

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton, on **Tuesday, 1 November 2022 at 6.30pm.**

Members of the Cabinet present:

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

Other Members present:

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Frank Mortimer, Councillor Trish Mortimer

Officers present: Julia Catterwell (East Suffolk Communities Officer), Karen Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Elliott Dawes (Housing Development Officer), Teresa Howarth (Principal Environmental Health Officer), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Helen Johnson (Culture and Heritage Programme Manager), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Andrea MacMillan (Planning Manager - Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services), Sue Meeken (Political Group Support Officer (Labour)), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer), Heather Tucker (Head of Housing), Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration), Ben Wright (Planner (Policy and Delivery))

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mallinder, Councillor Cooper and Councillor Jepson.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Announcements

There were no announcements.

4 Minutes

It was by consensus

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 October 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Continuation of East Suffolk Community Partnerships and Enabling Communities Budgets

Cabinet received report **ES/1322** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, which sought commitment to continue to support the East Suffolk Community Partnership Board and eight individual Community Partnerships, and the Councillor Enabling Budgets, including by investing the necessary resources and funding to enable their continuation.

Cabinet was reminded that a commitment was made by East Suffolk Council (ESC) to develop and deliver Community Partnerships, in response to concerns about a potential democratic deficit caused by the Council having fewer Councillors, covering larger geographical areas, with larger populations than before it was created. A significant amount of time was spent investigating different models at a national level and scoping out the proposed form and function of the Community Partnerships.

The model originally proposed had proved to be an exciting, fresh opportunity to engage with East Suffolk communities and their representatives in an innovative and unique way. It had involved the Community Partnerships in addressing local issues based on data, evidence and insight and in developing solutions, using devolved funding, in exactly the way the Government intended under the Localism Act 2011.

Cabinet was advised that the model had been externally challenged by the Local Government Association Peer Review Team in October 2021. The Team's general observations were that there was lots of evidence that Community Partnerships were 'adding value' and there had been a lot of support to give them a "great start". The Team recognised how ESC had brought people together and used a strong evidence base to identify local priorities, for example around mental health and social isolation. The Team recognised that ESC had backed up its priority by making a significant investment and it noted great examples of how ESC was also using the assets across the district. The Team flagged up the enthusiastic, energetic and committed staff and Members and also the positive feedback from partners describing Community Partnerships as "dynamic" and "innovative".

The proposals contained in the report to continue to operate, resource and fund the Community Partnerships were based on the evidence of impact in the first three and a half years, albeit during the Covid pandemic restrictions, feedback from the Peer Challenge and the opportunities that the Community Partnerships provided for co-ordinated activity to address both local challenges and those facing the whole of the district including the cost-of-living crisis.

Cabinet gave its full support for the proposals contained within the report; the Leader stated that he was a great supporter of the Community Partnerships, the Community Partnership Board and the Councillor Enabling Budgets. The Leader added that the

budgets had allowed Councillors to become community leaders and to make a real difference to small community and residents' groups, across the whole district, which otherwise ESC may have struggled to bring together in such a cohesive way. The Leader concluded that it was right and proper that ESC now sought to continue the Community Partnerships into the future.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing referred to the Covid pandemic and how the Community Partnerships had come into their own during that period.

Councillor Deacon referred to the Councillor Enabling Budgets, which were currently £7,500 per Councillor; he asked if the amount, going forward, was cast in stone; Councillor Deacon referred to the financial constraints currently faced by the country, and the pressures on everybody, that must be affecting the very people that ESC was trying to help through the grants, and Councillor Deacon asked if the budget could be increased to £8,000 going forward. The Leader, in his response, commented that there would be an opportunity, after the elections in May 2023, for the next Council to consider that.

Councillor Deacon referred to the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership, and the related population of over 66,000 people; Councillor Deacon asked if it would be better to split the Partnership into two, with Lowestoft in one Partnership and the northern parishes in the other. The Leader, in his response, stated that the areas needed to be constantly reviewed; he added that if the number was increased then, in effect, the number of Community Support Officers would need to be increased too. Officers added that the Community Partnership received an additional half post in support resources to recognise the fact that the area was bigger than the other areas.

Councillor Beavan suggested that there should be more emphasis on long term capacity building for resilient communities; he referred to the funding and asked where that would come from going forward. The Leader stated that all Community Partnerships, which were made up of all Members of ESC together with strategic partners and community groups, decided what they wanted to spend the money on; he added that some of the perceived small things were really important to communities. Referring to funding streams, the Leader stated that, going forward, they might change, and that would be taken on board by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and officers.

