

**Confirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Full Council** held via Zoom, on **Wednesday, 05 May 2021** at **2:00 PM**

**Members 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 Maurice Cook, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Tony Fryatt, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor TJ Haworth-Culf, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Ray Herring, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor Debbie McCallum, Councillor Frank Mortimer, Councillor Trish Mortimer, Councillor Mark Newton, 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:** Katherine Abbott (Democratic Services Officer), Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Chris Bing (Legal and Licensing Services Manager), Emma Bloom (Head of Customer Services, Communications and Marketing), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Shannon English (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Phil Harris (Communications Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Sandra Lewis (Head of Digital and Programme Management), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Andrea Mcmillan (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Sue Meekin (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Laura Mundy (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Dickon Povey (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Desi Reed (Planning Policy and Delivery Manager), Hilary Slater (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

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**1 Election of a Chairman**

On the proposition of Councillor Gallant, seconded by Councillor Hedgley, it was

**RESOLVED**

That Councillor Robinson be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year.

## **2 Election of a Vice-Chairman**

On the proposition of Councillor Bird, seconded by Councillor Back, it was

### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Ceresa be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year.

## **3 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cloke, Gandy, Goldson, Gooch, Green, Kerry and Mapey.

## **4 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor McCallum declared a local non pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 11, Neighbourhood Plans - Bredfield, Kesgrave and Reydon, as a ward member for Kesgrave, and as a resident of Kesgrave.

Councillor Lynch declared a local non pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 11, Neighbourhood Plans - Bredfield, Kesgrave and Reydon, as a ward member for Kesgrave, and as a resident of Kesgrave.

Councillor Lawson declared a local non pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 11, Neighbourhood Plans - Bredfield, Kesgrave and Reydon, as a ward member for Kesgrave, and as a resident of Kesgrave.

## **5 Announcements**

The Chairman of the Council announced that, due to Covid-19 restrictions, he had just attended one event since the last Full Council meeting.

The Leader of the Council announced that it had been a very eventful year, with the Council's activities being set against the backdrop of Covid-19; he stated that he was pleased that East Suffolk Council (ESC) could meet to reflect, and also to look forward, to the road ahead.

The Leader referred to the last ESC annual meeting, when he spoke about a Vision for the Council supported by its Strategic Plan and he was pleased to share some of the progress made towards those plans. He referred to ESC's priorities and commented that as one of the five key priorities which underpinned the Strategic Plan, Supporting and Enabling Communities had been key over the past year, with councillors contributing £313,500 from their enabling communities budgets to fund 300 projects.

Across eight partnership areas, the Leader reported, community partnerships spent £75,818 to tackle 48 local priorities, such as loneliness, community meetings and youth

services.

The Leader referenced the generosity of Central Government, ESC's prudent planning and the robust financial management of ESC allowing it to remain financially sustainable despite the huge financial pressures exerted by the pandemic. As a result, ESC had been able to freeze its element of council tax for 2021/22 in a bid to ease some financial burden from residents.

The Leader reported that he was proud that despite the challenges this year had presented, ESC had remained focused on its aim to grow the economy; in doing so, it had secured funding for some fantastic projects across the district and invested in regeneration projects for towns.

The Leader reminded members that ESC was awarded a staggering £43m from the Government as a contribution to the creation of Lowestoft's own permanent flood defences.

In association with the Coastal Communities Fund, the Leader reported that ESC had funded a £1.5m project at Martello Park in Felixstowe as part of a wider investment in the south seafront area. In addition, ESC had supported businesses across the district in what had been a financially debilitating time and had provided practical help, advice and administered a series of grant schemes to assist businesses that were affected by the lockdown restrictions. Over £90m had been paid out to over 6000 local businesses since the start of the pandemic and this support continued.

The Leader stated that Caring for our Environment was a key priority for ESC and it had an ambitious environmental vision for East Suffolk; it had been proactive in its approach and the need to care for the environment was threaded through everything that ESC did. This was reflected in its policies, its electrical vehicle fleets, housing stocks and the way that ESC managed its spaces by creating more conservation areas. The Leader added that ESC knew that how it addressed the climate crisis now would determine what life would look like in the future and it was dedicated to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and committed to converting this willingness into action.

