

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 07 December 2021 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 Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith

Other Members present:

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Carol Poulter

Officers present: Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer), Teresa Howarth (Principal Environmental Health Officer), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Bridget Law (Programme Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Chris Phillips (Senior Estates Surveyor), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Heather Tucker (Head of Housing)

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Announcements

Councillor Steve Gallant - Leader of the Council

Councillor Gallant, on behalf of the Cabinet, sincerely thanked the Chief Executive and his officers for all of their work in 2021.

Councillor Gallant stated that the year had been a challenging time for all and the Council had needed to adapt and reinvent many of its previously well-established processes and procedures; he considered that officers from all service areas had

worked tirelessly and gone the extra mile to continue to deliver the Council's ambitions.

Councillor Gallant explained that he had asked each Cabinet Member to outline one or two key achievements in their respective portfolios and said that Members acknowledged that these achievements could not have happened without the support and endeavours of the officer team that supports them.

Councillor Craig Rivett - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development

Councillor Rivett cited the record level of support provided for businesses in 2021 in response to COVID-19 and directed everyone to the East Suffolk Means Business website for more information on the grants and support available. Councillor Rivett highlighted that more support for the high street, people and places would be coming in 2022.

The Cabinet was advised of a celebration event in Saxmundham that had taken place on 3 December 2021 which had been very well attended and that events had been provided by the First Light Festival Community Interest Company.

Councillor Rivett noted that £25,000,000 of funding had been secured from the Towns Fund for Lowestoft and work on the project was continuing. Another significant piece of work highlighted was Freeport East which Councillor Rivett said would go live in January 2022, pending further work on the business case, and would put the Port of Felixstowe in a strong position globally.

Councillor Rivett reminded Members that Banksy art had appeared in East Suffolk during 2021 and a consultation was underway on street art. It was intended to have a bigger First Light Festival in 2022 having had a scaled down event in 2021.

External funding had been secured for the renaissance of East Anglian fishing and a task and finish group was in place looking at ways to improve the industry. Councillor Rivett outlined the work on cliff stabilisation and beach huts in Lowestoft, including disabled access, and stated the Lowestoft Post Office project was progressing well. Councillor Rivett noted that the cafe at Martello Park, Felixstowe, had progressed to fitting out and he looked forward to seeing it in operation in 2022.

Councillor Rivett summarised the significant work undertaken on energy projects including the three examinations held in 2021 for East Anglia One North, East Anglia Two and Sizewell C, as well as the extensive consultations and meetings with Government ministers and civil servants to remind them of the cumulative impact of projects in East Suffolk.

Councillor Norman Brooks - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport

Councillor Brooks advised that the rollout of the Civil Parking Enforcement service had continued during 2021 and the service had been finessed during this period; he described it as a massive piece of work to introduce the service across the whole of East Suffolk and had been remarkably well done.

Councillor Brooks noted that the Council had introduced 30 minutes free parking in all of its car parks and highlighted that the use of the RingGo app exceeded 50% of paid for parking events in 2021, compared to less than 10% in 2019. Councillor Brooks stated that this saved the Council money and reduced its carbon footprint from the collection of cash from pay machines.

Cabinet was informed that the Council remained party to a variety of ongoing consultations regarding proposed improvements to the A12/A14 Copdock Interchange and the A12 near Lowestoft and was working with partners on proposed improvements to the A12 near Wickham Market. Councillor Brooks said that there had been movement on other highways improvements in Suffolk to ensure that any freight generated by the Sizewell C construction, should it be approved, would be accommodated by the road network.

Councillor Stephen Burroughes - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Services, ICT and Commercial Partnerships

Councillor Burroughes stated that 2021 had been just as challenging as 2020 and considered that the Customer Services Team had been outstanding in all areas; the Team had continued to work from home in a very efficient way and had moved to a single front desk and virtual call centres. Councillor Burroughes said that customers were being encouraged to migrate to using a MyEastSuffolk account to interact with the Council online.

Councillor Burroughes advised that the Customer Services Team was continually using a data led approach through the Customer Services Dashboard, comments received and "Make Every Contact Count" to identify glitches and improve support services across the Council; this process had been streamlined with the implementation of new software packages during 2021.

Councillor Burroughes considered that the virtual call centre setup worked well and digital coaching had been offered to customers not used to interacting with the Council online. Councillor Burroughes highlighted that the Customer Services Team had dealt with a large number of queries on a number of topics during 2021, including supporting the COVID-19 response in signposting residents to health services.

