

**Confirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held via Zoom, on **Tuesday, 1 September 2020 at 6:30 pm**

**Members of the Cabinet present:**

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor David Ritchie, Councillor Craig Rivett, Councillor Letitia Smith

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Graham Elliott, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Ed Thompson, Councillor Steve Wiles

**Officers present:**

Katherine Abbott (Democratic Services Officer), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Cairistine Foster-Cannan (Head of Housing), Helen Greengrass (Felixstowe Forward Change Director), Andrew Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Fern Lincoln (Housing Needs Service Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Brian Mew (Interim Finance Manager), Darren Newman (Regeneration Project Manager), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Deborah Sage (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Karen Staples (Regeneration and Growth Manager), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration).

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**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rudd and Councillor Cackett.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Announcements**

There were no announcements.

**4 Minutes 7 July 2020**

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 July 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **5 Minutes 13 August 2020**

### **RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 August 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **6 Lowestoft Investment Plan**

Cabinet received report **ES/0469** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development who reported that in September 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) invited East Suffolk Council (ESC), on behalf of Lowestoft, to develop proposals for a Towns Deal, forming part of a £3.6 billion Towns Fund. Lowestoft was able to bid for up to £25 million through a five year Town Deal which required the development of a Town Investment Plan, which would make a case for investing in transformative capital regeneration projects in Lowestoft over the next 10 years.

A Towns Board was required to provide strategic direction and oversee the development of the Investment Plan. The Lowestoft Place Board (Towns Board) was established in January 2020 to fulfil this role.

The Deputy Leader reported that the next step was to submit the Town Investment Plan (TIP) to MCHLG by the 31st October 2020, as the basis for agreeing the Town Deal; his report was seeking delegated authority to conclude the Plan, ahead of submission. Furthermore, adequate capacity within the Regeneration Team was required in order to deliver the TIP and therefore due to the majority of posts in the team being temporary in nature the report was also seeking approval for the associated growth in the Council's core budget to extend these temporary contracts.

Cabinet very much welcomed the report and the investment, particularly at this time, with the ongoing pandemic. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism highlighted that this was a fantastic opportunity for ESC to ensure that it had an overarching plan which would deliver lots of aspects of its policies that, as a council, it was looking to support.

In response to a question from Councillor Byatt, who asked why Oulton Broad Parish Council was represented on the Lowestoft Place Board, it was explained that the TIP covered the broad urban area of Lowestoft and, as part of that, it was felt that with Oulton Broad Parish Council being one of the larger local councils, outside of Lowestoft Town Council, its inclusion was relevant and necessary in order to have full and robust stakeholder engagement. The Government had been very clear when developing the Place Board that it needed to be as inclusive as possible in order to obtain the views of the local area.

Councillor Gooch very much supported the proposals and was pleased that Oulton Broad Parish Council would be involved because it needed to be integrated; Councillor Gooch welcomed the fact that it was an agile document in relation to assessing the wider short, medium and long term impacts of the virus.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, to:
  - (a) agree the Lowestoft Investment Plan with the Lowestoft Place Board, in order to submit it by 31 October 2020, and
  - (b) agree Heads of Terms for the Town Deal with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to take the bid through to the second phase of full business case development for the projects within the Town Deal.
  
2. That the growth of £65,238 in the core budget be approved, to extend the temporary positions within the Regeneration Team until December 2022 to ensure the completion of the development phase of projects within the Town Deal, and to report further to Cabinet, once Towns Funding is secured, requesting that these roles be made permanent to deliver the 5 year Towns Deal and the 10 year Lowestoft Town Investment Plan.

## **7 First Light Festival**

Cabinet received report **ES/0471** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development who provided a reminder in that in January 2019, Cabinet approved the festival and ringfenced £120k to support the festival over three years. In September 2019, Cabinet approved funding to a maximum of £200k for the First Light Festival 2020, to be taken from the 2019/20 Business Rate Retention Scheme. The report before Cabinet sought approval for ESC to support the delivery of the First Light Festival 2021.

Due to the current pandemic the First Light Festival 2020 was unable to go ahead. Financial support for 2020 was therefore limited to £58,844. To celebrate the summer solstice weekend and keep momentum going, the first Light Festival CIC planned a programme of events for 2020 which were live streamed through Facebook and Instagram. Across the week the 15 events achieved the following engagement: videos were viewed 16,747 times; 49,456 people were reached; 184 Facebook pages were liked; there were 11,988 engagements on posts; and there were 3,391 Facebook page views.

