

Unconfirmed



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Conference Room, Riverside, Lowestoft, on **Wednesday, 25 May 2022 at 6.30pm**

Members present:

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Chris Blundell, Councillor Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Jenny Ceresa, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Tess Gandy, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Ray Herring, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor Keith Patience, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Carol Poulter, Councillor Mick Richardson, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith, Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Councillor Ed Thompson, Councillor Caroline Topping, Councillor Steve Wiles, Councillor Kay Yule

Officers present: Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Shannon English (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Laura Hack (Delivery Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Karen Last (Electoral Services Manager), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Paul Patterson (Senior Coastal Engineer), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Brooks, L Freeman, T Fryatt, C Hedgley, M Jepson, D McCallum, F Mortimer, T Mortimer and R Rainger.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes

Minutes 23 February 2022

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Minutes 23 March 2022

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Announcements

The outgoing Chairman of the Council, Councillor Robinson, announced that since the last Full Council meeting, he had attended the Suffolk County Council Civic Service and the Royal Garden Party in London.

The Chairman said that it had been a privilege to have undertaken the role of Chairman and he thanked everyone for their help and support.

He wished the incoming Chairman the best of luck for their term of office.

5 Election of a Chairman

The Chief Executive sought nominations for the Chairman of the Council. Councillor Rudd proposed Councillor Ceresa, whom she felt would uphold the processes and principles of the Constitution, whilst maintaining impartiality at Full Council meetings. Councillor Rudd stated that Councillor Ceresa would also be an excellent representative and ambassador for East Suffolk Council. This proposition was duly seconded by Councillor Smith. There being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Ceresa be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Councillor Ceresa took the opportunity to thank Members for electing her to this role. She said that she was proud to be the first female Chairman of East Suffolk Council and that she had never expected to sit at the 'top table' when she had first been elected as a Councillor 7 years ago.

6 Election of the Vice-Chairmen

The Chairman sought nominations for Vice Chairman of the Council. Councillor Rivett nominated Councillor Blundell as Vice Chairman and stated that Councillor Blundell was a very experienced Councillor who had previously been Chairman of the former

Suffolk Coastal District Council. This nomination was seconded by Councillor Mallinder.

There being no further nominations it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Blundell be elected as Vice Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

7

Announcements

Chairman of the Council

Bob Blizzard

The Chairman of the Council announced to Members the sad passing of Bob Blizzard, former Leader of Waveney District Council from 1991 to 1997 and MP for the Waveney Constituency from 1997 to 2010. Bob had enjoyed a varied and productive political career and he had retired from political life following the 2015 General Election.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Byatt, Leader of the Labour Group, to say a few words. Councillor Byatt started by congratulating Councillor Ceresa on being elected Chairman of the Council. He reported that he had been saddened to learn of Bob's passing and he sent his condolences to Bob's family and friends. He commented that Bob had had great warmth, integrity, intelligence and honour and he had worked tirelessly for Lowestoft and Waveney. He had been a very popular MP. He commenced and undertook much of the background work to secure the Gull Wing Bridge for Lowestoft and he would have been delighted to have seen it finally open. Councillor Byatt felt that there should be a permanent memorial to Bob in the district and suggested that the unnamed road on the Gull Wing Bridge could be given his name, as a mark of respect. Councillor Byatt stated that Bob had also been instrumental in his entering politics and becoming a Councillor. Bob would be sadly missed by all who knew him.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Topping, Leader of the GLI, to say a few words. Councillor Topping stated that Bob had been a decent and principled man, who had been a strong advocate for Waveney, and in particular, for Lowestoft, and he had been both articulate and honest in political debate. Councillor Topping commented that the former GLI Group Leader, Graham Elliott, had provided a fitting anecdote which had involved Bob attempting to ride a unicycle, which had generated the press headline of "the balanced view of a politician". Councillor Topping stated that the Chief Officer of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Community Council, from 1994 – 2000, had commented that Bob had been instrumental in ensuring that the district was not overlooked, which led to the creation of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney PCT and then CCG. This had ensured that decisions about health services for local people were made at the local level by people who knew their locality.

Members then observed a moments' silence in memory of Bob Blizzard.

Paddy Flegg

The Chairman invited Councillor Cackett to say a few words about the recent passing of former Waveney District Councillor (WDC) Paddy Flegg.

Councillor Cackett stated that Paddy (Patricia) had been a WDC Councillor from 2002 - 2014. She had been Vice Chairman of the Council in 2010/11 and 2013/14 and she had worked tirelessly for her constituents in Halesworth. Paddy had been a founder member of Halesworth Dementia Care and she had retained her interest in the Council and its Members until the end. Paddy had been a good friend and mentor to Councillor Cackett, who stated that, without Paddy's influence, she would not have become a district councillor.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Ashdown to say a few words. He commented that he had known Paddy for a long time and she had been very interested and involved in planning. She had been a long serving Member of the Local Plan Working Group and he confirmed her long standing interest in all Council matters. He stated that she would be much missed.

The Chairman then invited Members to observe a moments' silence in memory of former WDC Councillor, Paddy Flegg.

Leader of the Council

Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council

The Leader offered his congratulations to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council, on their elections this evening. He confirmed that they would both be excellent ambassadors for East Suffolk Council and would build on the Council's reputation as a first-rate super District.

The Leader stated that the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Robinson, could be very proud of the way that he had conducted himself in post. He had been a strong and fair Chairman and had put aside his political leanings to ensure that all Members had a fair opportunity to have their say during Council debates. He had adapted remarkably well to the new ways of working and had been both persistent and patient in overcoming the various IT glitches that were unfortunately unavoidable at times. The Leader asked all Members to join him in thanking Councillor Robinson for his hard work.

Achievements in 2021/22

The Leader stated that the Council had accomplished a great deal during the last 12 months, whilst being involved in the recovery from the pandemic. The pandemic had a significant impact on East Suffolk's business community and the Council had been at the heart of the response, by providing much needed support for small and medium-sized businesses. The Council had distributed over £135 million of Covid-related business grants.

The Leader reported that the Council had both delivered and overseen significant

projects which would bring many opportunities to the district. This included the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Scheme, which had been awarded £43 million of funding, the biggest award in the Country, which was a huge endorsement of the town and the district. The construction of the tidal flood walls in Lowestoft was also well underway, as part of a wider scheme to protect 1,500 homes and 825 businesses in Lowestoft. Members noted that the Council had also received three quarters of a million pounds to revitalise the East Point Pavilion and the old Deben High School site in Felixstowe was being redeveloped for local benefit.