Councillor Burroughes also outlined the improvements made by the Council's ICT service, such as doubling the bandwidth and improving network connectivity to make it easier for officers to work from home. Councillor Burroughes outlined the Grandpads scheme offered by the Council which had helped to reduce social isolation during the lockdowns, particularly for older people in East Suffolk. The ICT Team was using intelligent performance management to drive systems forward and was undertaking a digital audit.

Councillor Burroughes was of the view that the Council's commercial partnerships had worked well in 2021; Everyone Active had taken over the operation of the Council's leisure facilities in the former Waveney District Council area and Places for People had continued to deliver good services at the Council's leisure facilities in the former Suffolk

Coastal District Council area. Councillor Burroughes confirmed that the Council was driving improvements with East Suffolk Norse through Key Performance Indicators.

Councillor Maurice Cook - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources

Councillor Cook highlighted that the Council had achieved a balanced Budget including freezing District Council Tax and providing an additional contribution of £110,000 to town and parish councils to restrict their precept rises; a number followed the Council's lead and had not increased their precept.

It was noted that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic the Council had paid out over £130,000,000 in grants to businesses and in support of communities. Transparency to both Members and the public had been increased by taking the draft Budget to both Cabinet and Full Council and introducing half-yearly performance reports.

The Council had increased its investment in Multi Asset Trusts by a further £5,000,000 to boost its income from long-term reserves and had arranged an Environmental, Social and Governance advice service from its City analysts, Arlingclose, which would lead to the issuing of an 'Ethical Investment Statement' in the Council's Treasury Strategy from January 2022. Councillor Cook added that the Council had also increased its commercial income from the purchase and letting of the Moor Park Industrial site and the NWES Office accommodation complexes.

Councillor Cook outlined that a business case and other preparatory work had been provided towards the formation of the East Suffolk Services Ltd Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo) and other future, yet to be announced projects. The Council had also provided a new investment strategy and financial framework to the newly formed Southwold Harbour Management Committee.

Councillor Cook confirmed that the Council had received the agreement of the Government to close the second homes Council Tax/Business Rates loophole.

It was noted that the Council had provided additional funding for the Gull Wing Bridge project in Lowestoft; Councillor Cook detailed that in his own Ward an agreement had been facilitated between three parish councils to a new Solar Energy Farm to provide electricity for 16,500 homes, which would save 11,000 tonnes of carbon each year and provide a significant contribution to the Council's business rates in the coming years.

Councillor Cook concluded that these examples and many more to comply with the Council's ethos of creating sound income streams which, ultimately, help to relieve the pressure to increase Council Tax for the benefit of all residents of the district.

Councillor Richard Kerry - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing

Councillor Kerry highlighted the hard work to meet the needs of clients presenting to the Council seeking housing advice, noting the work of outreach officers to work closely with rough sleepers and accommodation offers being made to all those verified as rough sleeping. Officers had also continued to work with partners and other

statutory services to provide support to clients including wrap around support to enable long-term sustainable housing options and reducing rough sleeping.

Councillor Kerry outlined the work that had been completed to deliver a seven-bed unit of supported housing in Lowestoft in partnership with Orwell Housing, as part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme. It was highlighted that this facility was launched in June 2021, only four months after the Council had secured the funding to do so. Councillor Kerry detailed the benefits of the project and the cross-team working that had enabled it to be delivered within such a short deadline. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had visited the project and had been extremely impressed with the high quality of accommodation.

The Cabinet was advised that a new online service for housing tenants, myHome, was launched earlier in 2021 which allowed tenants to view rent balance and statements, make rent payments, set up paperless direct debits, review repair history, manage appointments, and allow secure messaging between tenants and Housing Officers.

Councillor Kerry summarised the housing development that had been progressed in 2021 and highlighted that the Stepping Home service was highly commended in the national Municipal Journal awards in the category for Delivering Better Outcomes.

The Private Sector Housing Team had successfully led a Suffolk-wide bid to increase awareness and enforcement action against landlords flouting the rules around renting out properties with a low energy efficiency rating; the project was now underway. Green Homes Grant funding had been secured to 2023 to deliver energy efficiency and renewable solutions across Suffolk.

Councillor Kerry concluded by stating that the Council had secured funding of £20,000 through the Local Government Association's Housing Advisors Programme to review the existing temporary accommodation for provision for those experiencing homelessness and support the development of a business case to consider the most appropriate future model of provision.

