

**Confirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Full Council** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Wednesday, 22 February 2023 at 6:30 pm**

**Members present:**

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Chris Blundell, Councillor Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw, Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Alison Cackett, Councillor Jenny Ceresa, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Steve Gallant, Councillor Tess Gandy, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Ray Herring, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Stuart Lawson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor James Mallinder, Councillor Chris Mapey, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Carol Poulter, Councillor Russ Rainger, Councillor Mick Richardson, 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:**

Chris Bally (Chief Executive), Kate Blakemore (Strategic Director), Lewis Boudville (Transport, Infrastructure and Parking Services Manager), Andy Jarvis (Strategic Director), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Sue Meeken (Labour Political Group Support Officer), Brian Mew (Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Tom Potter (Press and Publicity Officer), Dickon Povey (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Lorraine Rogers (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Isabel Rolfe (GLI Political Group Support Officer), Julian Sturman (Specialist Accountant (Capital and Treasury Management)) and Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager).

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**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Cooper, Janet Craig, Mike Deacon, Richard Kerry, Frank Mortimer, Trish Mortimer, Mark Newton, Keith Patience and David Ritchie.

Apologies for absence were also received on behalf of Councillor Debbie McCallum, during the meeting.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Andree Gee declared an Other Registerable Interest during the consideration of Item 13 - Halesworth and Oulton Neighbourhood Plans, as she was the Council's representative on the Broads Authority, which was responsible for part of the Oulton Ward.

## **3 Minutes**

Councillor Fisher stated that he had given apologies on behalf of several Members of the GLI Group, as they had needed to leave the meeting at around 8.30pm. However, this had not been included within the Minutes and he proposed that this be included and his proposal was duly seconded by Councillor Topping.

There followed some debate in this respect, during which Mr Bing, Monitoring Officer, advised that Minutes were not a verbatim record of a meeting. Members also noted that the time that the GLI Members had left the meeting, had been recorded later in the Minutes.

Upon being put to the vote, it was

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2023 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **4 Announcements**

### **The Chairman of the Council**

#### Full Council Meeting on 23 November 2022 – Motion about Water Quality Issues

The Chairman reminded Members that Councillor Byatt had submitted a Motion to the last Full Council meeting on 23 November 2022, regarding concerns about water quality issues and sewage leaks. The Motion had been amended at the meeting and Members had voted unanimously to support it.

The Chairman stated that she had now received a letter from Peter Simpson, Chief Executive of Anglian Water, which outlined their commitment to protect, restore and improve the region's environment. The letter had been circulated to all Members for information.

#### Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal

The Chairman reported that the death toll from last week's earthquake was in excess of 41,000, since the 7.8 magnitude quake had struck. In Turkey alone, it had been estimated that one million people lost their homes and 80,000 people were in

hospitals, many of which were badly damaged in the quakes, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Together, the Mayors and Chairs of Suffolk wished to help raise awareness of the need for aid and of the appeal being made by the Disasters Emergency Committee. The unbearable scenes from Turkey and Syria had affected everyone and it was almost impossible to imagine the devastation to life and communities on such an enormous scale.

The Chairman encouraged people to donate to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal, which would help provide urgent aid to those in most need. Any donation, no matter how small, would help. To donate, please visit the Disasters Emergency Committee Website.

### Civic Events

Since the last meeting, the Chairman had attended the Lowestoft Holocaust Memorial Day Service at Lowestoft Railway Station on 27 January 2023.

## **Leader of the Council**

### Ukraine

Friday, 24 February 2023, was the anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many lives had been lost and many more citizens had seen their lives, homes and opportunities destroyed. Residents of East Suffolk had been and will continue to do all they could to support those affected and displaced by this tragic conflict. The Leader invited Members to join him in condemning the ongoing actions of the Russian aggressors.

### New Strategic Director - Kate Blakemore

The Leader was delighted to welcome Kate Blakemore, newly appointed Strategic Director to East Suffolk. Kate brought with her a wealth of experience, having previously been a Strategic Director with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, a role she held for over five years and prior to that, she was Great Yarmouth's Head of Transformation.

