



AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Monday, 16 May 2022

Subject	CREATION OF A SECOND VICE CHAIRMAN POSITION FOR EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL
Report by	Councillor Steve Gallant, Leader of East Suffolk Council
Supporting Officer	Chris Bing Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer Chris.Bing@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	None

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

Audit and Governance Committee is asked to consider a proposal to create a second Vice Chairman post for East Suffolk Council for municipal year 2022/23, and continuing thereafter. The creation of the second Vice Chairman post should provide greater resilience, additional support to the Chairman in their role and greater coaching and mentoring opportunities for future chairmen.

Options:

To recommend to Full Council either:

- 1) to keep the existing arrangement with the Chairman of East Suffolk Council supported by one Vice Chairman; or
- 2) to create a second Vice Chairman post for East Suffolk Council to have the Chairman supported by two Vice-Chairmen, and to make consequential amendments to East Suffolk Council's Constitution to provide for this

Recommendation/s:

To recommend to Full Council to create a second Vice Chairman post for East Suffolk Council to have the Chairman supported by two Vice-Chairmen, and to amend East Suffolk Council's Constitution accordingly

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance

East Suffolk Council's Constitution requires that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council be elected at the Annual Meeting in May.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

East Suffolk Council Strategic Plan 2020-2024

East Suffolk Council Equality and Diversity Policy

Environmental:

Not applicable

Equalities and Diversity:

Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Financial:

An additional Vice Chairman of the Council allowance will cost £3,293.27 but this can be met within the existing Members Allowances Budget.

Human Resources:

Not applicable

ICT:

Not applicable

Legal:

The Council must conduct its business and take decisions pursuant to the Constitution and the Council Procedure Rules therein.

Risk:

Failure to comply with the Constitution and the Council Procedure Rules makes decisions taken by Councillors vulnerable to challenge on grounds of procedural impropriety.

External Consultees:	Not applicable
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Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
Compliance with, and enforcement of, the model Code of Conduct should raise and maintain standards in public life and make decisions taken less vulnerable to challenge.			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	The Chairman is the Civic Head of the Council, representing the Council as a whole in all civic and ceremonial matters. The Chairman also presides over meetings of the Council to ensure Council debate and decision making takes place in line with the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution. The role profile for the Chairman/Vice Chairman, which is also in the Constitution, can be found at Appendix A to this report.
1.2	The Chairman and the Vice Chairman play an important role in positively promoting the Council and the district. The Chairman receives invites to attend engagements all over the district from many organisations and community groups each year. East Suffolk is a large district both in terms of population (around 248,000 people) and geographic area (around 487 square miles). East Suffolk is made up of 178 towns and villages and includes Lowestoft (Suffolk's second largest town) in the north with a population of circa 72,000 and Felixstowe in the south, with a population of 29,000. It also has a number of historic market towns; Aldeburgh, Beccles, Bungay, Framlingham, Halesworth, Kesgrave, Leiston, Saxmundham, Southwold and Woodbridge.

2 Current position

- 2.1 East Suffolk Council's Constitution currently provides for the election of 1 Chairman and 1 Vice Chairman at the Annual Meeting in May. These important and high-profile roles are an honour and privilege to undertake but they can also be personally demanding with day, evening and weekend engagements and regular travel required throughout the whole district. The requirements of the role could be especially challenging for some councillors to carry out because of their personal circumstances and/or protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 The Chairman has a 1 year term of office. Under existing arrangements, the Vice Chairman succeeds the Chairman at the following Annual Meeting and the former Chairman ceases to have a civic role. Therefore, the opportunity for the former Chairman to share knowledge and provide mentoring support to the new Chairman and the Chairman Elect is lost.

3 How to address current situation

- 3.1 It is proposed that a second Vice Chairman role be created to help support and develop the Council's civic leadership team and potentially make it more inclusive and diverse pursuant to the Council's public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2 It is proposed that at the Annual meeting the existing Vice Chairman would become the Chairman, the former Chairman would then become a Vice Chairman and a second Vice Chairman would then be elected as Chairman Elect effectively to take over the Chairman role the following year as is custom and practice, subject to a confirmatory vote by Council at the Annual Meeting.
- 3.3 It is proposed that in the absence of the Chairman, a Vice Chairman will preside. If both Vice Chairman are present, the Vice Chairman who was the most recent past Chairman will preside at the meeting. If neither the Chairman nor the two Vice Chairman are present, a Chairman for that meeting must be elected. The person presiding at the meeting may exercise any power or duty of the Chairman.
- 3.4 The Chairman would be able to ask either Vice Chairman to attend engagements in their place for any reason.
- 3.5 The Vice chairmen of the Council could also be the Chairman or Vice Chairman of another Council committee. Cabinet members, and Assistant Cabinet members, cannot be Chairman or Vice Chairmen of Council because these civic roles are apolitical (like the Speaker and Deputy Speakers in the House of Commons).

4 Reason/s for recommendation	
4.1	To provide greater resilience, additional support to the Chairman in their role and greater coaching and mentoring opportunities for future chairmen

Appendices

Appendices:	
Appendix A	Role profile for Chairman/Vice-Chairman

Background reference papers:	
None	