Councillor James Mallinder - Cabinet Member with responsibility for The Environment

Councillor Mallinder said that The Environment was one of the Council's core principles; the Council had declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and had taken action in response to this. Councillor Mallinder said that the Council had a nature first focus and had made biodiversity a key priority throughout 2021.

Councillor Mallinder detailed the "Pardon the Weeds" campaign launched in 2021 which had created over 100 sites in conservation areas and demonstrated to residents that the Council cared about the environment and supported biodiversity. Councillor Mallinder announced a reduction in glyphosate spraying by 45% in 2021.

Cabinet was advised that during the summer of 2021 the Council had worked with town and parish councils to ensure they had the right number of bins and had introduced more paper recycling bins; 2021 had also seen the introduction of "smart" bins that indicated when they were full.

Councillor Mallinder expanded on changes to how cemeteries had been managed to allow more natural growth where appropriate to create pocket nature reserves. Wildflower border planting had taken place at the entrance to East Suffolk House and Councillor Mallinder considered it had exceeded expectation, describing it as having looked different each week. Councillor Mallinder noted that an Air Quality Strategy had been adopted in 2021.

September 2021 was cited by Councillor Mallinder as being historic, as Cabinet had approved the transition of its vehicle fleet from diesel fuel to palm free hydrotreated vegetable oil which was sustainable and renewable and would reduce the fleet's carbon footprint by 90%; the fleet's footprint was 32% of the Council's entire carbon footprint. Councillor Mallinder said this was a huge step towards the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030. It was noted that an open letter had been sent by residents highlighting the Council's commitment to the environment, which had been signed by all the political groups of the Council.

Councillor Mallinder advised the Cabinet of a recent successful campaign in Lowestoft to improve recycling; it had been reported that for the last few weeks there had been zero contamination on two particularly challenging routes in the area.

The Cabinet was advised that the "Tree Jubilee" campaign had been launched in November 2021 which would both support the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2022 and help to build a sustainable environment.

Councillor Mallinder concluded by highlighting that the cross-party Environment Task Group had guided the environmental work in 2021.

Councillor David Ritchie - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management

Councillor Ritchie said that a great deal had been achieved in Planning and Coastal Management in 2021 and reported on the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project. Councillor Ritchie reported that the construction of the tidal flood wall had progressed well; the first cladding on Waveney Road had been installed which had smartened the area and provided vital protection to the area.

Cabinet was advised that the tidal barrier structure would now take the form of a 40-metre mitre gate and would be the first such structure not to require the diversion of a navigation channel as well as the second largest tidal barrier in the United Kingdom.

Councillor Ritchie said that a decision had been taken to change from the original 28-metre design following navigational simulations that had shown a need to keep the current width of the navigation channel, to allow larger vessels to continue to access the inner harbour. Councillor Ritchie considered that this would allow Lowestoft to continue to develop as a hub for offshore wind energy.

Councillor Ritchie noted that the project had worked with schools and young people in Lowestoft to offer work experience, training and employment and highlighted that the project's virtual visitor centre was open for the duration of the project at www.lowestoftfrmp.org.uk/consultation.

Councillor Ritchie hoped that the project would be completed by 2026 and was possibly the largest engineering project ever undertaken by a district council; he gave massive credit to both Coastal Partnership East and the Council's Coastal Management team for the progression of the project and considered that the project would underpin a successful future for Lowestoft.

Councillor Mary Rudd - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health

Councillor Rudd noted that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including the Delta and Omicron variants identified in 2021, had put enormous pressure on the teams in her portfolio. The majority of work by these teams had not created big headlines but had kept residents safe; Councillor Rudd cited the work of Emergency Planning, Food and Safety, Corporate Health and Safety, Port Health, Community Health and Licensing as being important in achieving this and considered the work of these teams to have been amazing.

Councillor Rudd highlighted that the Food and Safety and Licensing Teams had visited restaurants and other eating places to ensure they were complying with the rules and that Health Teams had been assisting with the vaccine rollout and other aspects of the COVID-19 response. Councillor Rudd said that Port Health had expanded its staff to cover the extra workload involved with Brexit. Councillor Rudd thanked staff for their hard work.

Councillor Letitia Smith - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism

Councillor Smith thanked the residents of East Suffolk for the high numbers of volunteers seen throughout the year, at a time when the district needed to come together to help one another. Councillor Smith outlined the continued work of the eight Community Partnerships in their communities. Councillor Smith covered the launch of EAST (Everyone Active, Supported Together) bags earlier in 2021 which had been supported by the Community Partnership Board.

