

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held via Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 6:30 PM**

Members of the Cabinet present:

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

Other Members present:

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Caroline Topping, Councillor Steve Wiles

Officers present: Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Kerry Blair (Head of Operations), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Mark Fisher (Procurement Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration)

1 Announcements

The Leader referred to the commercial activity, creativity and innovation that was happening the length and breadth of East Suffolk, from Freeport East in the south through the Smart Towns Initiative on to the Major Town Investment Plan projects in Lowestoft. Tonight, the Leader stated, he wanted to announce something rather different that gave the opportunity to showcase another hugely important part of the East Suffolk community, the Cultural and Creative sector. Together with ESC's neighbours at Great Yarmouth Borough Council, it had been decided to enter a joint bid for UK City of Culture 2025. For many years towns and districts had looked on with envy as cities drew in significant investment and growth through the City of Culture Scheme. Through this scheme they had been able to highlight the diversity of culture available within their city limits, an opportunity that had erstwhile not been made available to East Suffolk.

The Leader stated that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport had recently announced that the UK City of Culture 2025 award was to be a catalyst for levelling up areas outside London and other UK cities, putting culture at the heart of

plans to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

This meant, for the first time, groups of towns could join together and apply for the title to be awarded to their local area, widening the scope of areas across the UK that could benefit and broadening its remit to encompass health and well-being, net zero communities, people and diversity.

UK City of Culture was a fantastic showcase of the huge impact culture had in towns and cities across the country, the Leader stated, and those entering would need to articulate a strong and unique vision for their future growth, celebrating local heritage and using culture to bring communities together, while building a sense of place and inspiring local pride.

The Leader reported that during the course of the past 18 months he and the Chief Executive had met with representatives of the amazing creative sector to hear how they had been coping with lockdown and to try to find ways to help them survive long periods of closure. This East Suffolk and Great Yarmouth bid had the potential to be transformational for the East Suffolk area, strengthening communities, building a sense of pride, celebrating and boosting the local arts and culture sector, and attracting new investment and tourism with all the benefits this economic uplift would bring. Working with the cultural and creative sector, from those of international renown in Snape and Aldeburgh to smaller but no less important contributors right across the district East Suffolk would create a groundswell of enthusiastic support and engagement which would in turn play a key role in efforts to overcome the challenges of low social mobility and disadvantage in the combined communities, helping them to recover from the effects of the pandemic and opening yet more opportunities, especially for young people.

At the moment, the Leader stated, he was at the stage of announcing the intention to bid, which would go public on 14 July 2021; there would be a lot of hard work ahead, but with many amazing opportunities and he felt that ESC had the very best partner possible in Great Yarmouth Borough Council who would share this journey. The Leader added that not only did the two authorities have a deep connection in their maritime heritage and close proximity, but they were also both going through a period of considerable change and regeneration as they worked towards securing a better future for their communities. They already collaborated on several important projects and they both believed that a wealth of benefits could come from putting culture at the very heart of everything they did, providing a catalyst for investment to drive their economic growth and regeneration. It could provide ambition for residents, inspire people and steer them towards engaging with others and creating positive pathways.

The Leader stated that both authorities were busy contacting key stakeholders and from the responses so far they were already confident their communities would be inspired at the prospect of playing their part in what would be a stimulating and exciting venture that would enable them to showcase to the rest of the UK and further afield the diverse, rich and multi-layered culture they treasured, their people and their creativity, experiences, buildings and landscapes, opening them up to be enjoyed and engaged with by everyone and creating a cultural legacy for future generations.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health referred referred to the Prime Minister's recent announcement in respect of Covid and stated that although the

vaccination rollout had been a success, the pandemic was not over and cases continued to increase rapidly; as such, Councillor Rudd urged everybody to wear a face covering where appropriate, this she said would help everybody, protecting each other to stay safe. Councillor Rudd also reminded everybody to carry out lateral flow tests twice a week. Proceeding with caution and following the guidance was imperative she stated.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources announced the recent appointment of Christopher Bing to the post of Monitoring Officer and Head of legal and Democratic Services.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing announced the recent appointment of Heather Tucker to the post of Head of Housing.

