directions would be moved forward.

Councillor Byatt added that his group did not wish to go against the plan, but needed more detail and believed having a mini 'hot house' or conference would support the process of everyone being able to own plan moving forward.

Councillor Byatt proposed three options for consideration

- 1) Approve 'Our Direction' as presented to Full Council
- 2) Send it back for further discussion and consultation
- 3) Not approve 'Our Direction'

Councillor Byatt encouraged consideration to option 2.

Councillor Smith-Lyte referenced the 'Hot House' of 2019 and her understanding was this took place due to the forming of the East Suffolk Council. Councillor Smith-Lyte highlighted that everyone had a chance to comment and contribute to the plan. Councillor Smith-Lyte pointed out that her group made suggestions during the 2019 'Hot House' which were ignored by the previous administration.

Councillor Smith-Lyte spoke to the environmental element of the plan, which she felt underpinned everything. Councillor Smith-Lyte summarised areas within her remit, which included, a focus on reduction, re-use and recycling of materials and to encourage food self-sufficiency.

There would be work to preserve and maintain the inherent beauty and attraction of East Suffolk including its natural landscape and conservation areas, historic environment and cultural heritage.

Councillor Graham added her commitment to fulfil the ambition of 'Our Direction' within her deputy Cabinet Member remit. Regarding the theme of Tackling Inequalities, the group was fully aware of how hard the cost-of-living crisis was for the community with over 11% of East Suffolk residents facing income deprivation. The Ease the Squeeze programme continued to operate to support community members with various initiatives.

Councillor Graham recognised the importance of the Community Partnership model and that further development to improve the delivery of the partnerships was underway. Regarding leisure within communities Councillor Graham highlighted that there were over a million visits to leisure centres in the district over the last year and the team continue to explore opportunities to increase footfall.

Councillor Graham discussed tourism and highlighted the ongoing support for the First Light festival which saw record audiences of over 40,000 in 2023. 100% of hotels and bed and breakfast's were fully booked and the festival was noted in the Guardian as one of the top ten in the country.

Councillor Plummer offered support of 'Our Direction' and took on board comments made by members in the chamber during the meeting.

Councillor Bennett spoke to Councillor Jepson's earlier question and stated that he felt it was evolution and that perhaps it was why the approach had been softer and a progression.

Councillor Bennett discussed digital inequality and requested concrete commitment on how this would be addressed. Councillor Bennett stated it would be good if every department could have a digital champion to ensure accessibility to information and services.

Councillor Bennett discussed sustainable transport and highlighted the excellent cycling and walking strategy. The group taking the strategy forward would have representation from all political groups and Councillor Bennett was looking forward to developing the strategy further.

Councillor Hedgley made a point that the Leader had promised a mini 'Hot House' and there was a request for this to happen.

Councillor Ashton stated that there was a belief that consultation was sought with members to get feedback for the strategy. Councillor Ashton highlighted the hard work that officers have done on the plan.

Councillor Ashton discussed customer service and the aspiration to make it as easy as possible for customers to do business with the council and the intention to provide excellent customer service to the community.

Councillor Thompson highlighted there was still a pandemic and a need to consider that when having young people at the council. He added that the strategy could be given to the young people to debate.

Councillor Byatt requested an amendment to the wording of the recommendation.

The Chair stated there could be an amendment made to the wording of the recommendation and suggest replacing 'approved' with 'reconsiders'

On the proposition of Councillor Byatt, seconded by Councillor Jepson the matter of the amendment was discussed by members.

Councillor Byatt stated he had nothing to add.

Councillor Jepson stated the comments made during the debate were not criticisms of any officers involved in working on the new strategic plan.

The Deputy Leader opposed the amendment suggested. He agreed that the KPIs needed to be reviewed and the plan needed to added to, however there needed to be a direction and an overall aim. The group were not afraid to alter or make changes and wanted to work together.

The Deputy Leader stated that the 'Hot House' could be revisited and encouraged members to reject the amendment put forward and pass the recommendation.

