

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Conference Room, Riverside, on **Wednesday, 26 February 2020 at 6:30pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Melissa Allen, Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Chris Blundell, Councillor Jocelyn Bond, Councillor Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw, Councillor Norman Brooks, 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 Mike Deacon, Councillor Graham Elliott, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Richard Kerry, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor Trish Mortimer, Councillor Keith Patience, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Carol Poulter, 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:**

Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Lewis Boudville (Car Parking Manager), Neil Cockshaw (Programme and Partnership Manager), Hilary Slater (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Sandra Lewis (Business Solutions Manager), Brian Mew (Interim Finance Manager), Lorraine Rogers (Finance Manager), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

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**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Fryatt, T Gandy, TJ Haworth-Culf, R Herring, C Mapey, F Mortimer and M Newton.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

**3 Announcements**

The Chairman of the Council

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The Chairman of the Council reported that he and the Vice Chairman had attended a number of civic events since the last Full Council meeting, which included Civic Receptions, a Burns Night celebration and various Annual General Meetings.

He also reported that the Minutes from the last Full Council meeting on 22 January 2020 had not been able to be published with the papers for this meeting, however it was hoped that they would be available in the near future.

### Urgent Item of Business

- The Chairman reported that in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, he had agreed, as Chairman of the Council, to accept an urgent item of business.

The matter related to a Councillor request for an extended leave of absence. The special circumstances for considering this item as a matter of urgency were that a decision needed to be taken before 25 March 2020, which would be the next Full Council meeting, as if the Councillor did not attend a meeting before that date, they would cease to be a Councillor, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972. Once any Councillor loses office, through failure to attend for the six month period, the disqualification cannot be overcome by the Councillor subsequently resuming attendance, nor can retrospective approval of the Council be sought. By considering this matter now, it would remove the pressure from the Councillor and help to speed up their recovery.

Therefore the Chairman had agreed that there were special circumstances which would allow for this item of business to be considered as a matter of urgency. This matter would therefore be considered as Item 11a on the Council Agenda for this evening, prior to the confidential reports.

### The Leader of the Council

- The Leader of the Council reported that he was pleased to announce that he had recently appointed Councillor M Cook as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.

The Leader then took the opportunity to provide an up-date for Members about the two Notices of Motion that came before the last Full Council meeting, on 22 January 2020, and which had been referred to Cabinet for further investigation.

The first was a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor David Beavan, in relation to what was then a forthcoming meeting of the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee. The Notice of Motion was:-

“This Council calls on the Southwold Harbour Joint Committee to respect the unanimous motion passed at the last meeting of Waveney District Council on 20/03/2019 which called for “a new inclusive, independent and effective management committee subject to an agreed budget” by appointing two Cabinet members, the ward member, a representative of Southwold Town Council and four independent members to an eight person Harbour Management Committee.”

At the Full Council meeting on 22 January 2020, the Council did not consent to discuss the Notice of Motion immediately. This was because the Southwold Harbour Lands Joint Committee was going to consider the formation of a Harbour Management Committee at its meeting on 3 February 2020. This included the consideration of the results of a public consultation which had been held by the Joint Committee, about the formation of a Harbour Management Committee. It was felt that it would be wrong for the Council at its meeting on 22 January 2020, to pre-empt those discussions, and the receipt of those locally held views and representations which were to be presented at the meeting on 3 February 2020. Also, it was acknowledged that the history of the Southwold Harbour Lands was lengthy and complex. A report setting out the history and background would be required for Members to debate the Motion. Therefore, instead, the Notice of Motion was referred to Cabinet for investigation, and/or debate, and a further report back for subsequent debate by the Council. This follows Council Procedure Rule (CPR) 11.5. Meanwhile, three things have happened since:

- 1) there was a very constructive meeting of the Southwold Harbour Land's Joint Committee on 3 February 2020 and resolutions were passed about the formation of a Harbour Management Committee.
- 2) Further reports will be made to the joint Committee about the formation of the Harbour Management Committee
- 3) Cllr Beavan has confirmed that he is "happy to withdraw the Motion as it seems things are now going in the right direction.

In view of all these things, no further action is required, in the form of a report back to Council.

The second Notice of Motion was submitted by Councillor Gooch, as follows:-

"In the context of this council passing the Motion to acknowledge the Declaration of Climate Change in July 2019 and the fact that we are addressing Item 5 The Housing Development Strategy 2020 to 2024 in today's meeting, it is essential that we marry these two directions.

To this end, I propose:

1. That all new council houses will be built carbon-neutral, for example by future-proofing with low carbon heating and the highest standards of energy efficiency.
2. That all developers of new affordable housing should be encouraged to meet these same high standards.
3. That all other developers of new housing should be encouraged to meet these same high standards.
4. That all existing council stock, and properties purchased for such use, should be retro-fitted to the highest standards as economically as possible".

At the Council meeting on 22 January 2020, Council did not consent to discuss this Notice of Motion, either, on the basis that, again, it was a complex issue that warranted a report to set out the facts and implications. Therefore, the Notice was referred to Cabinet for investigation, and/or debate, and a further report back for subsequent debate by the Council, in accordance with CPR 11.5.