Despite financial challenges, the Leader was pleased that the administration had delivered a balanced budget and the Council could proceed with its ambitions and continue to seek the improvement of outcomes for its communities and businesses. It was noted that in 2021/22, the Council had committed and spent £129 million to deliver essential services across 57 service areas. The Council had also brought in and secured over £45 million into the district via grant application bids.

The Leader referred to the speech he had made at the 2021 Annual Full Council meeting, where he had spoken about the Council's ambitions to continue to improve efficiency and reduce costs, as well as embrace new ways to become even more business-like in its approach. He was pleased to report that earlier this year, the Council had announced the creation of a new trading company, 'East Suffolk Services' and this company would deliver operational services, with a commitment to provide the best possible value for money for residents and businesses. The Council was also making the best possible use of its assets by investing to develop schemes such as those at Moore Business Park and the planned green energy hub in Lowestoft.

The Council was committed to the environmental agenda and the collective aim for carbon neutrality, both in principle and in practice. Caring for the environment was one of the key priorities of the Strategic Plan and it had been woven into everything that the Council did, from new build housing stock to vehicle fleets. In September 2021, the Cabinet had unanimously agreed to stop using diesel and to switch the fuel used in the 246 East Suffolk Norse vehicles to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). Once the entire fleet had been migrated to HVO, the Council's carbon emissions would be reduced by over 90%. The Council was also taking a considered approach to the new build of housing stock and ensured that, where possible, they achieved the 'passivhaus certification'. The Leader took the opportunity to thank the cross-party Environmental Task Group, led by Councillor Mallinder, and both the Members and the Officers, who were constantly looking at ways to meet the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The Leader reported that the Council had become more digitally agile, had modernised internally and increased efficiency, in order to better support its communities. The pandemic had accelerated the Council's plans and had called for its teams to work from home. This change also saw a shift in the way the Council conducted its business, with the introduction of internal virtual meetings and the broadcast of formal meetings on the Council's official YouTube channel. The Council also had the 'Digital Towns' initiative, which aimed to provide free public wi-fi in 11 of the district's market towns by the end of the year. The Leader stated that the digital projects were part of wider economic development work and also sought to provide a 'digital springboard' for local businesses, enabling them to maximise the benefits of the digital economy.

The Leader stated that there were still have many local and nationally significant projects in the pipeline. The Council had a £334 million planned capital programme, Freeport East, ambitions for “the energy coast”, East Suffolk Services, Digital Towns, and the Lowestoft Town Investment Plan.

The Leader referenced that the Council remained committed to enabling its communities to become more resilient and that the Community Partnership Programme had been a phenomenal success. There were 8 active Community Partnerships, chaired by Members of the Council, who had identified impactful changes that could be made at a local level, to enhance the local community and its residents. The Leader reported that as part of the recent Corporate Peer Challenge process, the Local Government Association (LGA) carried out a bespoke review of the Community Partnership model and the LGA sought to gain an insight into how the Council worked with its communities. The program had received high praise from the LGA and they were impressed by how “innovative and inclusive” the partnerships were. The Strategic Community Partnership Board which had oversight of the partnership, would continue to support the programme which had already yielded impressive results. The Council annually allocated £7,500 to all 55 Councillors, as an Enabling Communities Budget, which allowed them to fund projects in their Wards for local people, to meet local needs.

The recent feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge had extremely complimentary. The following were highlighted and recognised:

- * The highly ambitious Strategic Plan, laid out with clear objectives
- * The transformational plans for towns, the economy, the environment, and the organisation
- * A Strong and visible political and managerial leadership
- * Effective Cabinet Portfolio arrangements
- * Good Evidence of Scrutiny informing decision-making
- * A Strong budget position and good financial management
- * A Strong commitment to Member development
- * A Positive Member, Officer relationship

It was noted that the full report from the LGA had been published on Monday, 23 May 2022 and the Leader encouraged all Members to take the time to read it. The Team also made recommendations for areas of improvement and an Action Plan had been developed to address those and a progress review was scheduled for November 2022.

Cost of Living Crisis

The Leader referenced the cost of living and the rising costs of everyday goods were a painful financial squeeze on many households across the UK and indeed, on many households in the district. He reported that East Suffolk Council was developing a comprehensive programme of support for residents who were affected by the cumulative impact of rising food and energy costs, the lifting of the energy cap, rising housing costs and increasing petrol, diesel and heating oil prices, all of which had a significant impact on people’s lives.

The Council had started work on support, which would focus upon 4 themes:

- Money
- Food and Essential Items
- Energy and Fuel
- Housing

The Leader provided clarification that each theme included a mixture of crisis support and longer-term projects to help people to maximise their income, manage debt and access the support that they need. The Council was also working with key partners in the public and voluntary sectors through the East Suffolk Community Partnership Board to ensure that it does not duplicate support.

The Leader then took the opportunity to request that each Councillor, regardless of their political affiliation, would agree to allocate £1,000 of their Enabling Communities Budget for 2022/23 to this crucial programme of support. This would provide a pot of up to £55,000, which would be supplemented through other sources of funding, over the coming months, including a bid to the Community Partnership Board for almost £100,000. This would then create a significant pot of money that could be used to provide practical help to those, that through no fault of their own, found themselves in difficult financial circumstances. The Leader stated that he would email Members, over the next few days, to formally ask for their support.

Cabinet Membership

The Leader confirmed that there were no changes to the Cabinet, or their Portfolios, at this time and it was noted that further detailed information about the Cabinet was available on the Council's website. He then outlined the Cabinet Membership, including the Assistant Cabinet Members, and their Portfolios:

- Leader of the Council - Councillor Gallant
- Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Refugee Support - Councillor Cloke
- Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development - Councillor Rivett
- Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development - Councillor Wiles
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism - Councillor Smith
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health - Councillor Rudd
- Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health - Councillor Jepson
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Services, ICT and Operational Partnerships - Councillor Burroughes
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing - Councillor Kerry
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management - Councillor Ritchie
- Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management - Councillor Cooper
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources - Councillor Cook

- Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources - Councillor Back
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment - Councillor Mallinder
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport - Councillor Brooks
- Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport - Councillor Cackett

Cabinet Members

There were no announcements from Members of the Cabinet.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive took the opportunity to send his condolences and sympathies to the families of both Bob Blizzard and Paddy Flegg.

