

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Conference Room, Riverside, on **Tuesday, 03 March 2020 at 6:30 PM**

Members of the Cabinet present:

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

Other Members present:

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Graham Elliott, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Mark Jepson

Officers present:

Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Andrew Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Deborah Sage (Political Group Support Officer (GLI)), Sam Shimmon (Tenant Services Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kerry, from Councillor Cackett and from Councillor Cooper.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Rudd declared a local non pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 6, Sale of Uggeshall Close, Lowestoft, as the ward member for Gunton and St Margarets.

Councillor Jepson declared a local non pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 5, East Suffolk Council Funding for Citizens Advice, as a member of the Board of Felixstowe Citizens Advice.

3 Announcements

The Leader stated that he did not have any announcements himself, however, he did have an announcement to make on behalf of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing. Councillor Kerry wished to make a short statement regarding the Notice of Motion raised at Full Council on 22 January 2020 by Councillor Gooch concerning

the Council's declared Climate Emergency and the recently adopted Housing Development Strategy. It was agreed that the Notice of Motion would not be discussed at Full Council to allow the Housing Team to prepare a comprehensive response in respect of the challenges of carbon neutral housing and how these could be addressed where practicable. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing was pleased to advise that already one of the Housing Development Strategy's actions had been achieved by the recruitment of three officers in development and enabling roles. However, at this point, only one officer had commenced duties and would need time to settle into their role. Consequently, Councillor Kerry wished to advise that a full briefing on housing and carbon neutral development would be available at Cabinet in May 2020. This would allow the Development Manager time to integrate her new officers into the service prior to undertaking the necessary research.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health provided a reminder, in respect of the Coronavirus, for everybody to follow the NHS advice in respect of washing hands and the use of tissues.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health also announced that the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust had launched a consultation in respect of a new orthopaedic centre based at Colchester. Councillor Rudd announced that East Suffolk Council would be responding to the consultation, but she advised that individual Members could respond too. There would, Councillor Rudd advised, be public meetings too.

4 Minutes

RESOLVED

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

5 East Suffolk Council Funding for Citizens Advice

Cabinet received report **ES/0316** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities Leisure and Tourism. Cabinet was advised that East Suffolk Council (ESC) provided almost £200,000 of funding to its three Citizens Advice – Citizens Advice North East Suffolk, Leiston and Saxmundham CA and Felixstowe and District CA.

Citizens Advice provided invaluable support to those who were most vulnerable in East Suffolk communities around issues such as benefits, debt, housing, employment and a range of other support.

Between them in 2019, the three east Suffolk Citizens Advice enabled £1.65 million of debt to be written off and secured £1.2 million of income gain. In 2019, Suffolk County Council (SCC) announced that, due to funding pressures, it would reduce its funding for the seven Citizens Advice in Suffolk from almost £375,000 to £185,000 in 2019/20 and then to zero in 2020/21. However, following review, it was now proposed to provide £120,000 for the next three years but with conditions attached - a reduction to four CAs, sourcing additional sources of income and a move towards shared accommodation.

Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG bridged the resultant funding gap for two years by providing a total of £187,000 of funding, although it was understood that this funding was unlikely to be available from 2020/21 onwards. The reduction in funding to the three CAs in East Suffolk between 2018/19 and 2021/22 could therefore be £83,778.

Cabinet was advised that, currently, Citizens Advice North East Suffolk received 39% of the total funding from the Council, Felixstowe and District CA received 29% and Leiston and Saxmundham CA 32%. This balance did not correlate with either the population served or the number of clients seen in 2019, for example North East Suffolk received 39% of the funding in 2019, but served 48% of the population and saw 52% of the clients. However, it was believed that the three Citizens Advice in East Suffolk should be enabled to work together to determine their own future and achieve greater sustainability, and therefore the Council wanted to offer an additional £7,500 in 2020/21 to enable them to secure independent objective support to look at the transformation opportunities available. This review should include a review of the number and structures of Citizens Advice, opportunities for co-location with other public sector or VCSE organisations and other transformation opportunities such as income generation. It was believed that transformation in these areas should offer savings that could be reinvested in additional outreach and prevention activity. The Council would be keen to work with the Citizens Advice and their Trustee Boards to define the scope of the review and to receive the final report. This report should identify the optimum structures to enable the transformation of CA services in East Suffolk, taking into account what was known about demographic changes over the coming years.

The proposal was therefore to maintain Citizens Advice funding at the current level for 2020/21 and to bring a further report back to Cabinet early in 2021.

The Head of Communities gave an apology and drew members' attention to an error within the report; the report stated that the source of funding would be the New Homes Bonus; this was incorrect in that the source would be the core revenue budget.

The Leader referred to the joint ambition held by SCC and ESC to support the Citizens Advice on their journey to examine the options. Cabinet recognised the important work undertaken by the Citizens Advice and gave its support to this proposal stating that there should be an emphasis on delivering services for the local people.