The Leader reported that the pandemic had propelled ambitions for Delivering Digital Transformation forward. Operationally, ESC was more digitally agile and officers and members had embraced new ways of working; virtual meetings had become regular occurrences and ESC had modernised its IT systems and equipment to better support communities and residents.

In many ways, the Leader reported, technology provided an elegant solution to the problem of social isolation, during the height of the pandemic, with councillors contributing £14,689.58 from their enabling communities budgets to support the "Grandpad Loan Scheme" providing simplified tablets aimed at older people which enabled them to keep in touch with family, friends, and external support.

At this point the Leader highlighted the outstanding work that has been undertaken by the Democratic Services Team over the last 12 months; he commented that the fact Full Council was meeting today had not just happened by chance, the Democratic Services Team had to really change the way that it had supported meetings and indeed

supported the wider democratic processes. The changes that were needed were by necessity delivered at speed and in order to make this happen the Team had to learn new skills, hone those skills and become advisors to members; the Team was, the Leader commented, the backroom team that made members look professional and calm. The Leader, joined by all members, gave their sincere thanks and admiration for the way the whole Democratic Services Team had performed.

The Leader reported that as members reflected on their activities over the past year, it would be remiss of him not to acknowledge and pay tribute to the colleagues, friends and residents that had sadly passed away this year, the pandemic had unfortunately added to this number and thoughts and condolences went out to all those that had experienced loss.

The Leader commented how incredibly proud he was of what ESC had achieved and he referred to the first East Suffolk magazine published in April 2021 for an insight into achievements.

Looking forward, to the next 12 months, the Leader reported that there was much to do and ESC would continue to enable its communities, support local businesses as they rebuilt and prepared for the future, and ESC would develop the many exciting projects that it had emerging across the district. Through members' unceasing hard work and commitment, the Leader reported, ESC continued to deliver a first-rate service and he thanked members and officers most sincerely for their continued support and dedication.

The Leader referred to the Cabinet and reminded members that he had promised them more involvement, a greater say, better communications and open access to himself and his Cabinet; he believed that he had delivered this.

The Leader referred to the Constitutional requirement to reintroduce members to the Cabinet and remind them of the various areas of business that sat within portfolios. The Leader took members through this, with it also being displayed on the screen too.

Finally, the Leader introduced a video, that would be screened at the conclusion of the meeting. The video covered ESC's Strategic Plan, which guided all decision making, and told the story of achievements so far, one year on from the creation of the East Suffolk Strategic Plan.

The Chief Executive made three announcements, he firstly reported that the funeral of Simon Taylor-Buglione, a great friend and colleague, had taken place earlier that day; unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, colleagues were unable to attend Simon's funeral but many colleagues had lined the street, as a mark of respect, close to Simon's home, as the funeral procession left.

The Chief Executive's second announcement related to Hilary Slater, the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services, and Monitoring Officer, who would be retiring from ESC on 31 May 2021. The Chief Executive provided information in respect of Hilary's employment history, stating that she had served local government for ESC for almost 19 years, a remarkable track record of responsibility and public service. The

Chief Executive stated that Hilary was hugely respected by colleagues and her peers, being the most experienced Monitoring Officer in the county. The Chief Executive, referring to Hilary having recently taken on the role of Monitoring Officer for the Broads Authority, as part of a Partnership Agreement, quoted the comments of the Chief Executive about Hilary's excellent advice and guidance. The Chief Executive reported that Hilary had led and managed her teams with great care and attention, establishing a reputation for absolute professionalism, quiet determination and a progressive outlook. The Chief Executive commented that colleagues had always valued Hilary's support, advice and guidance and he referenced to her great strength of character and independence of spirit. In conclusion, the Chief Executive reported that Hilary had been a great support to him personally and as Chief Executive, and for that he was extremely grateful. Members joined with the Chief Executive in wishing Hilary a very long and happy retirement, and gave thanks for all that she had undertaken and achieved.