The Chief Executive stated that the last Municipal Year had been extremely busy for the Council and this year was also shaping up to be extremely busy too.

8 Political balance and allocation of seats on Committees 2022/23

Full Council received report **ES/1140** by the Leader of the Council, who advised that membership of the committees and sub-committees of East Suffolk Council was determined under the terms of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. These regulations ensured that seats on committees and sub-committees were allocated on a politically proportionate basis.

Members would have seen, the Leader reported, that within the report the total number of seats broken down by committee. The Monitoring Officer had undertaken the necessary calculations to apportion these seats to meet the requirements of the regulations. This proposed apportioning was detailed within the appendix to the report.

The Leader reported that, unfortunately, there had been some technical difficulties with the publication of this report. The first recommendation had been omitted from the covering report and there had been some errors in the nominations to the Committees in Appendix A. Therefore, an updated version of Appendix A had been published on the website, emailed to Members and paper copies were available at the meeting.

The Leader read out the first recommendation in full, which had been omitted from the report, which was:

‘1: That with effect from 25 May 2022, the seats on the Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council be allocated in accordance with the nominations made in the updated Appendix A to this report.’

The Leader then moved the 2 recommendations, which were then seconded by Councillor Rivett.

In response to a query regarding the Leader's earlier announcements about the Enabling Communities Budgets (ECB), the Leader confirmed that further information about the total received from donations from Councillors ECBs would be provided at

the next Full Council meeting.

Councillor Topping queried some of the nominations to the Committees, due to some concerns about Members' attendance and she asked if any Members were in receipt of an extended leave of absence. There was some discussion in this respect and it was confirmed that no Councillors were currently in receipt of an extended leave of absence and, furthermore, no Councillors were nearing 6 months non-attendance at meetings, which could lead to disqualification.

There being no further questions or debate it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That with effect from 25 May 2022, the seats on the Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council be allocated in accordance with the nominations made in the updated Appendix A to this report.
2. That the Leader be granted Delegated Authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the Committees for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

9 Appointments to Working Groups for 2022/23

Full Council received report **ES/1141** by the Leader of the Council, who stated that the report contained recommendations about appointments to working groups for the 2022/23 municipal year, that was until May 2023. Working groups were set up to examine specific issues in-depth, prior to recommendations being put forward to the relevant decision-making body.

The Leader added that the Council appointed to a number of working groups each year as part of its corporate governance framework and in support of the democratic process and decision-making arrangements. The working groups had clear terms of reference outlining their roles, responsibilities and reporting mechanisms, thereby increasing openness, transparency and making the best use of resources.

In conclusion, the Leader stated that, once again, the contents of the report had been reviewed and discussed by himself and the other political group leaders and an agreement had been reached that if this meeting agreed to so doing it would again be appropriate to vote on the allocations as set out en-bloc.

The Leader moved the 2 recommendations contained within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Rivett.

Councillor Byatt stated that he was pleased that the Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group allowed other Members to attend their meetings, when matters in their Wards were considered. He also commented that he was pleased that Councillor Patience had been nominated for a place on the Housing Benefits & Tenant Services Consultation Group (HoBTS) and he looked forward to their meetings taking place in

person, in the near future.

There being no further comments it was

RESOLVED

1. That the membership of Working Groups for the 2022/23 Municipal Year, as agreed by the Political Group Leaders and detailed at Appendix A, be appointed.
2. That the Leader of the Council be granted Delegated Authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the Working Groups for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

10 Appointments to Outside Bodies for 2022/23

Full Council received report **ES/1142** by the Leader of the Council, who stated that the report contained recommendations about Appointments to Outside Bodies (Non-Executive) for the 2022/23 municipal year, that was until May 2023. ESC appointed annually to a wide range of diverse outside bodies; some appointments were made because of a statutory requirement to appoint one or more members to them; most appointments were discretionary taking into consideration how representation added value. Appointment of Members provided support to the organisation concerned and enabled Members to fulfil their community leadership roles. Members appointed were able to work with and alongside local community groups, helping to empower them in terms of addressing local issues and delivering sustainable solutions.

The Leader stated that as per the previous report, the contents of this paper had been reviewed and discussed by himself and the other Political Group Leaders and Appendix A to the report was presented to Members for consideration.

The Leader proposed that a separate vote take place for the contested seats as highlighted in Appendix A. These were: the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA), the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) Management Committee and the 2 Named Substitutes on the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Goldson took the opportunity to suggest that a recorded vote take place for the 2 Named Substitute positions on the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel and this proposal was subsequently supported by more than 7 Members. It was then proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Back and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That a recorded vote take place for the appointment of the 2 Named Substitute positions on the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel.

The Leader then suggested that the contested positions should be voted upon first, followed by the rest of the positions being voted upon 'en bloc'. A vote therefore took

place in relation to the contested seats on the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA), the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) Management Committee and it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Cackett be appointed to both the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) and the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) Management Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

During discussions regarding the 2 Named Substitute places on the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel, Councillors Daly, Thompson and Byatt withdrew their nominations to be the named substitute members. A vote therefore took place between Councillors Robinson, Back and Patience. Each Councillor would have 2 votes, one for each seat available. The results of the recorded vote are shown below:

Councillor Keith Robinson (28 votes)

P Ashdown, E Back, S Bird, C Blundell, S Burroughes, A Cackett, J Ceresa, J Cloke, M Cook, T Cooper, L Coulam, S Gallant, A Gee, T Goldson, T Green, R Herring, R Kerry, S Lawson, G Lynch, J Mallinder, C Poulter, M Richardson, D Ritchie, C Rivett, K Robinson, M Rudd, L Smith and S Wiles.

Councillor Ed Back (28 votes)

P Ashdown, E Back, S Bird, C Blundell, S Burroughes, A Cackett, J Ceresa, J Cloke, M Cook, T Cooper, L Coulam, S Gallant, A Gee, T Goldson, T Green, R Herring, R Kerry, S Lawson, G Lynch, J Mallinder, C Poulter, M Richardson, D Ritchie, C Rivett, K Robinson, M Rudd, L Smith and S Wiles.

Councillor Keith Patience (11 votes)

P Byatt, J Craig, T Daly, M Deacon, J Fisher, T Gandy, L Gooch, K Patience, M Pitchers, S Plummer and K Yule.