Councillor Elliott stated that he welcomed the Council's continued support for this vital resource and fantastic facility. However, he was concerned for the future in that there would not be long term funding security. Councillor Elliott stated that he was concerned that the Citizens Advice were being pushed into making decisions that would affect their ability to deliver the service for, much of the time, the most vulnerable people in society. The Leader, in response, stated that Councillor Elliott was right, but he said that the reality was that the Citizens Advice needed, as everybody did, to work smarter. The Council needed to ensure that the overheads were as slick as possible so that the delivery of the vital services could be undertaken efficiently and effectively to ensure maximum value for the public.

Councillor Byatt stated that the Labour Group had no objection to the Council maintaining its funding of £199,600 for the next three years. However, he said the report did not mention in the recommendations how the budget for this year, with three separate Citizens Advice in existence, was to be allocated. Councillor Byatt said that the report provided clear details in respect of the disparity of funding and the lack of equity, not least because of the levels of deprivation that existed in the north compared to the south of the District. Councillor Byatt asked why the report did not contain a recommendation to re-balance immediately and allocate the funds on the basis of community need. Councillor Byatt referenced neighbourhoods in Lowestoft that were among the 10% most deprived in England.

In conclusion, Councillor Byatt stated that as the report referenced, it was a service that supported the most vulnerable and, as such, the Labour Group suggested a recommendation that the funding be allocated immediately, according to need.

The Leader, in response, stated that the points raised by Councillor Byatt had been considered, and he said that there were pros and cons to what was being suggested by the Labour Group. The Leader stated the situation was that if more money was given to one group than had previously been given that would mean that less money would be given to another group. There was, he said, a need to ensure that Citizens Advice was sustainable; it was, he said, for them to decide, in consultation with the expert that he hoped they would employ, what their model of management was going forward. The Leader hoped, he said, that there would be one management organisation, in the future, and the whole sum would go to that organisation to spend as it saw fit across the area.

RESOLVED

1. That the funding for Citizens Advice in East Suffolk be maintained at £199,600 for the three financial years 2020-21, 2022-23 and 2023-24.
2. That an additional sum of £7,500 be made available to enable the three CAs to secure independent support to help them to explore the transformation of Citizens Advice services in East Suffolk focussed on identifying the optimum structures to deliver the best outcomes for the East Suffolk population.
3. That East Suffolk Council should be directly involved in working with the three CAs to define the scope of this transformation review and receive the final report.
4. That the three Citizens Advice in East Suffolk be encouraged to explore all of the transformation opportunities available in the District over the next twelve months, with a view to freeing up resource for greater involvement in prevention activity and additional outreach into identified and agreed target areas. Reorganisation, and potentially a reduction in the number of Citizens Advice, may well be the best way to achieve this but objective support should enable the three CAs to work together to fully understand both the opportunities and barriers to change.
5. That future funding beyond the end of the 2020-21 financial year would depend on evidence of progress towards transformation and that therefore a further report should be presented to Cabinet early in 2021, with a view to developing a new funding and performance framework for 2021-22 onwards.

6 Sale of Land in Uggeshall Close, Lowestoft

Cabinet received report **ES/0317** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing which, in his absence, was summarised by the Leader of the Council. Cabinet was advised that a tenant, purchasing their property through the right to buy scheme, had requested to buy a small piece of land adjacent to the property to include in their garden. This land was too small for the Council to develop, and would have covenants to protect the land being used for development, extensions or a driveway which would increase the value of the land. There were no other interested parties in the land and a price, including legal fees, had been agreed with the purchaser which matched the valuation of the land by the Council's Asset Management Team.

Cabinet was advised that an equality impact assessment had been completed and there were no negative or positive impacts of the sale on any protected groups.

It was recommended that the land be sold for the agreed price, the money would then be re-invested in the Housing Revenue Account and would reduce the Council's grounds maintenance responsibility in the area.

In response to a question by Councillor Elliott regarding any protection that would be given to the oak tree on the land, the Leader stated that as the land was not in a conservation area and the tree was not protected by a tree preservation order, there would be no protection in place for the tree.

RESOLVED

1. That the piece of land marked on Appendix A be sold to the buyer of 5 Uggeshall Close, Lowestoft for £4,970 + £550 for the Council's Legal fees.
2. That the title deed includes a covenant for the land to not be used for development purposes except with the express permission of the Council.

7 Environment Task Group - Update

Cabinet received report **ES/0319** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment who, in summarising his report, stated that he was so proud that the Council had achieved so much since, seven months ago, declaring a climate emergency. Councillor Mallinder referred to the work of the Environment Task Group and said that it would continue to monitor the Council's goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. Councillor Mallinder added that he was hoping to develop the Task Group, to ensure that the Council was threading the environment through all of its policies and decision making.

Councillor Mallinder made it clear that the work of the Task Group was not secret in any way, it was open about its work, and had a dedicated web page. All members of the Task Group were encouraged to act as small ambassadors, talking to town and parish councils, and communities, about what the Council was trying to achieve.

Councillor Mallinder advised Members that the Council needed to look at its emissions; the Task Group had reviewed a greenhouse gas report that recorded emissions over a number of years; however, it was felt that that was not enough and it was felt that independent qualification was needed of what the East Suffolk position was with regard to emissions. Thus, Grounds Works had been commissioned to look at this. This, in 2018/2019, was 6,200 metric tonnes; that was down 23% from the

previous year. Councillor Mallinder, at this point, outlined where East Suffolk's carbon came from.