Finally, the Chief Executive announced the appointment of Sandra Lewis to the post of Head of Digital and Programme Management.

## **6 Political Balance and Allocations of Seats on Committees 2021/22**

Full Council received report **ES/0730** by the Leader of the Council, who stated that the report contained recommendations about the allocation of seats on the Council's committees and sub-committees for the 2021/22 municipal year, that was until May 2022, due to the reduction in the number of seats on the Appointments Committee from six to three and also due to the recent resignation of Councillor Elliott in March 2021.

The Leader advised that membership of the committees and sub-committees of ESC was determined under the terms of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. These regulations ensured that seats on committees and sub-committees were allocated on a politically proportionate basis.

Members would have seen, the Leader advised, that within the report the total number of seats broken down by committee. The Monitoring Officer had undertaken the necessary calculations to apportion these seats to meet the requirements of the regulations. This proposed apportioning was detailed within the appendix to the report. As proposed in recommendation two, this calculation would be reviewed after 10 May 2021 to take account of the results of the two by-elections (Framlingham, and Beccles and Worlingham Wards) and this would be agreed with all of the group leaders.

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

There being no questions or debate, on the proposition of Councillor Gallant, and seconded by Councillor Rivett, it was

**RESOLVED**

That, with effect from 5 May 2021, seats on committees and sub-committees of the Council be allocated in accordance with the nominations made in Appendix A to this report.

2. That the Chief Executive Officer calculates the political balance of the Council, to take account of the results of the by-elections for the Framlingham Ward and the Beccles and Worlingham Ward, to be held on 6 May 2021, and declared on 10 May 2021, and agrees them with all of the group leaders.

3. That, after the revised political balance figures have been agreed with the group leaders, the Chief Executive Officer, acting in consultation with the group leaders, makes any necessary changes to the allocation of seats and publicises those changes by way of an Officer Delegated Decision Notice.

## **7 Appointments to Outside Bodies 2021/22**

Full Council received report **ES/0731** by the Leader of the Council, who stated that the report contained recommendations about Appointments to Outside Bodies (Non-Executive) for the 2021/22 municipal year, that was until May 2022. ESC appointed annually to a wide range of diverse outside bodies; some appointments were made because of a statutory requirement to appoint one or more members to them; most appointments were discretionary taking into consideration how representation added value. Appointment of members provided support to the organisation concerned and enabled members to fulfil their community leadership roles. Members appointed were able to work with and alongside local community groups, helping to empower them in terms of addressing local issues and delivering sustainable solutions.

The Leader referred to a review of Appointments to Outside Bodies that was recently undertaken, involving himself and officers, the purpose of the review was to check the categorisation of all appointments as either Executive, Non-Executive, or Scrutiny; following that review some changes were made.

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

Councillor Byatt referred to the Lowestoft Transport and Infrastructure Prospectus Steering Group, noticing that it did not appear within Appendix A of the report, and he asked why that was the case. The Leader advised Councillor Byatt that he did not know the answer to that question but he would ask officers to confirm following the meeting.

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

### **RESOLVED**

1. That councillors be appointed to those Outside Bodies listed in Appendix A for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.
2. That the Leader of the Council be authorised to fill any outstanding vacancies left unfilled by Council.

3. That the Leader be granted delegated authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the Outside Bodies for the remainder of the 2021/22 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

## **8 Appointments to Working Groups 2021/22**

Full Council received report **ES/0732** by the Leader of the Council, who stated that the report contained recommendations about appointments to working groups for the 2021/22 municipal year, that was until May 2022. Working groups were set up to examine specific issues in-depth prior to recommendations being put forward to the relevant decision-making body.

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

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

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

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the membership of Working Groups for the 2021/22 Municipal Year, as agreed by the political group leaders and detailed at Appendix A, be appointed.
2. That the Leader of the Council be granted delegated authority to make any necessary changes to the membership of the working groups for the remainder of the 2021/22 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other group leaders.