Abstentions

D Beavan (twice), E Brambley-Crawshaw (twice), P Byatt (once), J Craig (once), T Daly (once), M Deacon (once), J Fisher (once), T Gandy (once), L Gooch (once), K Patience (once), M Pitchers (once), S Plummer (once), R Smith-Lyte (twice), E Thompson (twice), C Topping (twice) and K Yule (once).

Therefore, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Robinson and Councillor Back be appointed as the named substitutes on the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

There being no further discussion or questions, the Leader proposed the recommendations within the report, which was seconded by Councillor Rivett. Upon

being put to the vote it was therefore

RESOLVED

1. That Councillor Cackett be appointed to the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
2. That Councillor Cackett be appointed to the East Suffolk Travel Association (ESTA) Management Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
3. That Councillor Robinson and Councillor Back be appointed as the 2 Named Substitutes for the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
4. That Councillors be appointed to those Outside Bodies listed in Appendix A for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
5. That the Leader of the Council be authorised to fill any outstanding vacancies left unfilled by Council.
6. That the Leader be granted delegated authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the Outside Bodies for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

11 Petition from the beach hut owners on the termination of licences at the Spa area, Felixstowe

The Chairman invited Mr Scott, who was speaking on behalf of the petitioners, to outline the reasons for the submission of the petition and to state the action that he would like the Council to take.

Mr Scott reported that the petition had been signed by over 4,000 people, who wished the Council to reverse their position and allow the beach huts in the Spa area at Felixstowe to remain. He reported that the beach huts in Felixstowe were the oldest in the UK, with some dating as far back as 1900. Therefore, it was important that they were protected and allowed to remain in this Conservation Area. To remove the beach huts from the Spa area would be an act of civic vandalism. Mr Scott stated that the Council's decision to remove the beach huts was contrary to the local Conservation Area, the Town Plan and East Suffolk Council's Core Values. The petition had received support from a wide range of sources including the Victorian Society, Historical England, English Heritage and the Felixstowe Society.

Mr Scott stated that there were 2 principle reasons why East Suffolk Council wished to remove the beach huts, which were:

- That the beach huts caused an obstruction on the promenade. Mr Scott denied that they caused an obstruction. He stated that the beach huts had been located on the promenade at Felixstowe Spa for over 80 years and no complaints had been received by the Council relating to obstruction during that time.

- The beach levels were too low due to erosion and therefore could not support the beach huts. Mr Scott stated that East Suffolk Council's own strategy stated that the Council had a legal responsibility to replenish the beach, at the latest between 2025 and 2027. There was also another argument put forward by the Council, that any beach replenishment undertaken would not be to the level of the Promenade, which the Council felt was needed to enable huts to return to the beach. However, replenishment to the level of the promenade was not necessary for the proposals which had been put forward by the Petitioners.

Mr Scott argued that the beach huts sited at Felixstowe Spa Pavilion had become a unique heritage asset, with significant potential for the future. He explained that the spa huts could be the focus for heritage signage, information could be provided about the history of the beach huts and their impact on the British seaside, whilst some spa huts could be open for special educational "living museum" days. There were also commercial opportunities for memorabilia and gifts based on the first beach huts in Britain and Mr Scott stated that the energy which was currently being put into saving the huts, could then be channelled into making this unique heritage asset a success.

Mr Scott then referred to the options available to enable the continued use of the beach huts. He referred to the most viable option, which was to use platforms and he confirmed that the hut owners would be willing to pay those costs in full, which were estimated to be £116,160, compared to the Council's £500,000 estimated costs. Mr Scott confirmed that the platform option was sustainable, with an estimated life span of 20 years, and they had already been used by some beach hut owners successfully in Felixstowe for about 80 years. Timber platforms were also used at beaches across the UK, including Felixstowe, Essex and Norfolk. He commented that the platforms would cause no greater Health and Safety risk than at any other beach huts in the UK. Mr Scott provided reassurance that all of the platforms would have hand rails and the beach huts owners would all agree to have public liability insurance.

The second option was the proposal for niches, which would cost £9,000 per hut, and which would be paid for by the beach hut owners. It was noted that only an unused grass verge area would be lost to create the niches and the niches would result in an increase in space on the beach and the promenade. Mr Scott explained that niches were currently in existence for benches in that area and if more niches were created, there would be no obstruction of the promenade at any time. It was reported that, historically, the huts had originally been in this exact same space, on the grassed area. The proposals, with East Suffolk Council's support, would create a unique tourist attraction that celebrated a Felixstowe heritage asset and which had National Interest. He commented that the regional and national publicity for the Spa Pavilion Beach Huts could be easily pivoted to become a fantastic opportunity for Felixstowe tourism.

Mr Scott summarised that the 2 proposals suggested by the petitioners were both sustainable, they had many benefits and were at no cost to the taxpayer, as all the associated costs would be paid for by the beach hut owners. The beach hut owners were very keen to talk to East Suffolk Council and wanted to find a way forward. Mr Scott encouraged anyone interested to visit the area, to see the unique site for themselves. Mr Scott advised that he had a panel of experts on the beach huts with him this evening, to assist with any queries which may arise during the discussions.

The Chairman thanked Mr Scott for his presentation and she then invited the Leader of the Council, Councillor Gallant, to speak on this item.

The Leader stated that this was a very important issue, which he wanted to cover in a lot of detail. Therefore, he proposed that the Council suspend Council Procedure Rule 13.4 to allow for speeches to last for longer than 5 minutes, which was seconded by Councillor Goldson and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That Council Procedure Rule 13.4 be suspended for this item of business, to allow speeches to last for longer than 5 minutes.

The Leader stated that he and Ms Hack, Programme Manager, would provide a presentation regarding the beach huts. The presentation commenced with the petition that had been received, which was:

“The beach has disappeared In front of the spa pavilion beach huts rather than find an acceptable resolution the council have terminated our licences. The beach huts have been in the same position for over 100 years and are oldest beach huts in the UK. normally for 6 months of the year the huts spend the winter on the promenade, now apparently due to supposed complaints we cannot stay on the prom.

There are many unanswered questions firstly why has nothing being done to rectify why the beach has washed away after £10 million was spent on groin works to hold the Beach in place.

Please support our plight in keeping part of our National Heritage otherwise 44 huts will be removed forever.”