2 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4a Minutes - May 2021

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 May 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4b Minutes - June 2021

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 June 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 East Suffolk Council Outturn Report 2020/21

Cabinet received report **ES/0825** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, who stated that his report provided an overview of the Council's draft outturn position for 2020/2021 in respect of the General Fund, Reserves, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Capital Programme and the Collection Fund.

2020/2021 was, Councillor Cook reported, an unprecedented year, and the net budget impact of Covid-19 on the General Fund was forecast in the region of £8.6m, during the first quarter of the year. However, over the course of the last 12 months, there had been significant Government funding to support the Council's response to the pandemic and to lessen the impact on the Council's finances from additional cost pressures and loss of income. This was an area of significant uncertainty and fast moving developments, and was extremely difficult to forecast, especially the economic impact on Council income streams. As a result, the most significant variance from revised budget to actual was in relation to Covid, which had led to an outturn surplus for the General Fund of £1.1m. The proposal was for this balance to be transferred to the Transformation Reserve to provide funding for the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan.

As at 31 March 2021, Councillor Cook reported, the total on the Council's earmarked reserves stood at £73.8m. This was an increase of £27.3m on March 2020, arising from additional income from Business Rates and funding for Community Projects and Covid-19 which would be utilised in the current year. It was worth noting, Councillor Cook advised Cabinet, that £42.1m (57%) of the year-end balance was held across four earmarked reserves for Business Rates, Capital, Covid and Port Health.

The HRA reported a small outturn variance of £39k against the revised budget. The most significant variances to report were due to re-phasing of the Housing Development Programme. The General Fund Capital Programme reported a £5.05m underspend at the end of the year due to projects being re-phased to 21/22.

The outturn position would feed into the review and update of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Capital Programme and the HRA in the 22/23 budget process. Going forward, the Council was in a much stronger financial position than it expected 12 months ago.

Councillor Cook, in conclusion, referred to the financial support from the Government, which he said had been extensive; however, the prudent management of the support had been key in delivering this extremely welcome outcome; he referred to the most difficult financial circumstances one could imagine, and a very firm financial ethos being maintained. Councillor Cook, joined by all members, commended the outstanding work of the Financial Services Team.

The Leader also gave his thanks, not only to the Financial Services Team, but also to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources; he referred to the excellent outturn report, and not taking that for granted, it was exceptional and would allow ESC to deliver against its ambitious agenda over the next 12 months, and beyond.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment gave thanks for the hard work undertaken and stated that this would help the Environmental Team to implement policies going forward.

The Deputy Leader also gave his thanks and he referred to the Assets and Economic Development Teams being able to make acquisitions that had enabled further income to come into the Council. The Deputy Leader also referred to the grants that had been given and the speed at which the grants had been processed.

Councillor Byatt, after giving thanks for the excellent report, asked a number of questions; he asked how Council Tax and Business Rates arrears were affecting the Council; he also referred to the money that had been saved in travel costs and asked if some of the savings could be put towards additional electric charging points at the Council offices. Councillor Byatt also referred to income from the Port of Felixstowe and asked if the knock on effect of the shortage of lorry drivers affected the operations of Felixstowe and associated ESC income. Finally, Councillor Byatt referred to the bid of £5,000 for Member training, and slippage, and he asked about Member training in respect of new Planning arrangements.

In response to the questions asked by Councillor Byatt, Councillor Cook advised that he

would be presenting a report to Full Council which would cover Council Tax and Business Rates arrears, and he commented that no doubt the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment, together with the Environment Task Group, would be considering additional electric charging points. Referring to the shortage of lorry drivers, Councillor Cook advised that, potentially, this would affect the transport industry and ESC would react accordingly. In conclusion, Councillor Cook acknowledged the importance of Member training and the investment of this. The Leader referred to one of the impacts of the exit from the EU, and the increase in work by Port Health, and he acknowledged that that came at a cost to the importers, hauliers, companies and central government; the Leader stated he too had concerns around the employment of drivers, and he also had concerns around general employment in a number of sectors. The Leader referred to all that ESC could do to promote people moving to, and coming to East Suffolk, to work, to live, and to resettle, would only be positive because with those people would come a workforce and that workforce would need homes and facilities etc.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the Council's draft outturn position for 2020/21 together with reserves and balances as at 31 March 2021 be noted.
2. That the transfers to and from reserves shown in Appendix C, including transfer of the £1.107m General Fund outturn surplus to the Transformation Reserve, be approved.