Councillor Gooch, commenting on the points made by Councillor Deacon relating to the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership, added that financial equitability should be considered as part of any review. The Leader commented that that was a key issue and had been discussed at the outset; he referred to the population figures and acknowledged why there might be an expectation that there should be more funding going into the populated areas of the district but he referred to rural areas and commented on the cost of delivering a project being far greater than in an urban area.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism gave her thanks to all Ward Members and officers for their work related to the Community Partnerships.

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

RESOLVED

That Cabinet recommend to Full Council:

1. That it be agreed to continue to support and enable the Community Partnership Board and the eight Community Partnerships (one for each of the areas shown on the map at Appendix 1 to this report) until the end of March 2027.
2. That it be agreed to continue to support the Enabling Communities Budgets at the current level (£7,500 per Councillor) until the end of March 2027.
3. That £1,064,000 funding per annum be committed for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years from New Homes Bonus, and to fund at a similar level for the following two years subject to the funding being available.
4. That the purpose, remit, governance and structure of Community Partnerships in East Suffolk, as set out in the report, be endorsed and that the impact of the Community Partnerships be reviewed annually through an annual monitoring report.

6 UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funds

Cabinet received report **ES/1323** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, which sought approval to receive £2.75m of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to deliver a multi-year business support, community development and skills development programme. The report further sought approval to implement ESC's UKSPF Investment Plan which outlined how these activities would be delivered either directly by ESC or with partners and the anticipated outcomes they would achieve. In addition, the report sought approval from Cabinet to receive £1.13m of funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This was a capital fund scheme designed to support small businesses and community infrastructure projects within the rural areas of East Suffolk. The REPF delivery programme would be an addendum to the existing UKSPF Investment Plan and would be submitted to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for approval by 30 November 2022.

Councillor Deacon referred to page 35 of the report and the reference to "lack of cultural leadership in East Suffolk"; he asked what was meant by that phrase. Officers referred to, nationally, cultural leadership being very important in terms of driving local economic development. Until recent times, East Suffolk, and particularly areas such as Lowestoft, had suffered from a lack of that. Work was now in progress to redress that through a number of measures and that was a priority for ESC; the Cultural Strategy would provide a strong framework for future investment and activity.

Councillor Deacon also referred to the reference within the report to "the gross disposable income by head of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, and across

East Suffolk therefore, which was £21,000, which compared badly against £24,000 for the whole of the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy Area. Councillor Deacon asked for a definition of "gross disposable income". Officers advised that it was a measure of the available income that people had to spend within an area and they added that that needed to be addressed. After further debate on this matter, it was agreed that officers would provide further information and clarification for Councillor Deacon.

Councillor Gooch referred to Lowestoft and the voluntary sector, and indeed the leadership in particular theatres and cultural centres being hugely impressive; she suggested that should be celebrated more. Councillor Gooch also referred to levels of disadvantage and suggested that more should be put in in terms of the transport connectivity and the lack of bus networks, which she said was a major barrier to economic development in the area. The Leader confirmed that rural transport was a key workstream of the Community Partnership Board. Officers referred to transport connectivity and commented that this was probably the wrong fund for that, being £1.1m over three years to spread across the whole district which would not go very far in terms of transport investment. The main aim was to get grants into local communities for local infrastructure projects. Other larger funds would be used to focus on transport investment.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development thanked officers for their work.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the receipt of £2.75m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund be approved.
2. That the implementation of the ESC UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan be approved.
3. That the receipt of £1.13m from the Rural England Prosperity Fund be approved.
4. That authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Development and the Head of Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, to finalise the Rural England Prosperity Fund delivery plan and submit to DEFRA by 30 November 2022.

7 Partnership Scheme in Conservation Area application and match funding

Cabinet received report **ES/1324** by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, who reported that the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone, a five-year fixed term project, would complete in March 2023 and was a partnership, working with, Historic England, Lowestoft Town Council, Lowestoft Vision and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust. Since the launch in 2018 the partnership had successfully restored/allocated funding to 16 buildings/units

equating to £416,088.50 of public funding and £239,241.55 private match. The partnership worked with stakeholders including Norse and Highways to address local issues, implemented new policies (SPD Design Guide and updated Conservation Area Appraisal) and helped establish the Most Easterly Community Group. It also engaged communities and businesses in arts activities to help drive footfall into the High Street.

The report requested approval to apply for a second Partnership Scheme in Conservation Area (PSiCA) from Historic England to continue to repair and restore buildings in the historic High Street, Lowestoft for another five years. The £350,000 match funding, funded from capital reserves, would be required from ESC, over a five-year period once the project had started in April 2023 and would be split between the five years.