It was proposed that Cabinet agreed to support the festival for 2020 on the basis that it would:

- Attract 40-50,000 visitors, with a focus on people from outside of Lowestoft's traditional visitor base;
- Brand Lowestoft as a desirable and attractive tourist destination;
- Extend the area from which people travel to Lowestoft, to include the growing populations of Norwich and Ipswich;
- Contribute directly to the local economy during the festival including increased hotel stays;
- Position Lowestoft as a venue for contemporary arts and events, with the

potential for significant financial support from the Arts Council;

- Identify Lowestoft as, uniquely in the UK, the first place to see the sunrise, allowing the town to trade on its geographical position.

Cabinet very much supported the proposals within the report.

Councillor Byatt gave praise to officers for the work that had been undertaken during 2019 and for what had been an amazing event. In response to a question from Councillor Byatt, who asked if all of the work that was being carried out on the promenade at the moment, with the re-securing of the cliffs, would be complete prior to the festival taking place in 2021, it was explained that the work was always programmed to be completed by the beginning of June; there would be no interruption to the festival as a result of the work taking place.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the impact of the First Light Festival to the local economy and the positive response to the online events for 2020 be noted.
2. That the festival be supported to a maximum of £140k in 2021, which remains available from the 2019/20 Business Rates Retention scheme.

## **8 Felixstowe Business Improvement District**

Cabinet received report **ES/0470** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development who reported that Felixstowe Forward had been supporting the work on establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) in Felixstowe over the last two years. This had involved close collaboration with businesses within the proposed BID area to determine the appetite, geography and ambitions of such an initiative. With the support of an experienced BID development consultant, a draft BID Business Plan had been created which set out how the BID would operate. The BID Working Group would release the full draft business plan as part of the final engagement with businesses.

It was reported that the business led working group, which had been leading on the development of the Business Plan, had indicated that it was ready to progress to the ballot stage of the BID. The intention was for the ballot to take place during October/November 2020, subject to a final consultation or “engagement” with all businesses in the proposed BID area.

The report was seeking Cabinet’s support for the Business Plan, to instruct the Returning Officer to hold the ballot, for the Council to vote in favour of the BID, and to agree that the proposals met the BID regulations.

The creation of a BID in Felixstowe would act as a key vehicle to enhance the trading environment within the town centre and resort area of the town. Furthermore, it would address the current challenges being experienced in the town centre which had been exacerbated by the current pandemic.

The Leader stated that, particularly at this time, it was important that ESC did all that it could to support local businesses and to empower them to help themselves. BIDs

were, generally, the Leader said, producing positive results elsewhere in the UK, and the Government was keen to open up various funding pots that would be available to bid into. The Leader referred to the work that had been undertaken by Helen Greengrass, the Felixstowe Forward Forward Change Director, stating that she had been instrumental in liaising with the local businesses.

Councillor Jepson gave thanks to Helen Greengrass and her team, and to Paul Wood and his team, for the hard work that had been undertaken during the early stages of the consultation period.

Councillor Wiles stated that he very much supported this proposal; he referred to the opening of the high streets and that it had shown how much cooperation between businesses was required to move their aims forward. By working together they would be able to move forward and take control of their own destinies.

Councillor Byatt sought clarification in respect of the physical boundaries of the BID, with officers explaining that the BID area covered the defined town centre, in accordance with the Local Plan, it covered Hamilton Road, roughly from the Orwell Hotel down to the bottom of Bent Hill to the Seafront, and encompassed some of the side roads. The BID also encompassed the seafront, from the Spa Pavilion along to the top of Beach Station Road. It was possible, officers added, that during the consultation, the seafront and/or town centre businesses might feel it appropriate to have a separate BID. However, it was felt that that was unlikely. It was confirmed that the BID would include, approximately, 320 businesses.

Councillor Byatt referred to the successful BID, that had been in place for many years in Lowestoft, he asked if it would be appropriate for all councillors to receive a briefing in respect of BIDs. The Leader responded, stating that he hoped that the local members, where there were BIDs in place, were well aware of the work that was being undertaken, he also felt that it was incumbent on all councillors to ensure that they understood the issues facing local businesses and to offer assistance where possible.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism commented that this was a wonderful example of people in the area that were running businesses, getting involved, talking to each other and making positive outcomes.