6 Review of Place-Based Initiatives

Cabinet received report **ES/0823** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, who reported that ESC had provided financial and staff support to Place-Based Initiatives (PBIs) for the past fifteen years, beginning with Felixstowe Futures in 2006. The existing funding agreements were due to expire at the end of December 2021 for the current initiatives in Felixstowe and Leiston. This presented an opportunity to review the Council's approach to supporting such initiatives, and place-based working more generally. The report set out the Council's current support for PBIs and their impact to date, outlined the wider context of ESC's place-based working and presented a range of options for Cabinet to consider on the Council's future support of such partnerships.

Whilst there were currently two clearly defined PBIs receiving a range of support from ESC, plus Lowestoft Rising which was a key multi-agency partnership in the district, the Council was also engaged in a much wider approach to place-specific working and the options presented in the report reflected that. Six options were presented and these ranged from the continuation of funding for some of the existing PBIs, expanding the number of PBIs based on strong evidence of need and opportunity, allowing areas to bid for place-based resources, establishing a team of Change Managers who would be deployed on a short-term basis, moving to a town centre manager model or to cease all funding of PBIs in December 2021.

The Deputy Leader referenced the many activities / achievements of Felixstowe Forward, ie engagement events, securing external funding, completion of the Felixstowe Seafront Garden project etc; it had also enabled the way for new initiatives such as the Landguard Partnership and Felixstowe Bid.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism referenced the work of Leiston Together, which had worked on a Strategic Plan, looking at activities to do with Destination Leiston, Leiston People, Leiston Means Business, Leiston Future, Digital Leiston and Greener Leiston, commenting that they had been hugely beneficial to the communities around Leiston and surrounding villages. Turning to Lowestoft Rising, Councillor Smith reported that it had been supporting regeneration in Lowestoft and had also been hugely successful.

Both Councillor Jepson and Councillor Wiles commented on the excellent work and achievements of Felixstowe Forward, commenting how, over recent years, the brief and focus had shifted to that of an enabling role. Councillor Jepson and Councillor Wiles commented on the excellent work undertaken by Helen Greengrass and gave thanks for that.

Councillor Cooper commented on the excellent work of Leiston Together, and particularly how it had brought many groups / organisations together.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, referring to Felixstowe Forward, commented that he had been involved at the early stages of the project, back in 2006; he applauded the work of everybody involved.

Following a question from Councillor Byatt, the Deputy Leader commented that putting the four Change Managers in place, and being able to move them around the district as required, would not reduce significantly the capacity in Lowestoft and Leiston.

The Leader stated that the placed-based initiatives had been fantastic and continued to deliver; however, he added that if that model continued, other towns, ie Framlingham, Saxmundham, Woodbridge, Halesworth, would suffer. By introducing the Change Managers, who would have a much wider remit, the whole of the District would be supported.

The Leader gave his personal thanks to Helen Greengrass, and the Felixstowe Forward Team, who he said had carried out remarkable work.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the continuation of funding for Lowestoft Rising for a further three years from New Homes Bonus at a total cost of £60,000 or £20,000 per annum be approved.
2. That the implementation of option 4 i.e. establish a small team of East Suffolk

Council Change Managers to be deployed where there are short or medium-term needs identified be approved.

3. That the extension of East Suffolk Council's financial support for Leiston Together by one year until December 2022 be approved.

4. That a budget of £421k over two years from January 2022 to deliver option 4, provide an operational budget for this option and to cover the extension to the Leiston Together funding agreement be approved.

5. That this budget be funded from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve, with this reserve being subsequently replenished from additional funds arising from the Suffolk Business Rates Pool in respect of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' pot.