## **9 The future of Remote Meetings; returning to Face-to-Face Meetings**

Full Council received report **ES/0735** by the Leader of the Council, who firstly stated that there had been a lot of discussion about remote meetings, especially during the last week; he referred to the report before members explaining the various developments around remote meetings, setting out a plan for returning to face-to-face meetings, looking at some of the unknowns and providing some flexibility in decision-making, to take account of them.

The Leader stated that the background to this was that many of the Council's statutory powers, to hold meetings, for example, came from the Local Government Act 1972 and the accepted view had been that local authority meetings under the 1972 Act had to be held in person, at a "place", and could not be held remotely. That was why, last April, the Government made some regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 which allowed local authorities to meet virtually, rather than in a physical location. The regulations included a deadline of 6 May 2021, after which remote meetings could not

be held.

The Leader reminded members that ESC responded quickly and well to the pandemic by organising its meetings remotely with the first remote meeting taking place on 6 May 2020. Since then over 75 meetings had been held remotely and successfully and these had been broadcast live on the Council's YouTube channel. Meanwhile, the Government's Roadmap Out of Lockdown was published on 22 February 2021 and it proposed that "organised permitted gatherings" such as indoor meetings would be permitted no earlier than 17 May 2021. It anticipated that all restrictions on indoor gatherings would be lifted by 21 June 2021, subject to certain "steps" being met. This was followed by a letter sent to all local authorities by the Local Government Minister on 25 March which explained that there was no Parliamentary time for legislation to extend the 6 May deadline in the regulations but given the good progress made with the vaccination programme, and the roadmap, there should be a significant reduction in risk for members meeting in person from 7 May 2021. Mr Hall also suggested that councils consider the use of existing powers to delegate decision making to individual officers to minimise the number of meetings; the use of single Member decision-making without the need for Cabinet to meet; bringing forward the annual meeting, which ESC had done; encouraging the use of remote access to minimise physical attendance by the public. Mr Hall also launched a consultation on the use of the current, remote arrangements and this consultation was due to close next month, and the Council would be responding to it. However, the Leader reported, in the face of the deadline of the 6 May 2021, a court case was brought in the High Court against the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government; its purpose was to obtain a court declaration which would confirm the ability of councils to hold remote meetings under the 1972 Act. This was on the grounds that the 1972 Act did not define the location of the meeting as having to be a physical place. The court case was heard on 21 April 2021. The Government had legal representation at the hearing, and supported the arguments being put forward in favour of remote meetings.

The Leader advised members that the decision in the case was published on 28 April 2021 and he referenced the link to the judgement in the report. The Court dismissed the claim for a declaration. It made clear that once 6 May deadline had passed, Council meetings had to take place at a single, specified geographical location. Attending a meeting at such a location meant physically going to it. Also, that being "present" at such a meeting involved physical presence at that location. The court recognised that there were powerful arguments in favour of permitting remote meetings but new legislation would need to be made for this. In addition, the Court went on to decide, on 5 May, that the public had to join the meeting, physically, too, for it to be "open to the public" etc. This meant that any form of hybrid meeting could not be allowed, as the public had to be physically present at the meeting too and could not join it remotely.

The Leader reported that, at this point, ESC would not be able to hold remote meetings after 6 May, without further legislation being made, and some uncertainties remained which were listed in paragraph 2.8 of the report and were about whether or not restrictions would be lifted, when planned; and what if further restrictions were imposed, later in the year. For this reason, the Leader reported, ESC would need to ensure that it had the flexibility in place to carry out its business safely, and effectively, whatever the Covid circumstances might be.

As the report set out, the Leader stated, some flexibility already existed, if Members wished to use it, for example, some of the Council's meetings were not committees which had been given delegated authority by Council under the provisions of the 1972 Act; leading Counsel had advised that the Council's Executive and its committees were not committees of the authority for the purposes of the 1972 Act; leading Counsel had advised that Licensing Sub-Committee hearings to consider applications/reviews etc for licensed premises under the Licensing Act 2003 were not meetings for the purposes of the 1972 Act. So, if necessary, some meetings listed in paragraph 2.9 of the report could continue to be held remotely after 6 May 2021, in the absence of further legislation and despite the recent decision of the High Court. However, the Leader added, the meetings listed in paragraph 2.10 of the report were committees set up for the purposes of the 1972 Act. These could not continue to meet remotely, in the light of the court's recent decision, and in the absence of further legislation. This was because they were formal, decision-making meetings of the Council, which exercised authority for or on behalf of the Council.