The Leader reported that he was pleased to inform Members that a report on the issues raised by the Notice of Motion was being prepared by Councillor Kerry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, and the Head of Housing. It will be presented at a future Cabinet meeting, at which all Members will be welcome, and it will be reported back to Council, for a subsequent debate.

I think all Members can rest assured, therefore, that the Notice of Motion will be fully considered, and can be debated by Members, in the usual way, armed with the relevant facts.

Councillor Rudd, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health

- Councillor Rudd reported that all Councillors would be invited to attend a tour of Port Health in Felixstowe, in order that Members could see the variety of work undertaken by the Port Health staff. An email invitation would be circulated shortly and a tour of Felixstowe would also be arranged afterwards, if there was sufficient interest. All Members were asked to consider car sharing wherever possible.

Councillor Mallinder, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment

- Councillor Mallinder advised those present that the Council had been updating its Tree Planting Policy and Guidance and an email would shortly be circulated to Members in this respect. It was noted that maps regarding the land owned by East Suffolk Council would soon be loaded onto the intranet and Members would be encouraged to assist any groups in their Wards who were interested in planting trees. It was noted that all Councillors were able to access their Enabling Communities Budgets for this purpose, if they so wished, in order to support local projects. Councillor Mallinder reminded those present of the importance of quality over quantity when planting trees and the refreshed guidance, which would be published shortly, would assist when considering the type of trees to be planted and the most appropriate location.

Chief Executive

- There were no announcements from the Chief Executive on this occasion.

#### **4 Questions from the Public**

The following Question had been submitted by a Member of the Public, Ms Bostock, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8:

As residents of the Parkhill Estate in Lowestoft, we are deeply concerned at the lack of maintenance given to the open space and pond, sited at Johnson Way / Jenkins Green. There are a number of very old trees which should be protected and cared for, they need to be trimmed. With regards to the pond, a reed has been growing and due to lack of maintenance, this is spreading quickly over the pond, resulting in loss of wildlife. Herons and Kingfishers are no longer seen, ducks and moorhens are fewer in number. However, vermin (rats) have increased in number, surely a health hazard.

We are asking that you give this matter your attention, trim the trees, remove the reeds and broken trees from the pond, repair the fence. Once these matters are dealt with, residents are prepared to play their part in future care.

We shall also be contacting Suffolk Wildlife to seek their assistance and advice.

Councillor Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development provided the response on behalf of the Council:

Councillor Rivett thanked Ms Bostock for her question and informed the members of the public present that should they have any queries about matters that the Council was responsible for, they would receive a more timely response if they contacted the relevant Cabinet Member directly, rather than submitting a question on notice to Full Council, which would take much longer for a response to be received.

Councillor Rivett reported that a meeting to discuss the best way to manage the pond at Johnson Way/Jenkins Green had taken place on 27 January 2020. In attendance were the East Suffolk Council Ecologist, the Councillor for the Ward, Councillor Rudd, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, a representative of the Maintenance Team at East Suffolk Council, and the Head of Grounds Maintenance for Norse, who carry out work in this area on the Council's behalf. A resident's representative was also present, who gave some input on how they would like to see the habitat managed.

Following the meeting, the Ecologist gave the following view:

"Based on what we saw, the pond area does provide an important resource for local wildlife, with a number of birds (including house sparrow which is a UK Priority species) observed foraging in the vegetation surrounding the pond. Large-scale removal of vegetation should ideally be avoided in order to retain these habitats, however some limited vegetation tidying could be undertaken without impacting significantly on the ecological value of the area, these should be limited as follows:

- Trimming of bushes/brambles where they overhang the fence around the pond (including the gorse along the southern footpath boundary);
- Cutting back to ground level of the two small bushes in the south-east corner opposite some of the properties.
- Selective tree works (including removal of deadwood) – in accordance with the works already planned.

As already planned, all of the above should be undertaken before the end of February 2020, to avoid impacts on nesting birds. The vegetation has matured since 2008, including the increased amount of reed growth in the pond. Whilst it is appreciated that this has changed the aesthetic of the pond, from an ecological perspective the more mature vegetation provides enhanced wildlife value (particularly for things like nesting birds). I would be happy to provide further advice on this as required in the future"

East Suffolk Council took this advice into account, and have agreed to the following works being carried out:

- Gorse bushes encroaching footpath from behind railings to be cut back to railings;
- Small mound of brambles immediately to right of Gorse/Fence and fronting properties to be cut down to ground level;
- Small mound of brambles immediately next to road and encroaching on footpath to be cut down to ground level;
- Small open areas of grass to be stirred to tidy as a pre-season operation;
- Any long bramble runners growing from shrubs/trees (around grassed areas) to be cut back to tidy but without affecting tree/bushes;
- Reshape two mature oaks adjacent no.11 and reduce slightly from property, dead wood all oaks where necessary.