The Leader explained that the current situation was that there were 44 beach huts on the Promenade at the Spa without a licence and that the site licences were terminated for their positions on the beach on 31 March 2022. The termination of the licences led to a deficit of circa £23,420 per year for the Council in licence fees for those beach huts. It was noted that the Council had submitted 4 planning applications, that were heard in March 2022, which would have offered new locations for all 44 huts, however, 2 of the applications had been refused by the Local Planning Authority. In total, 30 new hut sites had been secured and the licence holders had been asked for their preferences for the 30 sites, with consideration given to health and personal circumstances. There remained 14 beach huts without a site. Members noted that the Felixstowe Beach Hut and Chalet Association had served the Council with an application for a Judicial Review, which they submitted on 4 May 2022.

The Leader then provided some background information regarding beach huts across East Suffolk. He reported that the Council had issued 1,675 licences for huts and chalets over the whole district. There were 919 licenced sites for beach huts in Felixstowe, these huts were privately owned and could therefore be sold by the owner. He reported that the hut locations were moved from time to time due to coastal forces, beach maintenance or development reasons and the last major

movement was the termination of circa 1,000 licences at Manor End in the 1980's. It was noted that licences were currently issued on a 3-year term. It was noted that the 44 licence holders in the Felixstowe Spa area made up 4.8% of the beach huts in the resort and the 14 without a site, just 1.5%.

In respect of the promenade itself, the Leader reported that it had Highway status and was maintained by Suffolk County Council to footpath standards. Also, the beach huts at Pier South, Pier North and the Spa had a licence to be located on the beach, with positions shown by markers on the edge of the Prom, however they are moved to the Promenade at the end of the season, between October and Easter, for winter storage.

Members noted that in July 2017, concerns were raised that beach material was being washed away under huts located directly in front of the Spa, due to tidal erosion. Subsequently, 9 huts (numbers 32 to 40) were moved back onto the Promenade for safety reasons for the rest of the season, due to the continued cliffing of the beach in this bay.

In February 2018, officers from the Coastal Management Team had undertaken a site visit and they had determined that there was not enough beach material in situ available to create a sand platform for any of the 55 huts at the Spa. The decision was made to leave them on the promenade temporarily, until a solution could be determined. On the 1 March 2018, the 'Beast from the East' had colluded with Storm Emma, and scoured the beaches further, which exposed concrete and metal structures from WW2. The Leader stated that the hut licence holders were written to, explaining the situation, a range of solutions were explored throughout the year and a meeting was held with hut owners in December 2018, giving the options for relocation.

The Leader reported that in 2019, planning permission was received for the creation of 16 new beach hut sites at The Dip. These were a mixture of new huts and relocation opportunities, 2 huts had relocated there from the Spa and there were currently 4 spaces empty. A planning application was then submitted to create a further 6 hut sites at Pier South, alongside the extension and strengthening of the concrete wall. This was rejected by the Local Planning Authority Committee on its first submission. It was noted that a planning application to create 5 new hut spaces to the south of the current row at Manor End was granted and 4 huts had subsequently moved to this location. Further proposals were then considered.

The Leader invited Ms Hack to continue with the presentation. Ms Hack confirmed that, in 2019, a proposal was put together for the creation of wooden platforms at the Spa location. With advice from Planning, Coastal Management and a Structural Engineer, it was determined that the design used at the Fludyers site was not sufficiently robust for the Spa location, nor did individual platforms meet current H&S criteria. A large platform in alternative bays, on which 8 to 10 huts would be placed was subsequently agreed. The consultation plans had been presented to hut licence holders at a face-to-face meeting held at Felixstowe Town Hall in June 2019 and costings for the proposal were budgeted at circa £500,000. However, after further research, concerns over the business case for the timber platforms were raised internally by the Council. The project was deemed high risk, detrimental to the environment, difficult to engineer, costly and only had a projected 20-year life span in that location, with no guarantee of achieving planning permission. The proposed bays

for their location were also not the preferred ones of hut owners, many of whom had expressed a wish, through the Association, to go back to their former locations.

A further proposal was created, regarding demountable blocks. Ms Hack stated that a submission was made to Planning for an engineering trial over the summer period, which would use two of the existing bays that beach huts had been formerly placed on. The proposal for the trial was of an experimental design, building up a concrete retaining wall behind which sand would be infilled and levelled and huts could be placed onto. The wall was proposed to be made of interlocking concrete demountable blocks, approximately 2000 mm square by 1000 mm deep built two blocks high. The costings for the trial were circa £131,000 excluding VAT with the cost of the whole scheme circa £407,000 and a further annual cost of removing the blocks for the winter of £156,000. It was noted that, although the trial received planning permission, due to COVID and the subsequent lockdowns, the concrete could not be manufactured as all but essential businesses had halted manufacture.

Ms Hack reported that in February 2021, Felixstowe beachfront was hit by Storm Darcy and the beach material was scoured further, which halted the beach platform trial due to lack of depth. It was then determined that returning the huts to the beach in this location would not be feasible. Ms Hack confirmed that beach hut licence holders were written to, explaining the situation and a face-to-face meeting was organised at Trinity Park in July, led by the Leader of the Council. After consultation with the Association, 4 sites were put forward for relocation and these options were presented to hut licence holders. The Council began to prepare planning applications for these 4 sites and submitted them in Nov-Dec 2021. Members noted that it had been stated at the meeting that if those final relocation sites did not come to fruition, the Council's only option would be to terminate the licences on 31 March 2022.

Ms Hack confirmed that in February 2022, termination letters and notices were sent to the 44 beach hut owners for their current licences at the Spa. Hut owners were informed that alternative sites were being taken forward to Planning and that licences in respect of huts currently at this location would not continue beyond the end of March 2022. It was acknowledged that the outcome of these applications was yet to be determined but, if successful, the huts could then be moved, and new licences issued for the new locations. In March 2022, the Local Planning Authority refused 2 of the 4 sites submitted and this left 30 new hut locations available out of a potential of 64. It was noted that the hut owners were formally asked to state a preference for one of the new locations available and empty their huts ready to move by 25 April. On 24 March, the Petition was received by the Council. On 4 May, the Felixstowe Beach Hut and Chalet Association served the Council with an application for a Judicial Review.

