

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held via Remote Meeting via Zoom, on **Tuesday, 2 March 2021**
at **6:30pm**

Members of the Cabinet present:

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith

Other Members present:

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Steve Wiles

Officers present:

Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Lewis Boudville (Transport, Infrastructure & Parking Services Manager), Neil Cockshaw (Programmes and Partnerships Manager), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Mark Fisher (Procurement Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Sue Meeken (Labour Political Group Support Officer), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cook and from Councillor Ritchie.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Announcements

There were no announcements.

4 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 February 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 COVID Recovery Business Support Programme

Cabinet received report **ES/0684** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, who reported that the trading restrictions associated with the Covid pandemic had had a dramatic and significant impact on businesses locally, regionally, and nationally. In response, the Government had launched a range of business grant schemes aimed at small and medium sized businesses to mitigate the impacts of reduced trading and enforced closure. Local authorities had been at the forefront of allocating these vital funds to local businesses and East Suffolk Council (ESC) had so far allocated £98.74m to over 6,000 businesses (the figure was an updated figure to that provided within the published report).

In the most recent round of grant schemes the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) was launched. The ARG differed from previous grant schemes in that it was profiled over two financial years, to cover the November 2020 and any future lockdowns, and crucially an element of the scheme could also be used for longer-term business support measures. The awarding of direct grants to businesses would remain the priority of the ARG, however modelling indicated a significant balance would be available to develop a business recovery programme.

The report, the Deputy Leader stated, set out a number of proposed business support measures based on direct engagement with businesses and business support providers. The proposed schemes would cover business start-up support, a general business recovery scheme, support for independent retail and a gigabit voucher scheme to enable businesses to access the new ultrafast broadband network in Lowestoft. The aim of this new programme was to support the wider economic recovery in the District during 2021 and complement the existing, long-term, and ambitious economic growth programmes. The proposals in the report were purposely provided at an outline level and if Cabinet supported the proposed approach they would be fully developed, costed and implemented during the Spring and Summer of 2021.

The Leader referred to the level of support received from Government, and he gave thanks for this, stating that it had allowed ESC to pass on that level of support to local businesses.

The Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development stated that, moving forward, this was about to become one of the biggest challenges within the business world for many years; he referred to the help that ESC was now offering, moving away from survival towards support, and he asked what sort of uptake and interest was being seen in the peer to peer support that was about to commence. Officers responded advising that there were a lot of enquiries, generally, through all business support agencies, and the peer to peer support demand was coming through but, equally, there was also a big increase in enquiries about start-up funding. Across the board, it was confirmed, businesses had been enquiring beyond the grants available, about other support for the longer term. Officers were confident that the measures set out within the report were based on demand and also consultation.

The Leader stated that one of the positive legacies from the pandemic was that ESC's relationships with businesses had become stronger and he welcomed that.

On the proposition of Councillor Rivett, seconded by Councillor Gallant, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That the outline proposals for the partial use of the unallocated £1.65m of the Additional Restrictions Grant, to provide a package of longer-term business support measures to support economic recovery, post Covid, be approved and delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Members with responsibility for Economic Development and Resources, to fully develop and implement these measures.

6 Parking Services: Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet received report **ES/0685** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, which contained, as an appendix, a report by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport reported that at its meeting on 16 November 2020 the Scrutiny Committee received a report to update it on ESC's parking management and Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). The report (ES/0556) provided information about CPE and car parking charging in the East Suffolk District in response to a request by the Scrutiny Committee from its meeting of 15 October 2020. In requesting the report, the Scrutiny Committee sought to establish whether the introduction of effective CPE to improve on-street parking had been properly consulted upon, whether the impact of a significant increase in charges to residents was considered acceptable and whether, or not, the model for this introduction had perhaps been based on flawed assumptions. Having considered and questioned the report, the Scrutiny Committee wished to submit constructive recommendations to Cabinet.

Unfortunately, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee were unable to attend the meeting. The Leader gave thanks for the report and commented that the recommendations by the Scrutiny Committee had been considered in some detail; he invited questions and / or comments.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing stated that the Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a very good job in scrutinising the work of Cabinet and he felt that the recommendations were fair and appropriate.

Councillor Cloke referred to paragraph 2.7 of the report, in relation to the cost of the annual tickets for off-street parking spaces and that this would be reviewed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process; Councillor Cloke commented that, in her view, this was not good enough. Councillor Cloke added that the people who used these tickets, particularly in Bungay, had paid £150 per annum up until now; Councillor Cloke commented that the people who had contacted her did not dispute that an increase was needed, but they did dispute the size of the increase, which they considered to be disproportionate, especially when the residents' permit was £30 per annum. Councillor

Cloke appreciated that off-road was different to roadside, but to a resident "parking was parking". Councillor Cloke concluded that it would have been better to impose an increase gradually rather than all at once and she asked Cabinet to review this charge.

On the proposition of Councillor Brooks, seconded by Councillor Rivett, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet, having noted the discussion of the Scrutiny Committee outlined within its report and within the minutes of its meeting, approves the responses set out within paragraphs 2.1 to 2.10 of this report, as its response to the Scrutiny Committee.
2. That the glossary of terms at Appendix C discussed in paragraph 2.5 not be published on the Council's website and that Corporate ICT policy be sustained.