All grounds works to be completed before the end of February 2020, to ensure minimal disturbance to nesting birds.

In addition, residents had flagged issues with a lamp post, and works required to repair sections of the footpath. East Suffolk Council have checked ownership records, and confirmed that both the lamp post and the footpath are the property of Suffolk County Council. The Council had therefore contacted the County's Highways team, and they were going to inspect the area, and make a decision on any required repairs.

## 5 Questions from Members

The following Questions were submitted by Members, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9:

### (a) Question from Councillor Pitchers to the Leader of the Council

- Will the Leader of the Council join with the Kirkley and Pakefield Councillor team in thanking Cabinet Member David Ritchie and his team for providing timely advice and communication in dealing with the possible consequences of Storm Ciara. Were there any lessons to be learned and if so, what were they?

### Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council I am incredibly proud of the efforts of Councillor Ritchie, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, and especially the Officer Team, who took a proactive approach to put in place plans for East Suffolk Council and partners, to manage this challenging situation at Pakefield and I thank the local District Councillors for raising this question to enable us to highlight this difficult situation. This work involved not only staff in the Coastal Management Team but also colleagues in Building Control, Environmental Health, Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU), Communities and Communications

In the last 3-4 months, we have seen a very unusual and unprecedented period of beach lowering in front of the Arbor Lane area at the south of Pakefield, resulting in cliff erosion. This situation continues to be very active, therefore the lessons learnt mentioned below are very initial and will be developed as the situation continues.

The specific lesson we learnt from the Storm Ciara response was that this situation is not going to go away. The erosion will continue to worsen with each storm event and

was in fact progressing rapidly on a regular basis. Therefore, we soon realised we needed to change from emergency response to looking at the hard reality of the long term. From this we have realised the need for and devised the community approach to removing the properties at risk. We are in the process of providing technical studies for the SMP review and whilst this is going on in parallel we realised there is no longer enough time to assist those on the Cliff Top before the review takes place so have had to focus our efforts on the immediate risks and assisting those affected.

Key lessons include:

- Proactive approach liaising with the property owners – make them aware of the risks and their responsibilities, e.g. contacting utility providers etc
- Regular liaison with professional partners, e.g. HM Coastguard, EA and Natural England
- Social media outlining the risks associated with walking on the beach, particularly too close to the bottom of the cliff
- Support the property owners by undertaking asbestos surveys and coordinating a demolition contractor
- Working together with other teams e.g. Building Control
- Cost efficiencies for the property owners – cheaper to demolish before the property ends up on the beach
- ESC need to come up with an incident plan for coastal erosion – it is not just CPE
- CPE need to have a mechanism to manage a rota – whether through Building Control or separate
- Member and SLT updates – may need to keep relevant Suffolk County Councillors informed more

Supplementary Question from Councillor M Pitchers:

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Can you ensure that the Kirkley and Pakefield Ward Councillors are kept updated on the latest developments, in this respect?

Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

Yes, it is very important that Ward Councillors are kept fully informed about the latest developments. This will benefit all concerned, as the Ward Councillors know their areas extremely well and their local community and the various community groups within it, so it is important for them to share and receive information as it develops.

(b) Question from Councillor Byatt to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

We recognize the in-depth analysis in the People and Places baseline report for Lowestoft Town Centre, published in December 2019. However, given the apparent fragmented areas of the confirmed and the intended Heritage Action Zones and the Lowestoft Town Centre Masterplan, rather than paying further consultancy fees, would it not be a better use of ESC money to employ a permanent officer to synthesize these areas and plans?

Response from Councillor Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development

- Both the Heritage Action Zones and Town Centre Masterplan intentionally cover discrete areas within Lowestoft. By their very nature they are focussed pieces of work aimed at enhancing, revitalising and regenerating specific areas of the town. However, whilst they do focus on particular areas their impact is much wider since the town operates as a whole and not in isolated silos. As a result of this, the Council's Regeneration Team has a remit to develop, manage and deliver a town wide regeneration and development programme which encompasses all the key areas of proposed development and enhancement within the town. Furthermore, the team's role is to ensure that all aspects of the town wide regeneration plan align and are complementary. This is currently encapsulated within the Lowestoft Regeneration Delivery Plan.

As you will be aware, in late 2019 Lowestoft was one of 101 towns invited to bid for a Towns Fund award of up to £25m, to support regeneration and development activities across the town. As part of this bidding process a Town Investment Plan (TIP) must be produced which sets out a town wide approach to improving the economic prospects of the area. The current delivery plan will form this basis of the TIP and the TIP itself will be agreed by the recently formed Lowestoft Place Board consisting of a wide range of public, private and third sector partners.

East Suffolk Council's Regeneration Team will lead this process and develop the draft Town Investment Plan. During the course of its development, input may be required from external consultants. Such consultants provide specific professional expertise, which does not exist within the Council, and it would be impractical and would not provide value for money for the Council to employ them on a full-time basis, they also provide additional capacity. It would be highly unusual for the Council to employ a member of staff on even a temporary contract to undertake a piece of work such as master-planning as it is time intensive and requires multidisciplinary skills and knowledge. As such, the contracting of a consultant is seen as the most practical and efficient way of completing such a piece of work.