Ms Hack then provided further information in relation to beach replenishment. It was reported that, in order to carry out beach replenishment to the extent needed for beach huts, extensive beach material would need to be bought in from either a donor site or a quarry with the correct type of sand. A potential donor site at North Felixstowe, to the seaward of the Golf Course, had been found, which was in an Environment Agency (EA) managed area. Movement of beach material from there to the Spa would require a combination of off and on road haulage, with double handling in between. As well as permission from the EA, the Council would also need permission and a licence from Crown Estates. Members noted that there were

concerns that breeding birds may use the vegetated shingle area above high tide for nesting between March and August and, as sand would be moved in April, mitigation for this would be required. There was also great uncertainty around the longevity or the 'stickingness' of the sand, with thousands of tons capable of being moved by a single storm. It was confirmed that the volume of beach material required to be imported to support the 2021 works was planned at around 400 cubic meters to create one sand platform. This was £30 per m3 of cost at 2021 prices, which equated to circa £48K per replenishment for four bays.

With regard to beach management, it was noted that the design of the 2012 works had anticipated that beach volumes in the groyne bays would reduce and that additional beach recharge would be needed by 2032. It was noted that the Council's Capital Programme had included an item for this work at the Central and Southern Felixstowe frontages after 2025. Members noted that the cost of these works would probably reach several million pounds and this size of spend would require grant in aid, which was unlikely to be justified on amenity benefit grounds alone. Ms Hack reported that the trigger for major capital improvement would be when the coast protection function of the seawall was a risk. The beach volume required to sustain the beach huts on the beach was much greater than the volume needed to protect the coast. It was stated that changes to the design of the groynes to the Spa frontage may be needed to improve beach stability, however, this would have a significant cost of approx £200,000 to £250,00 per groyne, of which there were 5. The costs involved in recharging even a small section of beach were high, due to the fixed costs for the mobilisation of equipment.

Ms Hack then explained the reasons why the promenade was unsuitable for the placement of the beach huts. She reported that whilst the huts had stood for many years on the promenade over the winter months, they had always been moved back onto the beach for the summer months. In recent years, the number of visitors to the resort had increased considerably, particularly since Covid 19, and with the ongoing development and investment in the town, popularity was likely to increase further. The promenade was an important feature that enabled large numbers of people to travel the length of the seafront on foot and by cycle. The Leader took the opportunity to thank Ms Hack for her detailed presentation, despite being poorly.

In conclusion, the Leader reported that the beach huts at the Spa Pavilion were removed from the beach and placed on the promenade due to coastal erosion and storm damage, which took away much of the beach material, making the area uneven, low lying and prone to further erosion. The huts had now been situated on the promenade for four seasons, which was only ever intended to be a temporary situation, pending investigations into potential alternatives. He stated that the Council had explored over 20 options for the reinstatement or relocation of the Spa huts over the past 4 years, however, the continued beach erosion and lack of suitable land to move the huts to had been a challenge. It was reported that under the terms of the License to occupiers, East Suffolk Council was required to make 'all reasonable endeavours to offer the licensee an alternative site.'

The Chairman advised that the 30 minutes allocated for discussion of the petition had been completed. The Leader proposed that a further 30 minutes be made available for the discussions on this item, which was seconded by Councillor Rivett. Upon being put

to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That the discussion on the petition continue for a further 30 minutes.

The Leader then read through the proposed recommendations from the slide, which were:

1. That the Council shares the disappointment expressed by the 44 affected beach hut owners.
2. That the Council acknowledges that coastal erosion is an escalating issue and ongoing risk to our resorts, assets and facilities.
3. That the Council appreciates the hard work of officers to find a solution acceptable to all parties.
4. That the Council recognises the permanent placement of huts on the Promenade will restrict its use by the wider community.
5. That the Council remains willing to engage in mediation regarding new ideas for relocating the 14 huts left without a site.
6. That the Council supports the actions to date and directs that the results of the Judicial Review are reported back to Full Council in due course.

The Leader stated that he would answer questions at this point in proceedings and would welcome a debate upon this matter.

Councillor Beavan asked whether deeper niches had been considered or investigated? The Leader reported that they had been considered and discussed with Planning Officers. However, the niches currently in place were already cutting into grassed areas used by others, however, by adding in deeper niches for the beach huts would take away even more of the grassed areas, reducing the amenity of others.

Councillor Topping asked whether the 14 beach huts which were without a new site, could remain on the promenade while mediation and further discussions took place? The Leader responded that those 14 beach huts did not have planning permission to be there and their licences had been revoked. It was now time to move forward and find new sites for those beach huts.

Councillor Daly commented that mediation could be very helpful and he queried if there was a timeline for the 14 beach huts to be moved and, if so, would that be after the Judicial Review had been completed? The Leader stated that the huts needed to be moved now, as they had already been there for 4 years. He reported that it was not just the 14 beach hut owners without a new site who wanted to stay on the promenade, the majority of the 44 beach hut owners wished to remain, however, that was not an option.

Councillor Wiles asked how many of the beach hut owners were Felixstowe residents? He also queried whether Suffolk County Council Highways had been contacted about the beach huts on the promenade? The Leader reported that it did not matter where the beach hut owners lived, the huts needed to be moved from the

promenade.

Councillor Byatt referred to earlier in the presentation when it was stated that beach hut owners were offered to relocate their huts to The Dip and only 1 had accepted. He asked why that site was proving to be unpopular? He also queried whether the 2 applications which were rejected by the Local Planning Authority could be reconsidered? The Leader reported that The Dip was less popular, as it was nearer the golf club, had fewer amenities and provided a very different offer to the Spa area. He stated that the 2 applications had been firmly rejected after due deliberation by the Local Planning Authority and there was no scope to challenge that or opportunity to further amend those applications.

Councillor Byatt asked if the Judicial Review would look at the 2 applications which were rejected and the processes involved in that. The Leader commented that the Judicial Review would only look at the decision-making process of the Council in relation to the beach huts, not at the applications.

Councillor Green congratulated the Chairman on her appointment and he asked if a 'tenancy at will' arrangement could be put into place for the beach huts on the promenade? The Leader reported that the Council did not wish to have the beach huts on the promenade at all and they had already been there for 4 years. He stated that it was not appropriate for the huts to be there and that the Council would not wish to set a precedent in this respect.