The Leader advised members that whichever meetings were held in person, ESC would need to plan carefully for them; helpfully the Government updated its Guidance on the Safe Use of Council buildings on 29 April 2021. The Guidance emphasised that where local authority meetings took place in person, the Guidance itself must be followed, risk assessments must be carried out, and the full range of options available for decision-making looked at, as set out in the letter of 25 March.

The Leader stated that what was being proposed was in line with Luke Hall's advice and the latest Guidance and he referred to the schedule of meetings for after 6 May 2021 and before 21 June 2021 suggesting that those meetings could be held either remotely or in person, as shown in the brackets in the list. Due to the uncertainties listed in paragraph 2.8 of the report, it should be noted that depending on the Covid compliant capacity of each of the meeting rooms at Riverside/East Suffolk House, the necessary layout and ICT provision, a decision would have to be made as to where each of the in-person meetings could take place, either at Riverside, East Suffolk House or at a larger, off-site venue. However, if large numbers of the public wished to attend a particular meeting, the Council may have to limit the numbers present to ensure Covid compliance. The Guidance was clear that only those "reasonably necessary" should be present in the room and, therefore, public participation might need to be restricted to a fixed number of seats. The live meeting could also be relayed into the other rooms e.g., the café at Riverside, and the Blyth at East Suffolk House, and broadcast on YouTube.

At the time of writing the report, the Leader advised, an alternative venue to hold a Full Council meeting had not been fixed. The next Full Council meeting was on 28 July 2021 and it may be that by then, all COVID restrictions would have ended, and the meeting could proceed in person, as normal.

Bearing in mind all points, the Leader stated, the Chief Executive Officer and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services would need to adjust the lay-out, venue, number of attendees and possibly the date of some of the meetings to take account of the changing circumstances around Covid and the Court case. Also, meetings may be cancelled if there was sickness or insufficient business to warrant the holding of the

meeting. One of the uncertainties listed in paragraph 2.8 of the report was about further Covid restrictions being imposed later in the year. Of course, the Government may have made primary legislation by then, to allow for remote meetings to be held once again, under the 1972 Act. However, if face-to-face meetings could not be held due to restrictions, and there was no new legislation to allow them, flexibility would be required to safeguard the Council's decision-making for its committees etc. In those circumstances only, it would be wise for there to be some contingency arrangements in place and so the proposals set out in paragraph 3.9 of the report were there as a contingency only and they would apply only if in person meetings could not be held for whatever reason on or after 17 May 2021 and the Government had not made any new legislation which would allow remote meetings to be held under the 1972 Act. To cover these circumstances, and in line with the Guidance, Officer delegations needed to be put in place to allow the Council to carry out its business. Therefore, the Leader stated, should the circumstances set out in sub-paragraphs 1) and 2) of 3.9 in the report apply, the Council was asked to agree that delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management to make decisions which fell within the remit of the Strategic Planning Committee, or the Planning Committee North or the Planning Committee South, having consulted with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Planning Committee North and Planning Committee South; to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make decisions which fell within the remit of the Licensing Committee, having consulted with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee; to the Chief Executive Officer to make decisions which fell within the remit of the Council, other Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council, in consultation with the relevant Council/Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. These delegated decisions would be made by the relevant Officers and evidenced by an Officer Delegated Decision Notice, which would be published on the Council's website.

Also, the Leader added, many councils provided powers to their Chief Executive Officer, to enable action to be taken to respond to an emergency, whatever it may be, and whenever it might occur. It was noted that during the pandemic, and particularly in the first lockdown, that these powers to act in an emergency were not available to the Council's Chief Executive Officer. To tie in with similar provisions which many other local authorities had, and to allow for maximum flexibility in the event of an emergency, it was proposed that a specific delegation be made to the Chief Executive Officer. Therefore, it was suggested that the delegation contained within the report be put in place to cover emergencies generally, of whatever nature, and arising at any time.