Cabinet gave its full support for the proposals within the report, particularly welcoming the encouragement of pride in the community, investment in poverty and making people feel better about the place that they lived and worked in.

Councillor Deacon asked if Lowestoft Town Council would be contributing to the scheme; the Leader stated that that was a matter for the Town Council itself and the Deputy Leader added that the Town Council was a member of the Heritage Action Zone.

The Deputy Leader gave thanks to officers for all of their work.

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

RESOLVED

That £350,000 of match funding over the period of 2023/24 to 2027/28 be approved and that it be agreed to make an application to Historic England for the same amount under the Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA).

8 Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document

Cabinet received report **ES/1325** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, the purpose of which was to recommend the adoption of the Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The SPD would support the implementation of policies relating to small scale residential development in the countryside in the ESC Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and Waveney Local Plan. The SPD would provide guidance including how to identify areas that could be considered as 'Clusters'/'Settlements in the Countryside', the requirements for sites to be considered appropriate for development, the landscape and characters considerations of such development, the expectations of public engagement on proposals and how SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 related to other policies in the Local Plans.

Cabinet gave its full support for the proposals within the report, particularly commenting on how the SPD was easy to read and understand; Cabinet welcomed that the SPD would answer a lot of the questions that many developers and local communities would have.

Councillor Ritchie gave thanks to officers for all of their work.

On the proposition of Councillor Ritchie, seconded by Councillor Brooks, it was by a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

1. That the Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document be adopted.
2. That the Head of Planning and Coastal Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, be authorised to make any presentational or typographical amendments to the Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document prior to it being published.

9 East Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2023/24

Cabinet received report **ES/1326** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and the Assistant Cabinet Member for Resources, which provided a review the 2022/23 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) and set out the options for the LCTRS for 2023/24.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources reported that each year the Council was required to review its LCTRS. Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) had carried out the annual review of the 2022 scheme. In recent years, a number of technical changes to streamline the process and improve the customer journey had been implemented. No further changes of this nature were currently proposed in respect of 2023/24.

Where it was determined to retain the existing scheme, this must be decided by 11 March of the preceding financial year. Retention of the existing scheme with no changes was a decision that could be taken by Cabinet, and did not require external consultation.

The current East Suffolk Working Age LCTRS scheme provided a maximum benefit of 91.5% for working age claimants and the scheme also fully protected War Pensioners. An option that had been reviewed but which was not recommended was to increase the maximum benefit for working age claimants to 100%, ie working age claimants would not have to contribute 8.5%. This option would entail sizable financial impacts on the precepting authorities, particularly the County Council, and the Council was undertaking a range of other initiatives targeted at the cost of living crisis.

Cabinet gave its full support for the proposals within the report.

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

RESOLVED

That it be approved that no change be made to the East Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2023/24.

10 Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy

Cabinet received report **ES/1327** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources, which sought approval of an updated draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), taking account of new and revised risks in order for the Council to set a balanced budget that would deliver its priorities for the period under review 2022/23 (revision of the current year budget) to 2026/27.

The report provided an update on the draft MTFS as at November 2022. The MTFS provided a baseline forecast of income and expenditure and looked at the overall financial climate, including public finances and the local government financial environment.

Councillor Cook reported that following the Chancellor's announcement of some Medium-Term Financial Plan measures in October, it was unlikely that there would be additional funding for local government for 2023/24 and 2024/25, including additional support for inflationary pressures. The current update of the MTFS therefore assumed no change to the current budgets for core and non-core funding streams. Further indication of changes to funding allocations for local government may be provided in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 17 November; this was a change from the original intention to deliver the full Medium-Term Fiscal Plan on 31 October.

Councillor Cook stated that the 2023/24 referendum limits for Council Tax were expected to remain unchanged at the higher of 2% or £5 for Shire Districts in two-tier areas. An increase of £4.95 for 2023/24 would equate to a District Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk of £181.17. Growth in the tax base was currently estimated at 1.33%, slightly higher than the original budget assumption of 0.92%. Implementation of Business Rates reform continued to be delayed, and it was now assumed this would not take place until 2025/26. The financially advantageous position of the Council under the current system had been reported in previous years, and this delay improved the budget position of the Council in the region of £5m for each of the next two financial years.

Officers continued to work with service areas to review budgets, and to date the work was reporting a budget pressure of £2.6m for the current year, mainly due to pay cost pressures and a reduction to income budgets. The delay to the Business Rates reforms had significantly improved the budget gap position for next year, the current budget gap for 2023/24 was £1.4m, a reduction of £3.5m from the February position of £4.9m.