7 Results of the Task and Finish Group on Procurement

Cabinet received report **ES/0824** by the Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, the purpose of which was to inform members of the findings of the Task and Finish Group and agree the recommendations set out in the Procurement Strategy Document. The Assistant Cabinet Member reminded members that during the summer of 2020 a motion was raised at a meeting of ESC's Full Council regarding how the Authority procured goods, works and services. In response to the motion a cross-party task and finish group was commissioned and met regularly, and reviewed several areas, including social value models and how they can be used to understand the impact of the Council's spending; the main features of The Preston Model; current procurement practises at ESC, legislation relating to procurement, and potential changes in legislation currently undergoing consultation.

It was identified that despite pockets of good practice, current processes did not go far enough and an East Suffolk model of procurement was required. The Task and Finish Group therefore identified four themes which the requirements set out within the motion could be met. These were supporting the local economy; measuring outcomes; partners; and East Suffolk commissioning. The Task and Finish Group focussed on developing a new East Suffolk model to deliver an updated strategy for procurement that would deliver on several important aspirations of ESC.

Councillor Wiles, in conclusion, thanked all members of the Task and Finish Group for their focus and hard work.

The Leader, after stating the importance of the work, also thanked members and officers for their work. The Leader referred to the importance of money, but he also highlighted the need to sometimes consider social values, longevity etc.

The Deputy Leader also gave thanks for the work undertaken, referring in particular to the work of his Assistant Cabinet Member.

Councillor Byatt commented that he was delighted to have been a member of the Task and Finish Group; he referred to the recommendations within the report and commented that they would have a permanent effect on the way that ESC would do some of its business.

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

RESOLVED

That the recommendations of the Member and Officer based Task and Finish Group be approved, which are:

- 1) Approving the action plan and outcomes in the Task and Finish Group Report (Appendix 1).
- 2) Creating a cross departmental project – to include consultation with members - to produce:
 - a) Revised procurement processes that support the new policy;
 - b) a Social Value and Sustainable Procurement Policy linked to the Strategic Plan to embed social value as a keystone to all council activity; and
 - c) implement the action plan.
- 3) That as part of the work of the project group, a social value calculator tool is identified and purchased to inform decision making, with a maximum budget of £50k.
- 4) That East Suffolk Council commissions work from the East of England Local Government Association to carry out a review of procurement processes, and a 'health check' to identify any changes that need to be made to implement the new policy.

8 Exempt/Confidential Items

The Leader stated that in exceptional circumstances, the Council may, by law, exclude members of the public from all, or part of, an executive decision-making meeting. The Council should, unless there were urgent circumstances, give notice of its intention to do so via the Forward Plan, which was updated and published on its website 28 clear days prior to the meeting.

There were various reasons that the Council, on occasions, had to do this and examples were because a report contained information relating to an individual, information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, or information relating to any consultations or negotiations.

Tonight, the Leader stated, Cabinet would be considering two substantive exempt matters which were outlined in agenda items 10 and 11 on the published agenda. Firstly, Waterlane Leisure Centre Roof Replacement, asked Cabinet to consider approval for funding from the Capital Programme to undertake refurbishment work to replace one of the roof areas and repairs to a second section at the Waterlane Leisure Centre, both areas were leaking and had reached end of life. If approved the investment would continue to provide a welcoming environment to the Council's leisure centres to provide the opportunity for everyone to lead a healthy and active life. By continuing to invest in ESC's buildings, the Leader stated, ESC was making the best use of its assets, ensuring that they continued to provide quality facilities across the district, were efficient and maximised the benefits for communities. ESC was delivering a redevelopment programme for its leisure assets to ensure they provided quality facilities for the community, that they were well maintained and became more financially sustainable. Secondly, the Leader reported, Review of Outsourcing Arrangements, Project Management Overview, asked Cabinet to consider a resourcing and transition plan for future operating arrangements.

RESOLVED

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

9a Exempt Minutes - May 2021

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

9b Exempt Minutes - June 2021

- Information relating to any individual.
- Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

10 Waterlane Leisure Centre Roof Replacement

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

11 Review of Outsourcing Arrangements - Project Management Overview

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

The meeting concluded at 8:18pm

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Chairman