It is also worth noting that the cost of any consultancy input during the course of the TIP's development will be met by the capacity funding (£162k) which ESC has been awarded by MHCLG to support the development of the TIP.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Byatt:

Councillor Byatt did not have a Supplementary Question on this occasion, however he commented that it may save the Council money in the longer term, if it were able to train its own staff over time and provide them with the necessary skills and local knowledge, rather than employing expensive, external consultants.

**6 Petitions**

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

## **7 Notices of Motion**

No Notices of Motion had been received as provided by Council Procedure Rule 11.

## **8 Acceptance of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Grant Funding**

Councillor Kerry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, presented report **ES/0313**, which sought approval to accept grant funding of £693,735 and to use it to deliver the projects and services in relation to reducing rough sleeping in the District.

Members noted that the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, required local authorities to develop and provide enhanced and tailored pathways for groups of people who were more vulnerable to homelessness than others, including people with mental health issues, those experiencing domestic abuse, ex-offenders and care leavers. The Government was particularly committed to assisting rough sleepers or people who were at risk of rough sleeping, with the goal of halving the numbers of people sleeping rough by 2022. East Suffolk Council was successful in its applications to the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and the Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding programmes for 2019/20. The total funding for the financial year 2019/20 consisted of £292,553 from the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and £202,180 from the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Councillor Kerry reported that in late 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had invited local authorities who wished to benefit from further funding to apply again. On this occasion, the two previous funding streams had been combined into one rough sleeping funding pot. Given the short timescale available for placing bids, the Housing Needs Service bid for an additional £698,448 of funding and the decision on the bids received was anticipated in January 2020. Councillor Kerry reported that he was pleased to announce that the Council had been awarded grant funding of £693,735 and approval was sought to accept the funding. The recommendations within the report sought delegated authority to accept and use the funding and also for an exemption from the Contract Procedure Rules, in order for negotiations to take place to enter into contracts with current and new service providers.

Councillor Deacon stated that he welcomed the additional funding and the initiatives that would be supported by it. He queried paragraph 2.2 g) on page 4, which related to the conversion of the 1 bed Hub in Felixstowe, into a longer term emergency bed for more entrenched rough sleepers. He asked whether the conversion could enable the facility to become carbon neutral. Councillor Kerry reported that he was not sure if the facility could be made carbon neutral, however the redevelopment would try to incorporate energy efficiency measures, to improve its sustainability where possible. It was important for the development to be undertaken quickly so that it was available for any rough sleepers in the area that may need it.

Councillor Elliott asked why retrospective permission was being requested in the recommendations. It was confirmed that the award was made in January and was too late to be considered at the Full Council meeting on 22 January 2020, therefore permission to accept the grant was being sought at this meeting. It was noted that the grant was over £500,000 therefore it had to be brought to Full Council, it could not be accepted at any other meeting.

Councillor Elliott then queried what would happen in 2021/22, and whether the Council would need to apply for further funding? He felt that it would be better if homelessness reduction was looked at in the long term, with funding levels secured for several years, which would provide much needed certainty. Councillor Kerry reported that the Head of Housing had recently met with Peter Aldous, MP, to explain the situation and the need for continued funding. It was confirmed that Peter Aldous would lobby Parliament in this respect and put forward the needs of the District Council to have secure, long term funding, to continue the important work to reduce homelessness.

Councillor Elliott also sought clarification regarding the temporary staffing posts which would be funded by the grants. It was reported that the posts would be held over and kept open, until the funding was received by the Council.

Councillor Kerry then moved the recommendations contained within the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Gallant.

Councillor Gallant advised that should the Council vote not to accept the grant funding, the money would be returned to Government and the important work to reduce homelessness would not be able to continue. The award of the grant had been delayed and the amount of the award was too large to be considered by the Cabinet and had therefore been brought to Full Council.

Councillor Elliott commented that the situation regarding the funding of the temporary posts was far from ideal and did not provide any security for those members of staff. He felt that a proper, long term funding package was needed, in order to reduce homelessness and also provide security for members of staff.

Councillor Green reported that she welcomed the additional funding and commented that homelessness was a complex issue, which needed significant input in order to help people stay off the streets, in the longer term.

On being put to the vote it was unanimously

## **RESOLVED**

1. That Delegated Authority be granted to the Housing Service to receive additional rough sleeping grant funding for 2020/21 of £693,735.
2. That Delegated Authority be granted to the Housing Service to use the funding to extend and continue with existing services and set up new services and initiatives as set out in this report.
3. That for the reasons given in this report the services provided via this funding be exempted from the Contract Procedure Rules, and that delegated authority be given for the Head of Housing Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to negotiate, agree and enter into contracts with current and new service providers identified to deliver the initiatives referred to in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.5 of this report.

## 9 General Fund Budget and Council Tax Report 2020/21

Councillor Cook, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, presented report **ES/0309**, which sought approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 and the Council Tax resolutions.