Councillor Smith noted she had joined a gym in 2021 and was regularly encouraging members of the Cabinet to be more active. Councillor Smith highlighted the Women's Tour event held in Felixstowe as well as a triathlon event that took place in the town on the same weekend, along with an event in Lowestoft to celebrate the longest day of summer which had been organised by the First Light Festival CIC. Cabinet was reminded that the Council's leisure centres had reopened in April 2021 as part of the roadmap out of lockdown. Councillor Smith said that moving forward from this the Council had continued to make efforts to support communities and had reviewed and extended place-based initiatives in Lowestoft and Leiston. Work was being undertaken to support young people into employment and Councillor Smith noted that Cabinet had approved funding for a new project to fund rural youth provision.

Councillor Smith said that she could not cover all the projects undertaken in 2021 and would circulate more information to all Members of East Suffolk Council to remind them what had been achieved during the year.

4 Minutes

RESOLVED

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

5 Council Tax Base 2022/23

Cabinet received report **ES/0961** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, who stated that the report outlined the process for estimating the tax base and the elements that needed to be taken into account. Starting with the total number of dwellings in the district, Councillor Cook reported, adjustments were made for reliefs, discounts, growth, and an estimated collection rate to arrive at a tax base expressed as a number of Band D equivalents. An increase in the council tax base had financial implications for precepting authorities as their income from a given level of Band D council tax was increased.

Councillor Cook stated that a number of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were evident in the calculation of the council tax base for 2021/22. The tax base for 2022/23 showed an overall increase as these impacts had diminished or reverted to normal trends. The number of properties saw significant growth in the last half of 2020/21 and the first half of this year, but there were now signs of levelling off, with the assumption now for growth to be around 0.7%. Typically growth in property numbers had tended to be around the 1% level. The value of LCTRS reliefs rose significantly in the first half of 2020/21, but then levelled off, and there had been a steady decline throughout the first half of 2021/22.

At this stage, Cabinet was advised, it had not been assumed in calculating the 2022/23 tax base that there would be significant movements from the current position.

The pandemic did impact on collection rates, the collection rate used in the tax base calculation was revised downwards to 98.75%. Monitoring of the position in 2021/22 now indicated that the 99% collection rate used in the calculation could be reinstated for 2022/23.

In concluding, Councillor Cook advised that Appendix A within the report showed the estimated 2022/23 council tax base for the district of 89,023.43 Band D equivalents by parish, an overall increase of 1,684.00, or around 1.93%, on the tax base for the current year of 87,339.43 Band equivalents. This Appendix also showed the increase or decrease in the tax base by parish compared with 2021/22.

There being no questions or debate, on the proposition of Councillor Cook, seconded by Councillor Gallant, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the council tax base for 2022/23 for the East Suffolk district is 89,023.43 Band D equivalent properties be approved.
2. That the Council tax bases for 2022/23 for individual town and parish areas area as shown in Appendix A to report ES/0961 be approved.

6 Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy

Cabinet received report **ES/0962** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, who stated that the report presented an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as of November 2021. The MTFS provided a baseline forecast of income and expenditure and looked at the overall financial climate, including public finances and the local government financial environment.

On 27 October 2021, Councillor Cook reported, the Chancellor delivered the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021. The Spending Review which covered the next three years was broadly positive for local government, with funding much better than expected. The increase was very much front loaded with growth in grant funding in 1922/23 and no further general increases in the following two years. The draft MTFS had assumed another year of the Revenue Support Grant and the Rural Services Delivery Grant, an additional £590k for next year. However, there was less certainty for continuation of the Lower Tier Services Grant and a new allocation of New Homes Bonus, so for now, these were not included in the MTFS beyond the current year.

The central assumption on Business Rates was, Councillor Cook advised, a continuation of the current regime for another year, with changes taking place in 2023/24. East Suffolk was in an advantageous position under the current system and deferral of the reforms constituted a financial benefit of over £3m to the Council in 2022/23.

Cabinet was advised that the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was due to be released in the week commencing 6th December 2021, which would provide greater detail on Government funding and Business Rates.

The updated Council Tax base was an improved position, with growth at 1.93% compared to 1% forecast earlier in the year. This was an additional £138k of income for 1922/23. A cautious approach had been taken with forecasting tax base growth in future years, with prudent assumptions regarding LCTRS reliefs and Collection Rates, and completion of development sites levelling off.