Councillor Craig said that it was disappointing to see that there had been a lack of engagement from East Suffolk Council regarding the beach huts. She asked how it had been decided which of the 44 beach huts would be allocated one of the 30 new sites? The Leader stated that the Council had been working closely with others to find a solution for this issue. He confirmed that there was no easy way to choose who would be allocated a new site. The fairest way to allocate them was to draw names out of a hat.

Councillor Green stated that hut owners have suggested using concrete blocks, as well as rising platforms, to allow the beach huts back onto the beach. He asked the Leader to explain the difference between the hut owners plan and the Council's, and why the engineers had rejected the hut owners suggestions? The Leader reported that the tide and sea were very powerful and were able to move large amounts of beach material, several tonnes in fact, in a short space of time. The platforms suggested would not have the structural integrity or the strength to withstand the power of the sea.

Councillor Smith-Lyte reported that she had not noticed being obstructed on the promenade by the beach huts, when she had visited the area. She queried, as the Judicial Review was currently underway, whether the beach huts could be evicted from the promenade at this time? The Leader provided clarification that the beach huts would not be evicted, their licences had been terminated, therefore they had no right to be located on the promenade. The licences were clear, concise and they could be terminated by the Council, if needed. Those beach huts currently had no licences and they needed to be moved. The Leader was concerned that, if there were a large number of visitors to the promenade over the summer, and it became crowded, there was a chance that someone could drop over the side and seriously hurt themselves,

due to the significant drop in beach levels.

Councillor Beavan stated it was a great shame if removal of the beach huts would lead to their destruction. The Leader reported that the beach huts were not replicas, they were old and original, however they were made to be transportable. The Council would continue to support their heritage, in a way that did not negatively impact the amenity of the sea front and promenade. He provided clarification and reassurance that the huts remained the property of their owners and they would not be destroyed by the Council.

The Chairman stated that the additional 30 minutes had been used. The Leader then proposed that a further 15 minutes be added to the discussion of this item of business, which was seconded by Councillor Rivett. Upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That this matter be discussed for an additional 15 minutes.

Councillor Gooch raised concerns that the beach huts were fragile due to their age and she asked if they could be moved safely? The Leader reported that the Council were experts in moving beach huts. The huts would be lifted up and moved, then they would all be checked to ensure that they were structurally sound, prior to being moved to their new site.

There being no further questions, the Leader moved the 6 recommendations on the slide, which were seconded by Councillor Rivett:

1. That the Council shares the disappointment expressed by the 44 affected beach hut owners.
2. That the Council acknowledges that coastal erosion is an escalating issue and ongoing risk to our resorts, assets and facilities.
3. That the Council appreciates the hard work of officers to find a solution acceptable to all parties.
4. That the Council recognises the permanent placement of huts on the Promenade will restrict its use by the wider community.
5. That the Council remains willing to engage in mediation regarding new ideas for relocating the 14 huts left without a site.
6. That the Council supports the actions to date and directs that the results of the Judicial Review are reported back to Full Council in due course.

The Chairman invited Members to debate.

Councillor Bird stated that he was Vice Chairman of Planning Committee South and he confirmed that the 2 planning applications which had been rejected had been thoroughly considered and due diligence had been undertaken. He commented that the Members of the Committee took their responsibilities seriously.

Councillor Beavan stated that there was a strong case for some beach huts staying on the promenade, as it was unfair to remove them if they had nowhere else to go. He felt that more time and compassion was needed to find a solution to this problem.

Councillor Deacon offered his congratulations to the Chairman on her election. He agreed that the promenade was somewhat pinched with both the pedestrians and beach hut users and that there was a long drop onto the beach, which was dangerous. He confirmed that he was unhappy that an alternative location had not yet been found for 14 of the beach huts. He then stated that he wished to propose an amendment to recommendation 5, to include the words Independent and Binding before the word Mediation. Therefore, he proposed that recommendation 5 should be amended to read:

5. That the Council remains willing to engage in independent, binding mediation regarding new ideas for relocating the 14 huts left without a site.

This proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Byatt.

Councillor Deacon also asked for further clarification about how the Judicial Review would impact the progress in respect of the beach huts. Mr Bing, Monitoring Officer, reported that the Judicial Review would look at the Council's conduct to date. He confirmed that if there was a full Judicial Review hearing, the actions of the Council could be upheld or its decisions could be quashed and the Council asked to reconsider its actions.

Councillor Deacon confirmed that he had sympathies with both the beach hut owners and the Council. Mr Bing, Monitoring Officer, provided clarification that the amendment had been moved and seconded and the amendment now needed to be debated, prior to going to the vote.

Councillor Deacon confirmed that he believed having Independent, Binding Mediation would assist progress significantly, as the Mediator would need to have oversight of the whole case, be impartial and ensure that the 2 sides came to an agreement.

The Leader stated that he could not support this proposed amendment and he supported the original wording of the recommendation. He felt that an independent person may not be cognisant of all the legal, technical and procedural issues involved in this case. He also queried the binding aspect, as he was unclear as to whom would the outcome be legally binding?

Councillor Goldson stated that he understood the concerns, as 14 beach huts were potentially left without a site and it was very difficult to make decisions in this respect. However, the current situation was not sustainable and someone needed to be in the middle to mediate. He confirmed that negotiations were the only way forward.

The Chairman stated that the additional 15 minutes had now ended. The Leader proposed that an additional 15 minutes be added to the consideration of this item, which was seconded by Councillor Rivett. Upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That discussions on this item be extended for a further 15 minutes.

Councillor Pitchers congratulated the Chairman on her election and stated that he understood that mediation was the only way forward, however, he confirmed that the mediator must be qualified to understand the details and technicalities around this matter.

Councillor Byatt asked if there were other options, such as an inquiry, that could be legally binding? He noted that the Local Government Association offered mediation services, which were able to resolve the issues in 90% of cases. He commented that it was important that the way forward in this matter was agreed.

Councillor Rivett stated that there had been a lengthy debate about this matter and any mediation in the future needed to be fair and reasonable.

The amendment, having already been moved by Councillor Deacon and seconded by Councillor Byatt was then put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED

That the proposed amendment to recommendation 5 be **LOST**.

Councillor Brambley-Crawshaw commented that she could not support the proposed recommendations, as she did not feel that the other proposals, such as the niches, had been fully explored. She stated that it was also important to protect the huts and their history on the seafront.