Councillor Daly stated that a huge amount of work had gone into it, there had been lots of debate and lots of opportunities for consultation with staff and members. He echoed the Deputy Leader's previous point that the administration are open to ideas, changes and relooking at areas. Councillor Daly concluded that it was the direction the council needed to take.

Councillor Smith-Lyte highlighted the amount of officer time in working on the plan prior to the meeting and that should the amendment go forward it would take more officer time to review again.

Councillor Hammond added that it was an excellent plan and urged members to vote for Our Direction as it stood without the amendment. He reminded all councillors that the Chair had stated he would consider motions put forward and should adjustments be required in the future there was a mechanism to facilitate that.

Councillor Ninnmey echoed that officers have been engaged and consultation had taken place. The development of the KPIs required would give further opportunity to input. He opposed the amendment and supported the plan as presented.

Councillor Bennett added that he took on board comments made from Councillor Gooch and Jepson. He believed it was an evolution of previous work.

Councillor Smithson stated that she felt most of the chamber was behind the sentiment of what was being presented. The plan was a strategic direction and at present she could not see what success would look like. Some of the KPIs requiring

development were significant and therefore Councillor Smithson wished to support the amendment proposed.

Councillor Byatt concluded to remind colleagues that the role of opposition was to challenge and support the administration when it was felt the right thing was being done. Councillor Byatt highlighted there was a lot to carry forward and that a step back could be required. He concluded that a half day for all members to discuss the plan further would provide the opportunity for full participation and wider support.

Following the conclusion of debate, the proposition of the amendment was put to the chamber to vote. There were 22 members in favour to accept the amendment. There were 22 members opposed to the amendment. The Chair concluded the vote to oppose the amendment. With a casting vote the suggested amendment failed.

The Deputy Leader summed up the debate before moving the recommendation. He stated that the group understood the concerns raised and stated there would be another 'Hot House' to include everyone in the plan. The Deputy Leader reiterated he wanted to move forward, building on what was already in place.

On proposition of Councillor Byatt, seconded by Councillor Deacon it was resolved to hold a recorded vote on the recommendation. There were more than 7 members in agreement.

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to undertake the Recorded Vote regarding the recommendation.

Upon being put to a Recorded vote, the recommendation was **CARRIED**.

The results of the recorded vote are shown below:

For the recommendation:

Councillors Ashton, Beavan, Bennett, Candy, Clery, Daly, Ewart, Fisher, Graham, Grey, Hammond, Langdon-Morriss, Molyneux, Ninnmey, Noble, Plummer, Rumble, Smith-Lyte, Specca, Thompson, Wakeling, Wilson.

Against the recommendation:

Councillor Patience

Abstaining from voting on the recommendation:

Councillors Ashdown, Back, Byatt, Ceresa, Craig, Deacon, Folley, Gandy, Gee, Gooch, Green, Hedgley, Jepson, King, Lawson, Lynch, Parker, Robinson, Scrancher, Smithson, Starling.

It was duly **RESOLVED**

That Council approves the Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028, as set out in Appendix A of this report, as the Council's Strategic Plan for the next four years.

10 Review of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy

Councillor Jan Candy, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, presented report **ES/1738**. The purpose of the report was to present to Full Council the outcome of the recent consultation on the draft revised statement of Licensing Policy and to seek the adoption of the Policy so that it could be published in January 2024.

There were no questions or debate.

Councillor Candy moved the recommendation, which was duly seconded and upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That Full Council:

1. Adopts the revised Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy for publication and implementation on 31 January 2024.
2. Delegates to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services the authority to make any minor changes required to the Statement of Licensing Policy as a result of legislative updates, typographical errors or to address formatting issues.

11 Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Beavan, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, presented report **ES/1737**. The purpose of the report was to "make" the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan for East Suffolk following positive results of the Referendum on 12th October 2023. More than 50% of those voting in the Referendum voted "YES" to the question and East Suffolk Council must now "make" the Neighbourhood Plan, unless it considers the Neighbourhood Plan would breach or be incompatible with any EU obligation or any of the Convention Rights. Once "made" by East Suffolk Council, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for East Suffolk and sit alongside the adopted East Suffolk Council Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Development Plan is used to determine planning applications.