Looking to the future, the Leader hoped that councils would have the freedom to make choices as to how they held their meetings, taking account of what would work for them, and their residents, and the local democratic process. The Leader commented that Government was supportive of the continuation of remote meetings; this was a matter of trying to get allocated some Parliamentary time for that to happen and he was confident of that happening.

Councillor Byatt commented how pleased he was that ESC meetings were now being livestreamed to the YouTube channel. Councillor Byatt also suggested that perhaps officers could continue to attend meetings remotely. Councillor Byatt, referring to decision making by members, commented that ESC had the facility to run a quorum Full Council meeting and he asked if perhaps that could be a potential back-up. In

response, the Leader was not supportive of this, referencing that all members had been elected by local people, to represent their views and interests at Council meetings, and he believed that democratic representation was important. He referred to the contingency plans with the report, emphasising again that they would only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Councillor Topping gave her thanks to all officers who had been involved in the setting up of remote meetings, commenting on how quickly and efficiently they had acted.

Councillor Topping gave her support for the proposals within the report, commenting that she fully trusted the Chief Executive Officer and she was confident that the Leader would keep members apprised.

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

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the current circumstances around remote meetings and a return to face-to-face meetings, as set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report, be noted.
2. That being mindful of the uncertainties listed in paragraph 2.8 of the report, and the need for flexibility in its decision-making, that Full Council agrees to make the delegations set out in paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 of the report.

## **10 Appointment of Monitoring Officer**

Full Council received report **ES/0734** by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.

Full Council was advised that the Monitoring Officer was a statutory appointment under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by paragraph 24 of Schedule 5 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Monitoring Officer was one of three statutory officers the Council was required to have in place, the others being the Head of Paid Service and the Section 151 Officer. These roles had specific statutory duties assigned to them and essentially the role of the Monitoring Officer was to report on matters they believed were, or were likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration, to be responsible for matters relating to the conduct of Members and Officers and to be responsible for the operation of the Council's Constitution.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources reported that the current post holder, Mrs Hilary Slater, had been the Council's Monitoring Officer since her appointment in August 2002, initially for Suffolk Coastal District Council, then for Waveney District Council as well and, more latterly, for ESC. Mrs Slater was also the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services. Mrs Slater was supported by the Council's Legal and Licensing Services Manager, Mr Christopher Bing, who performed the role of Deputy Monitoring Officer as well as his substantive role.

Mrs Slater had decided to take early retirement and would therefore leave the Council's employment on 31 May 2021. She would be taking her last two weeks of service as annual leaving which meant her last working day would be 14 May 2021.

Recruitment to the post of Head of Legal and Democratic Services (which also included the role of Monitoring Officer) had already begun and an Appointments Committee was scheduled for 22 June 2021. In view of this, arrangements needed to be made to cover the Monitoring Officer role between 14 May 2021 until the new post holder was in place. It was therefore proposed that Mr Bing be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer, on an interim basis, from 14 May 2021.

The Leader, at this point, expressed his personal thanks for everything that Mrs Slater had done for him and indeed for ESC; he referred to the creation of ESC, and commented that Mrs Slater was instrumental in that work, including the creation of the Constitution. The Leader also referred back to his earlier reports, including the remote meetings paper, and he added that this had involved a huge amount of work by Mrs Slater, including working over the recent Bank Holiday weekend; this, he said, was a demonstration of the commitment and dedication that she had given to ESC, and its predecessor councils, over many years.

Councillor Deacon commented that he had known Mrs Slater since her appointment at SCDC; at that time, he commented that SCDC was going through some fundamental changes in its governance and Mrs Slater was very instrumental in the successful outcome of that. Councillor Deacon expressed his thanks for all of the help that Mrs Slater had given him personally over the years, always delivered calmly and professionally, and in an understandable manner.