Reserves were currently projected to remain healthy over the MTFS at around £46m, which at this time did not include use of reserves to fund the current year or future year budget gaps. If the budget gaps identified at this early stage of the MTFS for the current year and 2023/24, were still present at the end of the budget process, then use of the In-Year Savings Reserve and the risk based reserves would be made to balance the budgets.

Members were advised that Local Government continued to operate in a very uncertain economic environment, making financial planning for the medium-term challenging, and a cautious approach was therefore taken with assumptions on future funding streams. It was hoped that some certainty around government funding for the next two years could be established from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in early December. The next update of the MTFS would be reported to Cabinet on 3 January 2023 and would include further review of key areas such as establishment costs, business rates income, revenue implications of the capital programme and use of reserves.

Cabinet gave its full support for the proposals within the report, commenting particularly on the global instability and how the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and officers had enabled ESC to deliver many great projects and have the confidence to make significant investments which brought income into the Council. Cabinet gave its thanks to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and officers for all of their important work.

Councillor Beavan referred to departmental budgets having to absorb inflationary increases for goods and services and asked for clarification that that was correct; Councillor Cook confirmed that was the case.

Councillor Beavan referred to the Spending Review on 17 November 2022 and the MTFS being updated on 4 January 2023; he asked if it would be possible to have an update after the Spending Review. Councillor Cook advised that if there was anything radically significant that needed reporting before 4 January he would do so.

Councillor Deacon referred to the Norse contract coming to an end and asked when ESC would have sight of the financial implications of that. Councillor Cook referred to the business case that had been considered by Cabinet earlier in 2022 and advised that that contained all of the relevant information.

Councillor Deacon referred to the obvious financial and environmental savings from hybrid working and asked if ESC would continue to support that; the Leader confirmed that it would.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy attached as Appendix A to the report be approved.

2. That it be approved that Members and officers develop proposals to set a balanced budget for 2023/24 and beyond.

11 Woodbridge Men's Shed

Cabinet received report **ES/1328** by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, which sought to agree the future use of land owned by the Council, adjacent to the Deben Water Sports Centre, near the boat pond and tea hut in Woodbridge, and to agree to offer a 20-year concessionary ground lease with permission for the Woodbridge Rotary Club to construct a hut (Men's shed) to a specification agreed by the Council's Planning and Asset Management services.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism reported that ESC owned the area of land as shown red on the plan adjacent to the Woodbridge boating lake. This area was fenced as it was formally used as a boat store. The former use ceased and was not ideal for that use due to the number of trees in the area. Any new shed or other building would be required to be on pillars due to the low-lying nature of the ground. Officers believed that the site had very limited alternative uses and therefore felt that it would be well suited for the proposed use.

The intention was to provide the Rotary Club with a new 20-year ground lease of the area and subject to relevant planning give it permission to build a base for its activities. The lease would be on a peppercorn basis (£1 if demanded). Each party would be responsible for their own legal and other costs. The tenant would be responsible for all outgoings associated with build and the land on which it stood, including boundaries. The lease would not be available for assignment and would revert to ESC in the event the Men's Club folded. Other terms and conditions would be as agreed with officers. Due to the low-lying land no parking on site would be allowed.

Cabinet gave its full support for the proposals within the report, particularly welcoming the impacts of Men's Shed activities on aspects of user's health and wellbeing, such as decreased levels of depression and increased confidence. Cabinet also welcomed the benefits that Men's Sheds brought to local communities.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism thanked officers for their work.

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

RESOLVED

That Woodbridge Rotary be offered a new 20-year ground lease of the land, outlined red on the attached plan at Appendix C of the report, at a peppercorn rent and given a licence to construct a men's shed to a specification agreed by East Suffolk Council Planning and Asset Management.

12 Exempt/Confidential Items

The Leader reported 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, the Leader reported, 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 had two substantive exempt matters to consider as outlined on the published agenda – items 14 and 15.

Item 14 related to the Romany Lane Traveller Site and outlined proposals for its future management and investment, including the agreement of a preliminary investment programme to improve standards on the site.

Lastly, item 15 related to a proposed Mix Tenure Residential Development in Lowestoft. This was an opportunity to deliver nine new homes utilising a brownfield site. The report outlined the options for the future development of the site and made recommendation for the appointment of a main contractor to design and build the new homes. Subject to detailed design, the build specification for the project would incorporate sustainable innovation such as air source heat pumps, PV panels, electric charging points and water butts. The units were expected to meet an EPC rating of B, as a minimum requirement.

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

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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

13 Exempt Minutes

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

14 Romany Lane Traveller Site – future management and investment

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

15 Mix Tenure Residential Development – Stanley Road, Lowestoft

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

The meeting concluded at 8.05 pm

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Chairman