Councillor Cook reported that the MTFS and the proposed Budget have been the subject of extensive updating, scrutiny, and consultation over the course of this year's budget process. Since Cabinet considered the Budget on 4 February 2020, the proposed budget increases received from the Norse partnership, in respect of the services that they provide to the Council, have been incorporated into the Budget and MTFS. These increases potentially have a very significant impact on the Council's financial position and at this point have not been agreed however they do need to be included to ensure a balanced budget is set, as a worst case scenario. The proposals from Norse would be challenged and reviewed in detail, and the result of these discussions will be reported to Cabinet during 2020/21.

It was noted that in 2020/21, the Council's financial position had benefited from the deferral of proposed changes to the business rates system and the roll forward of a one-year finance settlement from 2019/20. However, there was a high degree of uncertainty in the medium term. This means that it was important that the Council approved an appropriate increase in the Council Tax, and maintained its reserves and balances, to ensure both financial sustainability and the continuation of key projects and initiatives.

The increase proposed for East Suffolk's element of the Council Tax was £4.95 per year, for a Band D property. With around 68% of the district's properties being in Bands A to C, a typical Band B household would pay an additional £3.85 a year, or just over 7p a week. In addition, the Council was maintaining the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme so that the 14% of households in East Suffolk who were in receipt of those discounts would typically only pay 8.5% of the council tax bill. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 placed a personal duty on the Chief Financial Officer to make a report to Council about the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the Council Tax calculations and the adequacy of reserves and balances. The 2020/21 Report of the Chief Finance Officer was provided in Appendix C, and the Act required the Council to have regard to this report before it made its budget and council tax decisions.

Councillor Cook reported that Appendix A presented the updated Budget and MTFS, which reflected the Final Local Government Finance Settlement that was issued on 6 February 2020. There were no changes from the Provisional Settlement issued in December 2019. Appendices to the MTFS include more detail on the Budget and budget movements, and detail on reserves and balances. It was noted that it was a requirement for the Efficiency Strategy in Appendix B to be approved annually in respect of the potential flexible use of Capital Receipts for the one-off revenue costs of transformation projects, although no use of this flexibility was currently proposed in 2020/21. The Efficiency Strategy would be revised during the course of the year to reflect the new East Suffolk Strategic Plan.

At the Full Council meeting on 22 January 2020, Councillors approved that the Council retained the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 as the 8.5%

benefit scheme, i.e. the maximum benefit to working age claimants was 91.5%. Full Council also approved the introduction of a tolerance to the treatment of Universal Credit income in the Scheme. Council Tax Discounts and Premiums, and Long Term Empty Property Premium from 1 April 2020 were previously approved by the East Suffolk Shadow Council. These premiums should make a significant contribution to bringing empty properties back into use.

The Government have announced additional business rates measures that will apply from 1 April 2020, increasing the current retail discount and extending it to cinemas and music venues; extending the duration of the local newspapers discount; and introducing an additional discount for public houses. In the Recommendations, the Council was requested to use discretionary relief powers to grant these reliefs. The Council has a statutory requirement to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. The Statement to be approved for 2020/21 was provided in Appendix D. Finally, the formal Council Tax Resolutions for 2020/21 were set out in Appendix E. In addition to the Council's own Council Tax Requirement, this Appendix provided the Band D Council Tax for Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk, and the Parish Precept requests by each individual Parish.

Councillor Elliott sought reassurance that the Council was claiming the maximum amount of Council Tax from second homes and long term empty properties in the District. Councillor Cook confirmed that the Council was receiving the maximum amount of Council Tax that it could receive, whilst working within the framework of the legislation.

Councillor Topping commented on the 5 themes that were currently in the East Suffolk Business Plan and the East Suffolk Strategic Plan and queried whether an additional theme could be included regarding the Climate Emergency? Councillor Cook reported that the East Suffolk Strategic Plan was due to be discussed as the next item of business on the Council's Agenda, therefore this question should be deferred until then.

Councillor Deacon queried Appendix 4 in the report, on page 44, which illustrated the MTFS Key Movements. He sought clarification on the figures for Car Park Enforcement and also the additional income from car parking. The Finance Manager and Deputy S151 Officer reported that the increase in costs for Car Park Enforcement related to the additional staff who were being employed to cover Civil Parking Enforcement in the District, which would commence shortly. The increase in income from car parking, was to reflect the actual amounts that were being received, as there had been an underestimation of receipts in the past.

Councillor Elliott raised concerns about the increase in costs of the Norse contract and he sought assurance that the Council would be looking to bring back the function in house, in order that the Council could increase control over the budget. Councillor Cook reported that officers were looking into the matter of the increased costs. He advised that the figures shown in the report were, in fact, the worst case scenario and it was hoped that the actual figures would be reduced. Further reports regarding the progress of the negotiations with Norse, would be brought back to Cabinet, in due course.