As of November, the draft MTFS reported an updated budget gap of £1m for 22/23, a reduction of £4.4m from the February position. This was primarily due to deferral of reforms to the Business Rates system. Future years were showing a slight increase on the February budget gap of between £700k and £800k, giving rise to annual budget gaps of around £6m.

There were key areas of the budget still to be finalised, Councillor Cook advised, which could have a significant impact on the budget position. This included revenue implications of the capital programme, establishment costs and partnerships.

In conclusion, Councillor Cook reported that the 2022/23 budget would be presented to Cabinet and Council on 1 and 23 February respectively, along with further updates to the MTFS.

The Leader, firstly, referred to all of the achievements of ESC during the last 12 months, and he stated that those achievements could not be completed without an excellent Financial Services Team working in the background to turn ambitions into realities. The Leader offered his thanks to the Team for all of its work during the last 12 months.

Following a question from the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing regarding the forthcoming Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announcement, and if it was not positive news, whether it might have an adverse impact on the revenue programme going forward, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance stated that he was anticipating a positive outcome and officers added that latest intelligence was that it was likely to be in line with the assumptions within the Strategy, ie a one year settlement, with a stand still position on some of the big variants, ie business rates. Officers stated that, once the information had been received, they would circulate a paper to Cabinet that would set out the implications for ESC.

In response to a question from Councillor Byatt regarding New Homes Bonus, officers advised that their latest thinking was that it would mirror what was expected in respect of the rest of the settlement, ie a one year roll forward of previous arrangements. Officers added that it was quite difficult to estimate, if it was a one year roll forward, what the amounts might be because the last year had been such an unusual year in respect of completions of houses, which determined the amounts of New Homes Bonus. At the moment, a prudent approach had been taken of no reliance on New Homes Bonus.

Councillor Byatt made further points regarding the forthcoming Local Government Finance Settlement, but it was acknowledged that at this point the announcement was still awaited and unknown.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy attached to report ES-0962 as Appendix A be approved.
2. That Members and Officers develop proposals to set a balanced budget for 2022/23 and beyond be approved.

7 Review of Waste Management: Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet received report **ES/0963** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, which included, as an appendix, a report by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, containing recommendations for Cabinet to consider.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bird, introduced his report; he firstly stated that the Scrutiny Committee had decided to undertake a very comprehensive review of almost every aspect of waste management, hence the number of recommendations contained within his report. Councillor Bird, commenting on the Cabinet report, stated that he welcomed that Cabinet would positively embrace a number of the proposals but he found it disappointing that the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment's recommendation was to not accept the recommendation on increasing the fixed penalty notice for littering to the maximum allowable; Councillor Bird felt that by making the increase it would send a good message of deterrence; he found the argument against it somewhat unconvincing, that higher fines may lead to more payment defaults; he stated that if this argument was taken to its logical conclusion then no fines would be imposed because people would not pay them.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, firstly referring to the recommendations put forward by the Scrutiny Committee, stated that ESC was doing much of the work already; he also reminded members that ESC was not the solution; it was only part of the solution; he added that he wished that ESC could do more, but it did not have the authority; however, he added, ESC had the responsibility to make waste disposal as easy as possible and he believed that ESC did that. Going forward, with the move a Local Authority Trading Company to deliver waste services, there would be a review of practices and Councillor Mallinder reassured members that there there would be continued integrated working. Turning to the Environmental Bill, Councillor Mallinder reported that this would bring a complete change of how household waste would be collected.

Turning to the recommendations with the report, Councillor Mallinder summarised all of the recommendations together with his responses.

Councillor Deacon, Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, after giving thanks for the report, stated that he was very disappointed with some of the content; giving an example, he referred to fly tipping, and he stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner in Northamptonshire saw fly tipping as a crime and, as such, he supported local land owners to have rubbish removed. The Leader, in response, agreed that this was probably a very good initiative in Northamptonshire, but he believed that the Scrutiny Committee should be looking at things that ESC could do; he added that ESC did not control the PCC and related funds. The Leader believed that ESC should focus on the benefits for East Suffolk. Councillor Deacon, speaking again, stated that he accepted that view; however, he felt that ESC could approach the PCC, possibly with other district Councils within Suffolk. The Leader, in response, referred to the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP) and stated that if there was a suggestion that was Suffolk-wide, then it needed to be considered by the SWP. The Leader was of the view that it was not the role of the Scrutiny Committee to ask Cabinet to ask somebody else to do something; he added that the Scrutiny Committee could, if it so wished, contact the Chair of the SWP regarding initiatives.