In conclusion, the Leader commented that it was right and proper for the Council to have one vote; it was for the businesses to make the decision; he did not want the Council to influence that decision.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the principles of the draft BID Business Plan be supported, and that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director, acting in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, to agree the final version, once published;

2. That the submitted BID proposals meet The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 (the Regulations);
3. That the Returning Officer be instructed to hold a ballot, running from 13 October to 11 November 2020, subject to the final engagement with businesses in the BID area, indicating the likelihood of a strong vote in favour of the BID;
4. That the Strategic Director be authorised to complete the Felixstowe BID ballot papers by voting in favour for the formation of a BID, using only one of the 11 votes issued to the Council so as not to be perceived as unduly impacting on the outcome of the ballot.

## **9 East Suffolk Council Outturn Report 2019/20**

Cabinet received report **ES/0473** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance who provided an overview of the Council's draft outturn position for 2019/20 in respect of the General Fund, Reserves, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Capital Programme and the Collection Fund.

As part of the General Fund original and revised budgets for 2019/20, use of the In-Year Savings Reserve was planned to balance the budget. However, for outturn, the required use of the reserve was less than expected by £0.391m. For the revised budget, £1.077m was the planned use of the reserve but only £0.686m was required. This therefore provided additional funding in the In-Year Savings Reserve to be available for future year budget pressures. Section 2.2 of the report provided details of key variances to the revised budget for the General Fund.

Individual revenue budget carry forward requests in excess of £30,000 required Cabinet approval as required within the Finance Procedure Rules. For 2019/20 there was one revenue budget carry forward request of £69,500 for Cabinet to consider for approval. This was in respect of the East Suffolk Towns Initiative and further detail was provided in Section 2.4 of the report.

The total balance on the Council's General Fund earmarked reserves at 31 March 2020 was £46.93m and Appendix A provided a reserve summary of the Council's earmarked reserves. The General Fund balance stood at £6m at 31 March 2020.

The Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 was subject to audit and therefore the outturn position for the Council as presented in the report was a draft position.

Statutory amendments to the process for approval and publication of the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 had been made in acknowledgement of the impact COVID-19 had had on local authorities. The date for signing and dating the draft 2019/20 Accounts was by 31 August 2020. Under normal circumstances this would have been by 31 May 2020. The publication date for final, audited accounts was by 30 November 2020, four months later than the usual date of 31 July 2020.

Councillor Elliott referred to paragraph 2.12 of the report and the slippage within the General Fund Capital Programme; he asked why this was. Officers explained that the largest slippage was in respect of the Felixstowe South Seafront work and Martello

Cafe; this was where work had been programmed in but there had been delays due to unforeseen circumstances.

Councillor Elliott referred to the new build programme within the Housing Revenue Account, and the significant variance in that ESC had not spent as much as intended. Councillor Elliott referred to the ambitions of ESC for new build and he wanted to ensure that the ambitions were turned into reality. Officers explained that ESC was committed to fulfilling its development programme and it had an ambitious target to build at least 50 new council homes per year; it was doing all that it could to meet that aspiration. It was confirmed that there were several schemes currently underway and examples were provided. Work was progressing well. The Leader added that, sometimes, for reasons beyond the Council's control, including outside influences, things did not always move at the speed that the Council had the ambition for. He also referred to due diligence having to be undertaken where significant amounts of money were being spent.

Councillor Byatt referred to page 113 of the report, and the additional disabled facilities grant, he referred to improving disabled access to the South Beach in Lowestoft. The Deputy Leader, in response, commented that he was pressing those responsible for this project; he confirmed that, unfortunately, work had been delayed due to COVID-19.

Councillor Byatt also referred to air quality and was pleased to see that there was external funding available for monitoring purposes. The Leader, in response, commented that this remained a key ambition of the Council.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That Council's draft outturn position for 2019/20 together with reserves and balances as at 31 March 2020 be noted.
2. That the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report be noted.
3. That the carry forward of the individual revenue budget of £69,500 in respect of the East Suffolk Towns Initiative, detailed in paragraph 2.4 of the report, be noted.

#### **10 Exempt/Confidential**

##### **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 art 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **11 Exempt Cabinet Minutes 7 July 2020**

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

**12 Exempt Minutes 13 August 2020**

- Information relating to any individual.
- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

**13 Community Led Housing Fund - Southwold Hospital Scheme**

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

**14 Re-profiling of Current Rough Sleeping Funding and New Next Steps Accommodation Programme Funding Bid**

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

The meeting concluded at 7:53 pm

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Chairman