Councillor Elliott drew Members attention to the Pay Policy and he raised concerns about whether the Council's partner organisations and parties such as Norse were also bound to review their lowest paid workers. The Finance Consultant confirmed that the Pay Policy only applied to those staff employed by East Suffolk Council, it did not include partners or other organisations. Councillor Elliott queried whether it would be possible to see if the Pay Policy could be made to apply to partner organisations and Councillor Cook reported that this could be reviewed in due course.

Councillor Gooch advised that the Environmental Task Group was concerned about ensuring that the Council considered green and sustainable options wherever possible. She queried whether it would be possible to have an additional appendix in the future Budget Reports, to show the money spent by the Council on reducing damage to the environment and environmentally sustainable products? Councillor Cook reported that there was no defined budget for the Environment or any of the Core Themes within the Business Plan or Strategic Plan. He reported that all of the Council's projects had to provide a detailed business case prior to their consideration and environmental concerns and mitigation were clearly shown within them. It would therefore not be prudent to have a separate budget for Environmental matters, they were considered within everything that the Council undertakes. Councillor Mallinder, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, reported that the Environment could be compared to a 'golden thread' and was an important part of the decision making process in everything the Council does.

Councillor Blundell took the opportunity to raise the concern that he could not see Purdis Farm listed in Appendix E, which listed all of the Council Tax Resolutions. Councillor Cook reported that this would be investigated and Councillor Blundell would be updated outside of the meeting. Later, during the meeting, Councillor Gallant provided clarification that Purdis Farm had been included under the Parish Area - 'Brightwell, Foxhall and Purdis Farm'.

Councillor Cook then moved the recommendations within the report and they were duly seconded by Councillor Rivett.

Councillor Byatt took the opportunity to thank Councillor Cook for his report and he congratulated him on his recent appointment as Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources. He reported that this was the first time East Suffolk Council had set a budget and he stated that he would support the proposed budget if the money was being spent wisely, however he and his colleagues would scrutinise the money that was spent and ensure that the Council would keep its promises. With the challenging economic climate, with various local shops closing, it was important that the Council did everything it could to breathe life into High Street. It was also important that East Suffolk Council did the best for the people who lived and worked in the District, regardless of their politics. Future funding was a significant concern, as the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would disappear entirely in the near future and funding grants were only for a year at a time, therefore it was very difficult for all Council's to plan in the longer term. He reported that the role of the Opposition was not just to oppose everything, it was to work with the Administration and to challenge and question as much as possible. He felt that rural and coastal communities had been overlooked by central Government for many years and that work needed to be undertaken to ensure that this was addressed. The District also had a number of assets such as the

countryside, award winning beaches and many other opportunities and it was important that the Council made the most of them, wherever possible.

Councillor Gallant confirmed that he welcomed being held to account by the Opposition and he would also welcome any suggestions or ideas that could help the Council in the future.

Councillor Beavan took the opportunity to congratulate the Council for producing a prudent and balanced budget. He recognised that it was difficult for finance to balance the budget and it would only become more difficult in the future. He took the opportunity to raise that second home owners were able to use a legal loop hole to avoid paying Council Tax and Business Rates on their properties and they were therefore being subsidised by the remaining Council Tax payers in the District. He reported that there were approximately 354 holiday let businesses registered in Southwold and there was no substantial proof that any of them were genuine holiday let businesses. The Council was losing around £0.5 million each year as a result of this legal loophole and he urged the Council to lobby the Government to investigate closing the loop hole as a matter of urgency, in order that everyone was treated fairly and was paying the various taxes that they owed.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the Councils Standing Orders contained the need to have a Recorded Vote at meetings where decisions on the budget were made. Therefore, in accordance with Paragraph 15.5 (Recorded Votes) of Part 3 of the Constitution, the Council would be having a recorded vote for this item. The results of the vote are shown below:

For the recommendations contained within the report:

-  
Councillors M Allen, P Ashdown, E Back, D Beavan, S Bird, C Blundell, J Bond, E Brambley-Crawshaw, N Brooks, S Burroughes, P Byatt, A Cackett, J Ceresa, J Cloke, M Cook, T Cooper, L Coulam, J Craig, M Deacon, G Elliott, J Fisher, S Gallant, A Gee, T Goldson, L Gooch, T Green, C Hedgley, R Kerry, S Lawson, G Lynch, J Mallinder, T Mortimer, K Patience, M Pitchers, C Poulter, D Ritchie, C Rivett, K Robinson, M Rudd, L Smith, R Smith-Lyte, E Thompson, C Topping, S Wiles and K Yule.

Against the recommendations the recommendations contained within the report:

-  
There were none

Abstentions

-  
There were none.

Upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Council considered the Chief Financial Officer's report attached at Appendix C;

2. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2019/20 to 2023/24, including the General Fund Revenue Budget for revised 2019/20; proposed 2020/21; and forecast budgets for 2021/22 to 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A be approved;
3. That the movements to and from Earmarked Reserves and the General Fund Balance for 2020/21 to 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A6 be approved;
4. That the items to be treated as special items in 2020/21 as set out in Section 6 – the precepts by town/parish councils and parish meetings be approved;
5. That a Band D Council Tax for 2020/21 of £171.27, representing an increase of £4.95 or 2.98% on 2019/20 be approved;
6. That the Efficiency Strategy attached as Appendix B be approved;
7. That the Pay Policy Statement set out in Appendix D be approved;
8. That the Council Tax Resolutions in Appendix E be approved;
9. That the discretionary business rate reliefs referred to in paragraph 4.2 under Section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988 be granted;
10. That the Business Rates base (total net Business Rates income) of the district for 2020/21 of £96.159 million be noted; and
11. That the Council Tax Base of 87,888.87 for 2020/21 be noted.

## **10 East Suffolk Strategic Plan**

Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, presented report **ES/0308**, which sought approval of the East Suffolk Strategic Plan. He reported that the previous East Suffolk Business Plan had been adopted by both Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council in 2015 and this would be replaced by the East Suffolk Strategic Plan, once it had been adopted.

The proposed Strategic Plan covered 5 main themes and followed on from the robust direction of the previous Business Plan. The 5 themes were:

- Growing our economy
- Enabling our communities
- Financial sustainability
- Digital transformation
- Our environment

The plan had been created as a result of the successful 3 day 'Hot House' event. This took place in October 2019, at Adayrall Park, with 81 attendees comprising Members and staff, including CMT and SMT. Partners were also invited to the event. The collaborative nature of the Hot House enabled a fully rounded picture to be formed of the new plan and it was the output from the Hot House which had created the proposed Strategic Plan, as presented.

It was noted that the plan was written as a strategic-level document, showing the aims and objectives of the Council at a high level, to steer both the organisation's decision making and day to day management of services. All of the 5 themes were connected and were overarching principles for the way in which the authority would work as a whole. Within each theme, key priorities had been identified and the statements guide what was important to the Council and provided a steer regarding the areas which would be focused upon within each theme. Against each priority, there were points listed to show how progress was to be measured, to understand whether the Council was delivering to each priority over the coming four years. It was noted that these points, at a strategic level, would form the basis of the performance reporting presented to Cabinet, to show at a strategic level, whether the authority was moving in the right direction on areas identified to focus on.

Members noted that the Strategic Plan, as a strategic level document, meant that the detail regarding 'how' matters would be delivered, sits below the Strategic Plan within the action plans from the appropriate Service Areas, and a Strategic Plan Delivery Board would be created to monitor the delivery of the Strategic Plan. The Board would report to Cabinet and would be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the plan, including strategic risks and performance. It was confirmed that feeding into the Board, would be five programmes, which were based upon the five themes. The programme plans would be created from all of the Service Plans, capturing projects and tasks delivering to the priorities of the Strategic Plan. As such, all Service Plans and activity across the authority would feed into the 5 programme themes, with planned workshops to identify how each team contributes to the overall Strategic Plan.

It was noted that the Strategic Plan would be a live document and would be digital by default, with links to other documents and information.

Councillor Gallant took the opportunity to thank Sandra Lewis, Business Solutions Manager, for her outstanding work and support in relation to the creation and development of the Plan. All those present then gave Sandra Lewis a round of applause, in recognition of her hard work and contribution.

Councillor Coulam reported that she had found a typographical error in the spelling of Saxmundham and confirmation was provided that this would be amended after the meeting.

Councillor Brambley-Crawshaw queried who would be on the Strategic Plan Delivery Board. It was reported that the Board would consist of the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holders (Cabinet) and the Senior Management Team. It was noted that other Members of the Council would be welcome to attend the meetings, as Observers and ask questions.

Councillor Topping queried how the Council would get the Town and Parish Councils to engage with the Strategic Plan? Councillor Gallant reported that it was very important to share the Strategic Plan with our partners and organisations. He suggested that the Strategic Plan could be considered as an item of business at the future Community Partnership meetings, in order to keep everyone apprised of the Councils aims and objectives.

Councillor Elliott reported that there was a minor error with the map within the Strategic Plan, which should be amended for it to be an accurate reflection of the District. Councillor Gallant reported that there had been some difficulties in producing the map and he confirmed further work would be undertaken in this respect.

Councillor Gallant moved the recommendations within the report and they were duly seconded by Councillor Cook.

Councillor Byatt reported that he was pleased that the Plan would be a living document and he hoped that it would include information about Hidden Needs in due course. He was concerned by the target of 2030 for the Council being carbon neutral, as that was only 10 years away and there was still so much to do. However he was very pleased by the Strategic Plan and felt that the Council had much to be proud of.

Councillor Brambley-Crawshaw stated that she had been involved in the Hot House and had thoroughly enjoyed the process and had built good relationships during the process. During the Hot House, she had suggested that the Council should concentrate on creating a 'Vibrant Economy' rather than 'Growing our Economy', as she felt that the Council should focus on creating prosperity, rather than merely growth. She was concerned that endless growth would damage the environment and a new measure of success was required, rather than simply 'growth'.