7 Supporting the East Suffolk Visitor Economy

Cabinet received report **ES/0686** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, who reported that ESC had ensured the continuing growth and success of its visitor economy through its support of The Suffolk Coast (STC) Destination Management Organisation. The DMO had provided brand and destination marketing services, performed well delivering excellent visitor information, website services and growing its membership base, supporting energy projects, consultation responses and other highly effective individual or joint marketing campaigns. It had performed particularly well in addressing local tourism business needs during the Covid and ongoing Covid lockdown pandemic which had affected the tourism sector, not only locally, but also regionally and nationally.

This report, Councillor Smith stated, set out the demand and rationale for reviewing the DMO's funding and operational agreement for the next three years from April 2021 to March 2024.

Councillor Smith reported that the value of the tourism visitor economy to ESC was estimated to be £695m and it supported approximately 11,000 full time jobs, which equated to 15% of the employment of East Suffolk. ESC and its predecessors had provided direct financial support to the DMO annually since 2012 and had had a three year agreement in place since 2015. Currently the financial agreement with the DMO delivered business plan outcomes and supported growth and development to the visitor economy in East Suffolk. ESC also provided officer time to help to deliver and support funding bids, advising on major decisions and overseeing and monitoring performance. The DMO was led by a Board of professional business leaders who all provided their time for free and they were supported by a marketing membership team that it employed directly.

Councillor Smith concluded by stating that destination marketing services were critical in ensuring the continuing development of the successful visitor economy. Whilst there was always room for improvement, Councillor Smith stated, the Suffolk Coast DMO had delivered the services consistently well in East Suffolk and required continuing financial commitment support from ESC.

Officers added that the funding provided by ESC only made up a part of the complete

funding; it also received funding from its members through annual membership fees and it also received money through advertising via its website. Officers also commented that the DMO had been instrumental in supporting ESC's work with the major energy companies.

The Leader stated the importance, in coming out of the pandemic, of promoting what the ESC area had to offer and he commented that the DMO should be held to account for doing all that it could in supporting the re-start of the tourism industry. He also found it heartening that the DMO was at the forefront of negotiating, together with EDF and SPR, around what the impact of those particular projects would be on the local tourism economy and how any risks could be mitigated.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing highlighted the many East Suffolk attractions and he stated the importance of encouraging people to visit the wonderful area.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment agreed with the comments made and referred to the wonderful biodiversity and it being a credit to East Suffolk for its nurturing and preserving of the ecology.

Councillor Jepson commented on DMO membership and suggested that perhaps now was the time to try and attract more people onto its website, even at a reduced rate, he suggested that this may encourage more people to promote what they had to offer within the District. Officers commented that they had been discussing this with DMO Board and those discussions were ongoing.

Councillor Byatt, prior to asking a question, registered Councillor Deacon's apologies for not being available to present the Scrutiny report; Councillor Byatt explained that this was due to technical reasons which were beyond Councillor Deacon's control.

Councillor Byatt referred to the recommendation within the report, in particular the cost of £55,000; he then referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report and costs in respect of advertising revenue; Councillor Byatt asked if the revenue cost was in addition to the £55,000. Officers confirmed that this was income that the DMO was seeking to earn as part of its sustainability for its overall viability.

Councillor Byatt referred to the Board of professional people giving up their time, and welcomed this; Councillor Byatt asked that given East Suffolk was the gateway to the Broads, would the Broads Authority be involved. Officers confirmed that the DMO did approach organisations on a regular basis that met the commitments and the approach of the DMO; as such, there was always an opportunity for the Broads Authority if it wished to take it.

In response to a further question from Councillor Byatt regarding disabled access to beaches, and the importance of this, the Leader confirmed the aspiration of ESC to improve access in respect of disability to all assets.

On the proposition of Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Rivett, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That it be approved that East Suffolk Council enters into a further three-year agreement with The Suffolk Coast Limited Destination Management Organisation to provide destination marketing and brand management services across the District at a cost of £55,000 per annum making a total commitment of £165,000 over the life of the agreement.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, to review the agreement should section 106 tourism mitigation funding, linked to major energy projects, become available during the lifetime of this agreement.

8 Exempt/Confidential Items

The Leader of the Council reported that in exceptional circumstances, the Council may, by law, exclude members of the public from all, or part of, an executive decision making meeting. The Council should, unless there were urgent circumstances, give notice of its intention to do so via the Forward Plan, which was updated and published on its website 28 clear days prior to the meeting. There were various reasons that the Council, on occasions, had to do this and examples were because a report contained information relating to an individual, information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, or information relating to any consultations or negotiations.

Tonight, the Leader reported, the Cabinet would be considering one substantive exempt matter which was outlined in agenda item 10 on the published agenda: Contract for Green Waste in the South of the District, which asked Cabinet to give delegated authority to the Head of Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, to carry out negotiations for the provision of a contract in respect of garden waste. This would allow continuity of the processing operation.

On the proposition of Councillor Gallant, seconded by Councillor Rivett, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

9 Exempt Minutes

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

10 Contract for Green Waste in the South of the District

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

(including the authority holding that information).

The meeting concluded at 7:20pm

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Chairman