The LGA Peer Review of the Council, which took place in 2022, had indicated that whilst East Suffolk was making excellent progress as an authority, it lacked sufficient capacity and resilience at a senior level. Members were very pleased to have appointed someone of Kate's calibre and track record of success into this key role. The Leader then invited Kate to say a few words.

Kate took the opportunity to thank everyone for her warm welcome, she had received a very good induction so far and she could see that everyone really cared about East Suffolk.

## **Cabinet Members**

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, provided an update on the support that was available via the East the Squeeze project. It was noted that 592 referrals for help had been received so far. Members noted that grants of £4,500 were available to set up Community Pantries and the Field to Fork project provided free gardening and growing kits to help people grow their own food. Further information about these projects would be provided later in the year.

### **Chief Executive**

There was no announcement from the Chief Executive.

## **5 Questions from the Public**

No questions have been submitted by the electorate as provided by Council Procedure Rule 8.

## **6 Questions from Members**

The Chairman reported that seven questions from Members had been received, as provided by Council Procedure Rule 9. In accordance with the Constitution, there was 30 minutes in total, allocated for Member Questions. To ensure that there was sufficient time, the Chairman stated that all questions would be taken as read and she asked that any Supplementary Questions were brief and to the point.

She also took the opportunity to remind Members that they were welcome to speak to the relevant Cabinet Member, should they have any questions, and they did not need to wait for the next Full Council meeting.

a) Question submitted by Councillor Janet Craig to Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, IT and Operational Partnerships

‘100 car parking spaces in Sudbury and Stowmarket have been covered in solar panels to help power two Council owned Leisure Centres and provide Electric Vehicle charging points for Leisure Centre users, providing a useful income stream. This was achieved using part funding from two Government schemes.

This sounds like a positive move to support not only residents but also the visitor economy, so what is there to prevent this Council from following the example from colleagues in Babergh & Mid-Suffolk and applying to these two sources of grant funding (Getting Building Fund and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme). We could then do something similar at our Leisure Centres, and also potentially expand the existing EV provision at other Council premises?’

Response from Councillor Burroughes, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, IT and Operational Partnerships

As Councillor Craig had given apologies for the meeting, a written response would be provided to her question outside of the meeting.

b) Question submitted by Councillor David Beavan for Councillor Richard Kerry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing

‘Your Housing Strategy 2017 to 2023 aimed to increase our council house stock from 4,479 to 5,200. How is that coming along?’

N.B. As Councillor Kerry had given his apologies for the meeting, this question was answered by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, instead.

Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

The Council was committed to increasing the number of homes within its stock to enable more residents to access genuinely affordable housing.

Since the inception of the Housing Strategy, and despite two years of pandemic and financial crisis, East Suffolk Council had, from a standing start, built 105 properties, had a further 4 projects consisting of 83 properties that have Planning Permission, 3 projects consisting of 17 properties that have a Planning Application submitted and 3 projects consisting of 19 properties, which have had a Positive Pre-Application. A further 5 projects consisting of 32 properties have Cabinet approval and were awaiting a planning application.

There were also 11 ‘live’ projects which were on-going, and they were at an initial consideration stage. These included 2 Acquisition Projects (including S106) consisting of 16 properties, 2 Redevelopment Projects consisting of 10 properties and 7 New Build Projects consisting of 94 properties.

This was a total of 22 projects, which comprised 271 properties, which were currently being managed by the Council’s in-house Development Team.

On average, this Council sells 24 properties a year through the Right to Buy scheme.

There were competing demands for the funds and officer resources, within the Housing Revenue Account. These included important safety improvements as a result of the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act, ambitions to improve the energy efficiency of the Council’s stock to ensure all properties reached EPC C by 2030 and net zero by 2050, as well as also continuing to develop additional properties. Therefore, later in the year, the Council would be embarking on a review of its Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, which was essential to consider the long-term options available, how these could be afforded and how to continue to re-pay the HRA debt. This work would involve scenario testing to understand what was and was not affordable. The outcome of this work would be presented to Members for consideration, before a new Business Plan was written and presented to Full Council for approval.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Beavan

In December 2022, there were 4,433 houses in the Council's housing stock. This is less than we had in 2017, as more houses had been sold via the Right to Buy scheme than were built. The GLI proposes that 500 new homes will be built under the next Administration. Can we have your vote?

#### Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

No.

#### c) Question submitted by Councillor David Beavan for Councillor Norman Brooks, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport

'Four years ago, you agreed to apply for a resident's parking scheme in Southwold. How is that coming along?'

#### Response from Councillor Brooks, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport

The kerb-space management schemes for Framlingham, Lowestoft and Southwold that were to be funded from 'SCC's On-street Parking Account (OSPA)', were designed in Spring 2021, following preliminary engagement with district councillors and representatives of the town councils but not Lowestoft TC.

The scheme proposals were submitted to SCC in July 2021, requesting written consent to proceed with the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process. Following its technical evaluation, SCC has recently provided the necessary written consent.

The programme for engagement with district councillors, representatives of the town councils and relevant local disabled groups, business etc. was to be determined, therefore, relevant councillors and town councils have been invited to re-engage about the next steps of the process and to review their respective scheme's proposals. The reviews will lead to further iterations of the parking management scheme proposals to ensure road safety, obstruction issues and the balance for parking demand in each locality remain valid.

The statutory process for making a TRO will then start and it will be this stage at which full public consultation will happen. Feedback from the statutory consultation will inform the final designs for the kerb-space management schemes in each of the three areas. Following this consent, a schedule is being developed to create parking schemes for all the towns across the entire district and Ward Members will be advised as soon as they have been completed.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Beavan

After 2 years of silence, I ask a question at Full Council and finally get an answer. This plan will not work, as you will stop tourists, shoppers and employees from parking on Southwold's Streets, for the benefit of second home-owners.

Response from Councillor Brooks, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport

The process is just starting, we need to let it progress.

d) Question submitted by Councillor David Beavan for Councillor Letitia Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism

‘Community transport is great for the retired but working age people and the young need buses operating all day. Rural transport was the number one priority when Community Partnerships were set up three years ago. It was still number one at last month’s rural “Ease the Squeeze” workshop. How is that coming along?’

Response from Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism

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In September 2020 the Community Partnership Board agreed to establish a Transport and Travel Task Group with Members and officers from ESC, SCC, Transport East, SALC, CAS, EDF and a local community enterprise.

The Group had developed a twin track approach:

Short Term activities included:

- i) identify, develop and seed/match fund pilots to test ‘proof of concept’ and assess their viability to be scaled up across the area
- ii) Develop a 3-year work programme
- iii) Enlist a programme manager (provided by EDF)
- iv) Develop a programme delivery budget, focused on short-term deliverables

Medium – Long term activities included:

- i) Study transport and travel issues & gaps in East Suffolk to provide data and intelligence on which to base future work.
- ii) Work with strategic partners to redesign parts of the system, and collectively lobby to influence change.

Progress for the Short Term activities:

- In July, a new community transport pilot launched. Operated by BACT, “Buzzabout” was a bookable bus service for residents in Gunton, Somerleyton, Lound, Blundeston and St Olaves.
- SCC supported to pilot the KATCH Taxi bus between Framlingham, Wickham Market, Campsea Ashe Station. Funding used for fare subsidies and marketing. Launch affected by pandemic and lockdown and SCC stopped service at end of Pilot Stage.
- ESC currently developing a new demand responsive transport service with CATS, the local community transport operator, to serve residents living in the Wickham Market, Framlingham, Campsea Ash and Snape area.
- Relationship established with a local technology provider to explore the development of a mobile app which can help with booking transport. A workshop was held to scope out first version of the app to determine what features and functionality is required.
- Expressions of Interest in the “Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund” (DfT) submitted for £140,000. Bid focussed on the Demand Responsive Digital Application

project and increasing transport accessibility for rural communities. The bid was endorsed by Transport East but was unsuccessful due to high demand.