Councillor Mallinder, speaking as Chair of the SWP, confirmed that the initiative referred to by Councillor Deacon would be considered by the SWP.

Councillor Byatt referred to the reference within the report to Norse Commercial Services and ESC's Environmental Enforcement Team working together; he referred to the end of the Norse contract and asked if consideration was being given to forming a Shadow LATCO. In response, the Leader referred to the Board that had been set up, working towards the introduction of the LATCO; it was not a Shadow Board he said, because that would not be appropriate, but a lot of work was underway, including monitoring and planning for 2023, when there would be a change of contract.

Councillor Byatt referred to the many people on low incomes within the East Suffolk area, who could not afford to pay the fee for the removal of bulky waste, and he asked for that to be given further thought in the future. Councillor Mallinder, in reply, referred to the officer team working closely with housing colleagues in order to assist as much as possible. He felt that there was an opportunity for town and parish councils to assist and help their communities. Councillor Mallinder encouraged ward members to discuss this with town and parish councils and he offered assistance and guidance.

Councillor Byatt, referring to the education of people, suggested that perhaps councillors could contact the schools within their own respective wards. In response, Councillor Mallinder repeated the importance of education and he wanted ESC to be proactive in this area; again, he was happy to assist where possible.

Councillor Byatt referred to budgets and hoped that there would be savings through the introduction of the LATCO. The Leader, in reply, stated that there would not necessarily be savings in moving from one contract to another in 2023; it was not necessarily about saving money, it was about providing value for money he stated.

In response to comments by Councillor Byatt in respect of the Environmental Bill, Councillor Mallinder stated that the concept of the Bill was to harmonise the service across the whole of the UK and he welcomed this, hoping that the UK would focus on recycling waste better, although, ultimately, the UK had to consume less and produce less waste; that was key he stated.

Councillor Gooch, after giving thanks for the report, referenced the Scrutiny Committee's attempt to look at proposed actions to try to make the lives of residents easier, cleaner and less blighted by litter. Firstly, Councillor Gooch echoed the words of Councillor Byatt, ie trying to enable people who were financially struggling to not find themselves with the only option but to dump a broken fridge because they could not afford the fees for having it removed. Councillor Gooch also expressed her disappointment at the proposal to not increase the fines where people dumped things deliberately, stating that the fines should represent the damage being done to communities. Finally, Councillor Gooch commented in respect of representations to other bodies, and asked if it would be better for representations to go from the Scrutiny Committee or the Environment Task Group.

The Leader, after acknowledging the comments, referred to representations and stated that it was a matter for each to consider; it was not a matter for Cabinet. Councillor Mallinder, referring to littering, stated that everybody, ie town and parish councils; residents; producers; should take responsibility, not just ESC; he also referred to the disposal of large items and felt that charities, town and parish councils, community

partnerships etc could assist. He did not believe that the finance was causing an issue and he did not believe that fines were the answer; it was, he said, about education and encouraging people to make the right decisions.

The Leader stated that the recommendation with the report, by Councillor Mallinder, would be slightly amended.

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

RESOLVED

That Cabinet supports the response outlined by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment in response to the recommendations as stated out in report ES/0963.

8 Review of Housing Development: Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet received report **ES/0964** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, which included, as an appendix, a report by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, containing a recommendation for Cabinet to consider.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bird, introduced his report.

Councillor Kerry then stated that in his role as Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing he was asking Cabinet not to accept the recommendation from the Scrutiny Committee, at this time. He thanked the Scrutiny Committee for the review and scrutiny of the Development pipeline, which provided much needed affordable housing within East Suffolk. He understood, he said, the aspiration and desire for ESC to commit to building additional Affordable Housing units, but there were a number of other factors that needed to be considered before a Business Case could be produced such as the one requested by the Scrutiny Committee.

In July 2019, Councillor Kerry stated, ESC voted unanimously to step up its positive work on environmental issues to tackle the issue of climate change. As part of this work, ESC needed to consider the energy efficiency of its 4,500 Housing Revenue Account owned properties. The level of work and investment required in the stock was not yet fully understood and work was underway to try and understand the true cost and scale of the issue. However, it was without doubt going to be at considerable expense.

Councillor Kerry advised members that the Housing Revenue Account has its own Business Plan, which was written in 2018, and since it was produced a number of key changes had been seen which would impact on what ESC chose to do in the future. These included the Building Safety Bill, the Retrofit agenda, the changes in the way ESC could use Right to Buy receipts and the removal of the debt cap.