Councillor Noble congratulated Wickham Market for their efforts on the plan and for getting the plan to the stage where it could become part of the East Suffolk Council Development Plan.

Councillor Green added his congratulations to Wickham Market for their work, recognising the time and effort that went into the plan.

Councillor Gooch commented on the shortage of dentists that was mentioned as part of the plan, and hoped that the administration could continue to work with local MPs to address the provision of dental services in the area.

Councillor Beavan moved the recommendation, which was duly seconded and upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the Council make the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum version, August 2023) part of the statutory Development Plan for East Suffolk for the whole of the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Area

12 Code of Corporate Governance

Councillor Beavan, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, presented report **ES/1739**. The Code of Corporate Governance is a key document for the Council which summarised the principals of good governance and sets out the Councils overarching corporate governance arrangements and approaches. Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. The Code of Good Governance follows the most recent guidance set out by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The Audit and Governance Committee reviewed the Code at its 11 September 2023 meeting and positively commented upon and championed good governance. They noted that there had been very little change since last year, beyond the updating of references to other policies and updating some of language. The Audit and Governance Committee resolved to recommend to Full Council that it adopts the refreshed Code of Corporate Governance.

Councillor Byatt asked for clarification on the definition of the 'golden triangle group' referred to in the report. The Chief Executive confirmed that this was a term used to refer to the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer.

Councillor Beavan moved the recommendation, which was duly seconded and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That the having commented upon the refreshed Code of Corporate Governance, Full Council adopts the refreshed Code of Corporate Governance attached at Appendix A to this report.

13 Lowestoft Flood Protection – Transport and Works Act submission Update

Councillor Beavan, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, presented report **ES/1742**. Councillor Beavan stated this was a legal requirement for the completion of the Lowestoft Tidal Barrier as the Council awaited a financing announcement.

The TWAO (Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992) was submitted on the 12 October 2023 and there was now a forty-two day period in which responses could be submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Councillor

Beavan stated that this period closed on the 23 November 2023, and confirmed that one objection and one letter of recommendation had been submitted.

Councillor Green referred to the estimated £124m shortfall in funds for this project and asked if this was an accurate figure. Councillor Beavan stated that this was the best estimate at this point, but prices were fluctuating at the moment. A decision on further funding was expected by the end of the year.

There had been a significant amount of work on the project as well as preparing the report for Full Council, thanks was noted to the officers involved.

The Deputy Leader moved the recommendation, which was duly seconded and upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED

Full Council resolve that:

That the resolution for the promotion by East Suffolk Council (the "Council") for an application to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the Lowestoft Tidal Barrier Order, which is to be made under the Transport and Works Act 1992, was duly submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 12 October 2023 in accordance with the resolution of this Council passed at a meeting held on Wednesday 15 March 2023, and is, by this resolution, confirmed.

14 Appointment of Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer

Local authorities are required to have in place certain statutory officers, one of which is the Section 151 Officer, known in East Suffolk as the Chief Financial Officer, who undertook a range of key financial responsibilities.

In March 2023, the former post holder retired and Full Council agreed to appoint Mrs Lorraine Rogers as the Acting Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer pursuant to a full recruitment process being undertaken once the financial year end processes had been completed. Mrs Lorraine Rogers was formerly the Deputy Section 151 Officer. The recruitment process was completed, and the report sought Full Council approval to appoint Mrs Lorraine Rogers as the Council's permanent Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer.

The Deputy Leader stated that he was delighted to bring the report to Full Council with the recommendation to appoint the role to someone who had over 27 years of experience working in the Council.

There were no questions from members. It was noted that members offered their congratulations and recognised the value in employees having career opportunities to progress in the organisation.

RESOLVED

That Full Council approve the appointment of Mrs Lorraine Rogers as its Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer and the officer responsible for the administration of the Council's finances under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972

15 East Suffolk Council's Food and Health & Safety Service Plan 2023-2024

Councillor Candy, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health introduced Report ES1719 which related to the East Suffolk Council's Food and Health and Safety Service plan 2023 - 2024.