Progress for the Medium - Long Term activities:

- Transport East were fully participating in the Task Group and referred to the work underway in East Suffolk in their evidence on Rural Mobility to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee on 25 January 2023.
- An on-demand community transport service in the Leiston area was being considered. The service would serve Leiston, Knodishall, Friston, Benhall, Saxmundham, Theberton and Kelsale and be developed once the transport app has been introduced.
- Intention to scale up any successful pilots, subject to finding a sustainable funding model.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Beavan

Two years ago, I had an oven ready project for an electric bus to support Southwold. It was an innovative scheme, with a full business plan, which would cost only £30,000 a year to run. Have we missed the bus?

#### Response from Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism

The Transport and Travel Task and Finish Group have looked at all of the issues in detail and come up with some innovative solutions to providing additional demand led transport. I cannot agree with you that we have missed the bus.

#### e) Question submitted by Councillor Caroline Topping for Councillor Steve Gallant, Leader of the Council

'I am pleased to see that the government are now supplying the extra funding to cover the costs incurred by the new regulations around voters needing to supply photo ID at the next elections and onwards. What will be the new 'set up' of the polling stations bearing in mind this additional work? By set up I mean numbers of staff, how the actual environment will be arranged, how the information will be asked for and what will happen if the voter does not have the ID.'

#### Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

All funding will be covered by 'New Burdens Funding'. Staff numbers in polling stations will be increased where necessary and possible, using similar numbers to those used for elections during the pandemic. The physical set up of the polling stations will not change overall, as the need to request ID does not inherently change the flow of a polling station.

However, private rooms or private areas within the polling station will be available for those who request privacy to check ID. Mirrors will also be supplied for those who may need to replace full face coverings following the ID check.

Staff in the Polling Station will request the ID at the same time as asking for the voter's



name and address or taking their poll card. The elector will not be marked on the register until the photo ID has been checked and approved.

If a voter does not have one of the permissible types of photo ID, their details will be recorded on a new prescribed form and they will be asked to return with appropriate ID. A voter will not be allowed to vote without ID, there is no discretion for the polling staff on this point.

If and when the voter returns with ID, it will be recorded on the prescribed form and they will be able to cast their vote.

If the voter supplies photographic ID that does not demonstrate a good likeness or there are questions over the integrity of the ID, the Presiding Officer cannot accept that ID. The details will be recorded on a new prescribed form and the elector will be invited to come back with another piece of ID. They will not be able to vote unless the ID is accepted.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Topping

That was very illuminating, thank you. How will our polling station staff be trained and supported to deal with voters who may arrive without any ID, who then get angry when they cannot vote?

#### Response from Councillor Gallant Leader, Leader of the Council

Many things can aggravate people. However, our polling staff will be trained on how to deal with any issues that may arise at a polling station. They will also have back up, if necessary. The Police regularly visit polling stations on polling day and undertake patrols in the area. There has been lots of publicity about the need to have ID for this election.

This Council has already issued 120 forms for people who do not have the required photo ID. Also, if photo ID was out of date, it can still be accepted if the photograph was a good likeness of the elector.

#### f) Question submitted by Councillor Peter Byatt for Councillor Craig Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development

‘A two-page advertisement from Nuclear Waste Services was published In the Lowestoft Journal of 3rd February 2023, seeking possible locations for a Geological Disposal Facility. What stance does this Administration intend to take on the possibility of Nuclear Waste being buried underground in our District?’

#### Response from Councillor Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development

Thank you for this question. I hadn't seen the advert in the Lowestoft Journal until I reviewed it following receipt of your question.

The Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) siting process was centred on a consent based,

partnership approach. It was therefore up to individual interested parties and local authorities to decide whether to enter and then remain in the process. The development would only proceed if the community gave its consent through a test of support. East Suffolk Council has not made an expression of interest in relation to the siting of the GDF. There was no current intention to make such an express of interest.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Byatt

Other organisations in East Suffolk, such as Parish or Town Councils, may have considerable assets and they could make contact about this matter.

Response from Councillor Rivett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development

Communities can give an expression of interest. There were various steps to follow and there was support available when seeking to express an interest. However, there needs to be a well-informed debate about this matter.