Councillor Rivett gave his thanks to Mrs Slater for her excellent work, commenting particularly on her advice and guidance given at Full Council meetings.

Councillor Ashdown referred to all of the advice that he had received from Mrs Slater, particularly in respect of Planning matters, and he gave thanks for that.

Councillor Byatt thanked Mrs Slater for all of the impartial advice that she had provided to the Labour Group, in respect of many matters.

Councillor Topping commented on the excellent and professional work of Mrs Slater, and she gave thanks for that.

Councillor McCallum gave her personal thanks to Mrs Slater for all of the support that she had provided to her.

Mrs Slater thanked all members for their comments; she stated how much she had enjoyed her work and she referred to the many achievements by members of ESC. Mrs Slater commented that, sometimes, being Monitoring Officer was not an easy role, but she was always confident that members would listen to her advice and she felt that this was a recognition of how mature the organisation was. Mrs Slater also thanked the Chief Executive for his comments and she added that she felt the culture at ESC came from the top and she referred to everybody being hard working and committed. Mrs Slater referenced all of her colleagues within the Corporate Management Team, giving

thanks for their support, and she gave thanks to all of her teams, who she said worked extremely hard and were so committed; Mrs Slater concluded by stating how proud she was of everything that they did and had achieved.

Finally, the Chairman gave his thanks to Mrs Slater for all of her work over many years and all members joined the Chairman in wishing Mrs Slater a very long, happy and healthy retirement.

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

## **RESOLVED**

That the temporary appointment of Mr Christopher Bing as the Monitoring Officer and Ms Jacqui Bullen as the Deputy Monitoring Officer from 14 May 2021, until the Head of Legal and Democratic Services post is filled, which includes the role of Monitoring Officer, be approved.

### **11 Neighbourhood Plans - Bredfield, Kesgrave and Reydon**

Full Council received report **ES/0733** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, who stated that the purpose of his report was to ask the Council to consider the three neighbourhood plans which were 1) Bredfield Neighbourhood Plan; 2) Kesgrave Neighbourhood Plan; and 3) Reydon Neighbourhood Plan, and to agree that the Council was minded to approve them; also, to give delegated authority to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management, acting in consultation with himself, to make the plans, after the three neighbourhood plans referenda which were being held on 6th May 2021, assuming that there was a positive outcome for each, as a result of the referenda. This appeared to be the most efficient way for the Council to ensure that the plans were made within the statutory deadline of eight weeks of the day following a successful referenda.

Councillor Ritchie emphasised that the three Neighbourhood Plans had been produced by the communities as a result of a lot of hard work and commitment, and he gave thanks for that; Councillor Ritchie also referred to some minor errors in Appendix A to the report, the Bredfield Neighbourhood Plan, in that some of the maps were missing from the document; Councillor Ritchie gave an assurance that the version of the Plan that had been publicised and posted on the ESC's website, and on which people were being asked to vote, was correct.

Councillor Beavan congratulated Reydon Parish Council on being probably the first Parish Council to adopt the "St Ives" clause in its Neighbourhood Plan; Councillor Beavan commented that it was not a panacea, but it was certainly a step in the right direction to protect communities from being completely taken over by second homes.

Councillor Fryatt commented that he had worked closely with Bredfield Parish Council in the production of its Plan and he commented on the hard work undertaken and gave thanks. Councillor Fryatt commented on the importance of Planning Committees

taking account of neighbourhood plans.

On the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, and seconded by Councillor Cooper, it was by unanimous vote

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Bredfield Neighbourhood Plan, the Kesgrave Neighbourhood Plan, and the Reydon Neighbourhood Plan be agreed that it is minded to approve them, subject to a positive outcome at the referenda about each being held on 6 May 2021.
2. That subject to a positive outcome for each of the referenda being held on 6 May 2021, delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management, acting in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, to make the neighbourhood plans, as soon as reasonably practical after the declaration of the referenda results on 10 May 2021, and to evidence their delegated decision with the publication of an Officer Delegated Decision Notice.

The meeting concluded at 4.18 pm.

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Chairman