The first Food and Health and Safety Plan was approved in November 2021 and came to end on 31 March 2023. The plan covered the vital work carried out by the Environmental Services and Port Health area.

The Food and Health and Safety Team deliver a wide range of statutory functions, both regulatory and advisory. Councillor Candy outlined a number of these, which included the regulation of health and safety standards in workplaces, food health export certificates, health and safety inspections, ship sanitation certificates, inspection of vessels at the port of Lowestoft along with raising awareness among food business operators, employers and the public.

Councillor Candy highlighted the function of the Corporate Health and Safety Team and Suffolk Coastal being the leading port health authority in the UK.

The great work of Head of Environmental Services and Port Health and her team was recognised by the Chamber.

There being no questions from the chamber and on the proposition of Councillor Candy, seconded by Councillor Smith-Lyte it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the performance against the service plan for 2021/23 be noted
2. That Full Council considers and comments on the service plan for 2023/24
3. That the service plan for 2023/24 be approved
4. That authority be delegated to the Head of Environmental Services and Port Health to make any minor changes to the service plan for 2023/24 required as a result of legislative updates, typographical errors or to address formatting issues.

16 Cabinet Members' Report and Outside Bodies Representatives' Report to Council

Full Council received report ES/1736, which was presented by Councillor Beavan, the Deputy 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 Deputy Leader stated that the

written reports could be taken as read and he invited relevant questions on their contents.

Councillor Byatt questioned if there could be a magazine representing good news stories from across all Wards.

The Deputy Leader responded to state he would have to report back on the query raised.

Councillor Craig asked the Deputy Leader if the Council had an indication of how widespread the issue of damp and mould was in the housing stock. Councillor Craig also queried if the new inspector would be working with private let homes and the Safer Suffolk Renters Scheme.

The Deputy Leader stated there was a focus on damp and mould inspections and the team were working with Safer Suffolk Rentals Scheme. The Deputy Leader suggested the Head of Housing be approached for further information if required.

Councillor King queried if a name change could be considered regarding the Coastal (Leisure) Strategy to encompass all areas of sport in the area.

Councillor Graham thanked Councillor King for the feedback and would be happy to take it back for consideration.

Councillor Jepson raised parking and queried the timescales on when the parking strategy would be progressed.

Councillor Hammond confirmed that the team were looking to roll out more bespoke arrangements. Views would be sought from business, stakeholders, and communities. Councillor Hammond confirmed that a series of town-by-town parking reviews had commenced in Felixstowe, Beccles, and Bungay. Councillor Hammond encouraged Councillors from all wards to input into the process and felt that there was an opportunity to make significant improvements for towns and their communities.

Councillor Smithson questioned if suppliers paying fair tax would be incorporated into procurement workshop due to be held in January 2024.

Councillor Langdon-Morris confirmed that it would be considered and stated that it would be good to put together a question to all councillors on the matter.

Councillor Gooch made a request for the Environmental Task Group to consider the ongoing issue on the highways, where litter was not collected prior to grass cutting taking place.

Councillor Smith-Lyte thanked Councillor Gooch for the question and confirmed that it would be revisited.

Councillor Folley questioned if digital champions were in place and if there could be a progress report on how the project had worked.

Councillor Ashton responded to state that the digital champions were in place and there was plan to review how they were being utilised.

Councillor Ashton added to state that reviews are underway exploring the different ways people can engage with the council. This considered libraries, walk in centres, hubs and online options. He reiterated the intention to have excellent customer service across the council and welcome and thoughts or ideas members have.

Councillor Bennett raised the new Sea Shore development in Felixstowe, there had been a proposal to sell the beach huts, however Councillor Bennett questioned if a leasing / hiring model could be considered.

Councillor Graham responded to state there was an ongoing review, and shared the concerns raised. Councillor Graham stated she would get back to Councillor Bennett with more information.

The Deputy Leader concluded the business item to reiterate that the administration were open to questions and suggestions . He encouraged members to email and not feel they had to wait for Full Council.

17 Exempt/Confidential Items

It is recommended 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.

18 Exempt Minutes

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

The meeting concluded at 9:15pm

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Chair