Councillor Smith-Lyte stated that she felt that the 2030 target for being carbon neutral was correct, as the target needed to be ambitious. There needed to be significant change and people should focus more upon car sharing and using public transport.

Councillor Gallant thanked Members for their comments. He felt that the Council needed to set an ambitious target and should be aiming high. However the Council may not be able to deliver everything, so it should do its best. In relation to the Economy, he stated that 'Growing the Economy' had been chosen, as it was simple to measure growth. He felt that 'Vibrancy' would be difficult to quantify and it would mean different things to different people. He confirmed that he wished the Strategic Plan to be ambitious throughout and the delivery plans would also be challenging.

Councillor Gooch reported that the Strategic Plan had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and she was pleased that some of the suggestions made by the Committee had been taken on board. She reported that there were different ways of measuring growth, it was not necessarily about having more. She commented that the Plan needed to be agile and responsive to meet the Council's needs.

Upon being put to the vote it was

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the East Suffolk Strategic Plan and associated governance structure be adopted.
2. That Delegated Authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor amendments to the Strategic Plan.

## **11 Cabinet Members Report and Outside Bodies Representatives Report to Council**

The Leader of the Council presented report **ES/0310**, which provided individual Cabinet Members' reports, as well as reports by Outside Bodies representatives. The Leader stated that the written reports would be taken as read and invited questions on their contents.

Councillor Bird provided clarification that his update on the Felixstowe Landguard Partnership Committee, related to the meeting he had attended on 24 January 2020, which had been inadvertently omitted from his report.

Councillor Topping took the opportunity to raise concerns about conflicting meetings being held at the same time, sometimes by the Council and asked that this be avoided wherever possible. She gave the example of the Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and Villages Community Partnership meetings, which clashed with other events or meetings held by the Council. The Leader of the Council reported that Democratic Services took great care in trying to avoid meeting clashes wherever possible. The Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that the team tried to avoid clashes and Managers had been asked to ensure that the Corporate Calendar was updated with all the events that Councillors may attend, in order that there was a central point that officers could check, to try and avoid meeting clashes.

Councillor Byatt took the opportunity to seek reassurance that the Council was lobbying Government for support and increased funding for Suffolk Constabulary and the local Clinical Care Commissioning Groups. He was concerned that County Lines had reached Suffolk and that Market and Coastal Towns were being disproportionately affected. The Leader of the Council reported that the Council lobbied for additional funding wherever appropriate and was committed to doing the best for local residents. He provided reassurance that Suffolk Constabulary were working hard to protect the vulnerable in the County.

The recommendation within the report was moved by Councillor Gallant and seconded by Councillor Rivett. It was therefore unanimously

### **RESOLVED**

That the report be received.

## **11a Urgent Item of Business - Councillor Request for Extended Leave of Absence**

The Chairman of the Council invited the Leader of the Council to present this Urgent Item of Business. It was noted that the Chairman had already explained the reasons for accepting this urgent item of business, within his announcements, at the start of the meeting.

The Leader of the Council presented the report, which sought approval for Council to grant an extended leave of absence for a Councillor. It was noted that Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act') stated that if a Member of a Local Authority fails to attend a Council meeting throughout a period of 6 consecutive months, from the date of his/her last attendance to any meeting of the authority, they shall unless

the failure was due to some reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a Member of that Authority.

Councillor Gallant reported that Councillor Frank Mortimer had not attended any Full Council or Committee meetings since the Full Council meeting held on 25 September 2019, due to ongoing health issues. It was noted that Council can only consider the approval of any reasons for non attendance before the end of the relevant 6 month period, which would be 25 March 2020. The next scheduled Full Council meeting after the six month period would take place on 25 March 2020, so it would be best practice to consider this matter now, rather than to leave it to the last moment.

Councillor Mortimer was elected to the District Council in May 2019 for the Carlton and Whitton Ward. As a result of his health issues, Councillor Mortimer had been unable to fulfil his responsibilities as a Ward Member, however his District Council Ward duties were being picked up by the other Ward Councillor for Carlton and Whitton (Councillor T Mortimer).

Councillor Gallant, as the Leader of the Conservative Group and Leader of the Council, had submitted the request for Councillor Mortimer to be granted an extended leave of absence beyond the usual six month rule, to give him the opportunity to recover fully and resume his District Councillor duties.

Those present took the opportunity to send Councillor F Mortimer their best wishes for a speedy recovery and they hoped to see him at a future meeting of the Council in due course. Councillor Byatt reported that he had needed to request to an extended leave of absence, when a Waveney District Councillor, and he had been grateful for the Council's support.

The recommendation within the report was moved by Councillor Gallant and seconded by Councillor Byatt. It was then unanimously

#### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Frank Mortimer's request for an extended leave of absence be approved for 6 months, until 26 August 2020.

#### **12 Exempt/Confidential Items**

##### **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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **13 Felixstowe Seafront Cafe / Restaurant Build**

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

**14 Parking Services: Agency Agreement for Civil Parking Enforcement Administration**

- 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.

The meeting concluded at 8:40 PM

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Chairman