Councillor Wiles stated it was important to find alternative sites for the 14 huts on the promenade. The beach was very exposed to surge events and storms, which could do significant damage. It was important that any new sites being offered for those 14 beach huts were safe and appropriate.

Councillor Blundell spoke movingly of his late wife, who had wanted to see the beach at Felixstowe for one last time, however, she had been unable to due to the beach huts being in the way and blocking the view from the car park. He stated it was important to remember that the promenade and beach were enjoyed by many people, not just the beach hut owners.

Councillor Green reported that the beach huts were used by a wide range of people and the huts were important, emotionally, to many people. She hoped that a way forward could be found and that the huts could remain on the promenade until the conclusion of the Judicial Review.

The Leader stated that all those involved with the beach huts wanted there to be a good outcome, however it was no longer appropriate for the beach huts to remain on the promenade for the reasons outlined during the presentation and discussions. All of the options had been considered in detail, with expert input from engineers and coastal protection officers. It was noted that the recommendations had already been moved and seconded and he then requested that the recommendations be put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Council shares the disappointment expressed by the 44 affected beach hut owners.
2. That the Council acknowledges that coastal erosion is an escalating issue and ongoing risk to our resorts, assets and facilities.
3. That the Council appreciates the hard work of officers to find a solution acceptable to all parties.
4. That the Council recognises the permanent placement of huts on the Promenade will restrict its use by the wider community.
5. That the Council remains willing to engage in mediation regarding new ideas for relocating the 14 huts left without a site.
6. That the Council supports the actions to date and directs that the results of the Judicial Review are reported back to Full Council in due course.

The Chairman took the opportunity to adjourn the meeting for 5 minutes, to allow those in attendance for the Petition item, to vacate the building, from 9.10pm – 9.15pm.

12 Changes to the Financial Procedure Rules

The Chairman welcomed Members back to the meeting and noted that the meeting would soon reach 3 hours duration. The Leader proposed that the meeting continue past 3 hours duration. This was seconded by Councillor Rivett and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That the meeting continue over 3 hours duration.

Full Council received report **ES/1143** by Councillor Cook, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which was presented by Councillor Back, Assistant Cabinet Member for Resources. Councillor Back reported that the Financial Procedure Rules (FPR) provided the framework for the financial administration of the Council, with a view to ensuring that financial matters were conducted in a sound and proper manner, constituted value for money and minimised the risk of legal challenge.

Members noted that the Financial Procedure Rules had last been reviewed in April 2019, prior to their adoption by East Suffolk Council, and it was timely for them to be reviewed and refreshed.

Councillor Back referred to the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code), which

had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in December 2021. The FM Code provided guidance for good and sustainable financial management in local authorities and would provide assurance that authorities were managing resources effectively. It was noted that the FM Code applied a principle-based approach. It did not prescribe the financial management processes that local authorities should adopt. Instead, the FM Code required that a local authority demonstrated that its processes satisfy the principles of good financial management for an authority of its size, responsibilities, and circumstances.

Councillor Back reported that in addition to the introduction of the FM Code, the Council's circumstances and levels of activity in a range of areas had changed significantly following the creation of East Suffolk Council three years ago.

Councillor Back confirmed that the Changes to the Financial Procedures Rules had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on 14 March and by the Cabinet at their meeting on 5 April 2022. Both had recommended the changes to the Financial Procedure Rules for adoption by Full Council.

Councillor Byatt took the opportunity to thank the Finance Team for their ongoing work and he sought clarification regarding which ICT processes could be enhanced in relation to finance, as referenced within the report. Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer, reported that the Navision Finance System would be upgraded in due course.

There being no further questions or debate, Councillor Cook proposed the recommendation contained within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Rudd. Upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

That the proposed changes to the Financial Procedure Rules be approved.

13 Community Governance Review

Full Council received report **ES/1145** by the Leader of the Council, regarding the Community Governance Review (CGR). It was noted that at its meeting on 26 January 2022, East Suffolk Council had approved the Terms of Reference for the CGR. Stage one of the CGR had invited submissions to be put forward on future governance arrangements for towns and parishes, in accordance with the terms of reference for the review. The CGR Member Working Group had met to consider the submissions received and to agree draft recommendations for consultation.

The Leader reported that the purpose of this report was to ask Council to approve the draft recommendations to be put forward for consultation, as part of the district-wide Community Governance Review (CGR). If approved, there would be a consultation period on the draft recommendations from 30 May to 8 July 2022.

The Leader confirmed that following the consultation period, there would be two months for the CGR Member Working Group to consider the comments received,

undertake any additional consultation if necessary, and to draft the final recommendations. The final recommendations would be considered by Council at its meeting in September 2022. The draft recommendations could be found in Appendix A to the report and a full summary of the responses received could be found in Appendix B.

As a point of information and by way of update, the Leader drew Members' attention to the reference on page 84 of Appendix B, to Letheringham Parish Council, which was currently unable to operate because it had no Parish Councillors and there was a recommendation for Parish Councillors to be appointed to the Parish Council by East Suffolk Council. The Leader confirmed that this was still the intention, however, it had not been possible to identify 5 nominees for East Suffolk Council to appoint in time for the meeting this evening. The Monitoring Officer was currently liaising with 3 members of the public, 1 of whom had agreed to be appointed and 2 of whom were potentially interested in being appointed, subject to understanding more about what would be required of them. Therefore, a report to appoint members to Letheringham Parish Council would need to be brought to a future Council meeting to consider, once 5 nominees had been identified.

The Leader moved the 3 recommendations contained within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Rivett.

Councillor Byatt took the opportunity to thank those Members who sat on the CGR Member Working Group and the officers involved, as he was impressed by the very detailed reports that were provided, which enabled meaningful discussions to take place. He also commented that he had been surprised by how many Parish Councils there were in the East Suffolk District.

There being no further comments, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That the draft recommendations, as set out in Appendix A to this report, be approved by Council for consultation.
2. That the Community Governance Review Member Working Group be authorised to amend draft recommendations and re-consult where necessary.
3. That the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to request their support with any consequential changes to district warding arrangements ahead of the elections in May 2023.

14 Cabinet Members Report and Outside Bodies Representatives Reports to Council

Full Council received report **ES/1149**, which was presented by 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 ESC on Outside Bodies'. The Leader stated that the written reports would be taken as read and he invited

relevant questions on their contents.

There being no comments or questions, the report was received for information.

The meeting concluded at 9.30pm

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Chairman