Therefore, at this time, Councillor Kerry proposed to Cabinet that it rejected the recommendation from the Scrutiny Committee and continue with the on-going review of the HRA Business Plan, which considered multiple issues, rather than one in isolation.

The Leader emphasised the need for balanced budgets and managing income and expenditure, and he also referenced ESC's aspirations in respect of housing and the environmental agenda. That, he commented, required a balanced view to be taken.

Councillor Bird, speaking again, urged Cabinet to support the recommendation from the Scrutiny Committee; he emphasised that the Committee did not recommend increasing the council house building targets, merely to produce a business case to quantify the impact and cost of so increasing the target. Councillor Bird added that to argue against the recommendation by citing the Council's obligation to retro fit the existing housing stock with non fossil fuel heating was not a plausible argument; it conflated two separate issues. Councillor Bird emphasised that he believed that the target for house building should be challenging and ambitious; in conclusion he commented that to consider increasing the number of council houses built by ESC would be sending the right message to residents, particularly those who were in desperate need of a home.

The Leader and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing repeated the need for evaluation to take place at this time. The Leader commented that working up a full business case now would take up a lot of officer time, and it was not needed because Cabinet would not authorise an increase in the build of council houses until the cost of retro fitting those already in existence was known.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment echoed the words of Councillor Kerry; he repeated the costs involved and referred to the retro fitting that would improve the efficiency of the homes and make them less expensive for residents.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources referred to the Local Government Settlement, to be received together with possible amendments to the Prudential Indicators within which ESC must work; it was, he said, a possibility that house building may be included within one of the prudential indicators which ESC would no longer be able to borrow against. As such, there were many uncertainties.

Councillor Deacon stated that he was delighted that ESC would be building the truly social housing in Felixstowe at the former Deben High School site, one of the reasons being that in the Felixstowe Peninsula there were 400 families in desperate need of that type of housing. Councillor Deacon added that ESC owed it to those sort of families across the district to at least consider a business case to solve the problem; Councillor Deacon asked the cost of doing that.

In response, the Leader stated that the Team was focussed heavily on a whole number of issues; there was, he said, little point in asking the Team to produce a Business Case when Cabinet's view was already known. The Leader referred to the cost of what was ahead and that it would be a pointless exercise in officer time.

Councillor Kerry, after thanking Councillor Deacon for his comments on the former Deben High School site, added that he would not stop developing houses; that work would continue, and he gave many examples of ongoing projects.

Councillor Byatt referred the former Deben High School site being an exemplar project and suggested that it be highlighted as such to the private sector who might produce more social housing, that was desperately needed.

Councillor Bird, on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, after hearing all comments made, asked Cabinet to re-double its efforts to at least try to achieve meeting the existing target of building 50 houses per year, which was currently not being met. In response, the Leader stated that Cabinet would continue to do that.

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

RESOLVED

That the recommendation by the Scrutiny Committee be rejected.

9 Review of Empty Homes: Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet received report **ES/0966** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, which included, as an appendix, a report by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, containing a recommendation for Cabinet to consider.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bird, introduced his report. Councillor Bird emphasised the number of empty homes within the district, which he said currently equated to an entire housing estate; it was he said a waste of resources and a blight on communities.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing then stated that empty homes were a wasted resource which could be providing much needed homes, this was most notable at this time of housing crisis. They were also known to attract anti-social behaviour, vandalism and fly-tipping but dealing with empty homes was not a statutory function and therefore resources often had to be prioritised elsewhere.

The report before Cabinet, Councillor Kerry stated, suggested that the business case should come back to Cabinet in April 2022.

Cabinet gave its support for the proposals within the report.

On the proposition of Councillor Kerry, seconded by Councillor Rudd, it was by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That Cabinet accepts the recommendation by the Scrutiny Committee and requests officers to develop a Business Case to consider what additional resources or incentives could be put in place to ensure more empty homes are brought back into use. This should then return to Cabinet for review and a decision in April 2022.

At this point, Councillor Deacon spoke, he reminded Cabinet of the speech that he made at the recent Full Council meeting, where he vigorously defended the concept of the Leader and Cabinet type of governance; however, that was against the balance of having a very strong Scrutiny function, and Councillor Deacon believed that ESC did have a very strong Scrutiny Committee which came up with very good ideas, and Councillor Deacon believed that it was important to note that he did not wish to see the work of the Scrutiny Committee being a tick box exercise.