Councillor Mallinder took the opportunity to highlight some of the issues within the report, that were now included within an action plan; these were staff training, that had already began; leisure centre refurbishment; the installation of solar panels at East Suffolk House; landscaping at East Suffolk House to increase biodiversity; electric vehicles.

Looking ahead, Councillor Mallinder outlined that he wished to work closely with Suffolk County Council, to develop joint goals of being carbon neutral. Discussions had also been scheduled with the Suffolk Waste Partnership, with Biodiversity, and with Transport, looking at developing a local air quality action plan, and work was ongoing with Planning colleagues, working towards guiding developers to be more environmentally engaged.

In conclusion, Councillor Mallinder gave thanks to Member and Officer colleagues: to the Head of Environmental Services for his hard work and dedication; to Task Group members, who all wanted to do the right thing for the Environment; to Cabinet Members for their engagement; to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport for his recent car parking policy report which encouraged less but longer journeys to destinations; to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing for his recent Housing Strategy which made it clear that East Suffolk Council was underlining the importance of the environment; to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health who, at every opportunity, encouraged car sharing; and to the Leader, for making the Environment one of ESC's top priorities. Councillor Mallinder emphasised that the small changes that ESC made would always, over time, have a big lasting impact.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Services and Operational Partnerships asked what else communities could do and how the Council could encourage them to get work underway as soon as possible. In response, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment stated that he would encourage all communities to engage with their ward members; he referenced discussions at the recent Full Council meeting in respect of tree planting and community orchards. He also referenced re-wilding of verges and the pilot schemes that had been put in place at Southwold and Saxmundham. Later in the year these would be expanded across the district. Councillor Mallinder felt that involvement and ownership were key, as were local volunteer groups, he said that he would be happy to talk to town and parish councils. He referred to extensive information being available on line to assist individuals who wanted to make a difference.

Councillor Byatt thanked the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment for his enthusiasm; he referred to discussions that had taken place during the shadow authority period relating to the burning of biomass fuels in some Suffolk schools and asked if, in this regard, discussions were taking place with Suffolk County Council. The Leader responded, stating he was sure that SCC would be considering this.

Councillor Byatt asked if ESC could set up its own power company, selling 100% green energy to residents. In response, the Leader stated that this was certainly a possibility.

Councillor Byatt, lastly, commented on the number of properties that still lacked solar panels; he thought it was now more difficult to obtain subsidies. In response, the Leader confirmed that the Government was again looking at the feed in tariffs. Debate took place regarding the cost of solar panels, and incentives, with the Leader commenting that solar panels were not particularly expensive, it was the installation of the panels that was expensive, most of the cost was related to the scaffolding that needed to be erected. In response, Councillor Elliott stated that solar panels should be put onto new houses, when scaffolding was already in place.

Councillor Elliott thanked the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment for his report, and for his enthusiasm. Councillor Elliott expressed concern, however, regarding the speed of the work, in particular that the Task Group was only meeting quarterly in response to the climate emergency that had been declared. Councillor Mallinder felt that quarterly meetings were adequate at the moment; he referred to the huge amount of work that was being undertaken between the meetings. He commented that he would keep the frequency of meetings under review. The Leader added that the Task Group could meet weekly, with minimum achievement; he felt it was about actions and the way that they were carried out.

Councillor Elliott referred to training for officers and members. He referenced Local Government Association training that had recently been attended by a member of his group, and recommended this for others. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment responded stating that he would look into this. The Leader suggested that if this training did take place it would make sense for the LGA to come to east Suffolk rather than lots of members and officers travelling.

In response to a question by Councillor Elliott asking if ESC would put in place a carbon budget, which he said was a good way of looking at what was used, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment responded that the Task Group would investigate this.

Councillor Elliott commented that councils could invest 5% of their pension fund into renewable energy schemes, which would generate money and save carbon. This was, he said, a positive opportunity.

Councillor Elliott asked when an Action Plan would be presented to Cabinet. In response, the Leader referred to all of the decision making by Cabinet, and Full Council, and the fact that the environment would always be at the heart of that.

Lastly, Councillor Elliott referred to the Council's new Strategic Plan and referenced the big emphasis on growth; he was, he said, concerned that there was a conflict between the Council's climate action plan and its desire for growth. The Leader, in response, stated that the two things were not fighting against each other; growth was, he said, not just about building lots of houses and roads. It was about sustainable growth, which the Council was keen to achieve. He gave a number of examples, one being electric vehicle charging points, which was a positive thing. The Leader stated he was

confident that he had the right people, both at Cabinet meetings, and at Full Council meetings, to challenge inappropriate growth and, he further stated, that they would have his full support in that.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment added that development could be a positive thing; it could have less carbon footprint and be more efficient in resources.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the update on the work of the Environment Task Group.

8 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 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

9 Transfer of Assets in Bungay

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

10 Exempt Minutes

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

The meeting concluded at 7.22 pm.

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Chairman