Councillor Deacon also reminded Cabinet that part of the function of a Scrutiny Committee was to be a critical friend to Cabinet and he pointed out that Cabinet may ask the Scrutiny Committee to look at something in advance of a decision being made.

In response, the Leader emphasised that he was, and would always continue to be, a strong advocate of Scrutiny; his only criticism, which he commented that he had shared with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, was that the Committee should focus in on issues; he gave the two housing reports just considered as good examples where the Scrutiny Committee had not looked at the complete housing portfolio but, instead, had focussed on smaller elements of the service.

Councillor Deacon accepted the Leader's explanation, and gave thanks, stating that he was glad that the Leader was an advocate of the Scrutiny system.

10 Southwold Harbour Management Committee – Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2021/22

Cabinet received report **ES/0960** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, who stated that the report provided an update from the Southwold Harbour Management Committee (SHMC) on performance against budget for Quarter 2 2021/22 and recommended to Cabinet both a schedule of charges and dues for the Harbour for 2022/23 and the campsite and caravan Site fees and charges proposals for 2022/23. Cabinet was advised by Councillor Cook that the proposals set out presented a balance between the interests of the customers of Southwold Harbour and the need to keep pace with rising costs.

It was reported by Councillor Cook that the net income at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22 for the Southwold Harbour, adjusted for income in advance, showed a small favourable variant compared to the budget to date and it was anticipated that the outturn position for 2021/22 would be broadly in line with the budget. Councillor Cook noted that net income at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22 for the campsite and caravan site showed an adverse variant of approximately £62,000, which was anticipated to increase by the end of 2021/22.

Officers would be, highlighted Councillor Cook, exploring government support for cost and income losses related to the pandemic, which could be claimed and attributed to the campsite and caravan site. Councillor Cook described the proposed fees and charges for the campsite and caravan site were brought in mind with current rates of inflation and would increase income for 2022/23.

Councillor Cook stated that the SHMC Budget Monitoring Report considered by the SHMC at its meeting of 11 November 2021 was attached as Appendix 1 to the report, which in turn the schedule of charges and dues for the Harbour and the fees and charges proposals for the campsite and caravan site fees and charges were appended to. At that meeting, the SHMC had resolved that this Budget Monitoring Report be reported to Cabinet and that the schedule of charges and dues for the Harbour and the fees and charges proposals for the campsite and caravan site fees and charges be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Gallant said he was pleased to see the SHMC established and working well and considered it positive and reassuring to see that it was taking on this serious piece of work; he invited questions and comments from Cabinet.

Councillor Ritchie, who noted that he was the Chairman of the SHMC, expressed his gratitude to Councillor Cook and the Council's Finance Team for their hard work on the Southwold Harbour accounts. The recommendations were fully supported by Councillor Ritchie, who stated he was looking forward to seeing the Harbour's finances being on sounder funding and providing improvements to facilities.

Councillor Byatt queried the use of red and white diesel at Southwold Harbour and sought clarity around the maintenance of the ice unit on the North Dock wall. The Head of Operations confirmed that the Council maintained the ice unit as a condition of the refurbishment of the North Dock wall, to attract more commercial vessels. The Head of Operations stated that he understood that the Council could use red diesel on the site for its own purposes and could sell white diesel to customers for their own use.

On the proposition of Councillor Cook, seconded by Councillor Ritchie, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2021/22 for Southwold Harbour Management Committee be noted.
2. That the annual schedule of charges and dues for Southwold Harbour for 2022/23 attached as Appendix B to the Southwold Harbour Committee Budget Monitoring Report be approved.
3. That the Fees and Charges for Southwold Caravan Site and Campsite for 2022/23, attached as Appendix C, to the Southwold Harbour Management Committee Budget Monitoring Report be approved.

Cabinet received report **ES/0965** of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with Economic Development, who explained that a legal issue had arisen and it had become apparent that the Council had erroneously retained the freehold of land at Martello Park in Felixstowe. Councillor Rivett confirmed that the East Suffolk Council Constitution required that any disposal of land be brought to the Cabinet for approval.

There being no questions or comments from either Cabinet Members or Ward Members, Councillor Gallant sought a proposer and seconder for the recommendations set out in the report.

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

RESOLVED

That the transfer of the freehold at Nil consideration, the two areas of land as outlined in the appendices in red, to Bloor Homes and the Freeholder of 14 Marine Parade Walk, respectively, be agreed.

12 Exempt/Confidential Items

RESOLVED

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

13 Exempt Minutes

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

The meeting concluded at 8.44 pm.

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Chairman