N.B. Councillor Gandy arrived during the consideration of Question F, at approximately 7.02 pm.

g) Question submitted by Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte for Councillor David Ritchie, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management

‘Many local authorities in England are deciding to drop the questionable practice of allowing the submission of duplicate planning applications which, perhaps deliberately, confuses communities and obfuscates the consultation process. When will East Suffolk Council follow suit?’

N.B. As Councillor Ritchie had given apologies for this meeting, the Leader provided the answer to this question.

Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

The government’s Planning Practice Guidance sets out how the procedures for the determination of planning applications was undertaken.

Submitting duplicate applications was not common, including within East Suffolk, but the guidance refers to Section 70A(8) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which defines applications for planning permission as ‘similar’ if (and only if) the local planning authority thinks that the development and the land to which the applications relate were the same or substantially the same. The Council has received some criticism in the past that such duplicates create confusion for communities and there was a public perception that such submission give applicants an advantage in the planning process. This was not necessarily the case.

The guidance goes on to state “Where an authority considers that an application was similar, it was not automatically obliged to decline to determine the application. The purpose of these powers was to inhibit the use of ‘repeat’ applications that the local planning authority believes were submitted with the intention of, over time, wearing

down opposition to proposed developments. They were, however, designed to be flexible and to give local planning authorities the discretion to entertain 'repeat' planning applications where they were satisfied that a genuine attempt had been made to overcome the planning objections which led to rejection of the previous proposal or there had been a material change in circumstances."

As the guidance states it was at the discretion of the Council as to whether it should determine a duplicate application. The number of such applications was very low and had tended to be utilised by a small number of applicants and generally for major housing applications. If the duplicate was submitted on the same day as the first application then the fee for the planning application was 50% of the first application. However, in a number of recent cases the duplicate had been submitted at a later date, after the first application, so it attracted a 100% fee. Recent examples of income from such applications include a 70 dwelling pair of applications, generating two fees of £26,999. Another example was a development for 161 dwellings, generating two fees of £38,177.

In some circumstances the impact on officer time and resources to deal with a duplicate application, with two applications running together through the planning process, was far less than the impact of a later resubmission after a first decision. It should also be noted that when an applicant instead resubmits a new application within 1 year of a previous decision for the same site and development, there was no planning fee applicable to that, it was a completely free application. Resubmissions can therefore come at cost to the Council whereas duplicate submission generates a fee to cover the cost of officer time, which can be considerable in some cases.

#### Supplementary Question from Councillor Smith-Lyte

Since 6 April 2009, as part of Section 43 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, local authorities have had the option not to allow dual or twin applications and I would argue that it is not worth the extra officer time. My question is, is the prospect of additional fees, just too good?

#### Response from Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council

I have already provided an answer about money and officer time, I have nothing further to add.

## **7 Petitions**

No petitions have been received as provided by Council Procedure Rule 10.

## **8 Notices of Motion**

The Chairman reported that 1 Notice of Motion had been accepted for this meeting. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.4, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and the Leaders of the Opposition Groups met to discuss the Motion and agree a way forward. The recommendation

from this meeting was that the Motion would be discussed this evening. The Chairman therefore proposed from the Chair that this Motion be discussed this evening, which was seconded by Councillor Cook. The Chairman invited Members to vote on the proposal to debate the Motion this evening and it was unanimously **CARRIED**.

The Chairman invited Councillor Beavan to read out his Motion:

*Saving our Coastal Communities*

*This Council Notes:*

- *Following the likely implementation of the Second Homes 100% premium, it is anticipated that the council tax income resulting from the 4,096 second homes in East Suffolk will increase East Suffolk Council revenue by well over £700k. We acknowledge that the exact figure will be dependent on customer behaviour.*
- *The Second Homes 100% premium is also anticipated to increase council tax income of £5.85m for the Suffolk County Council and £1m for the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner.*
- *That Norfolk County Council have previously given a portion of the council tax they collected on second homes back to the District Council to fund local regeneration and community projects. North Norfolk District Council's November Cabinet recommended that if this premium is introduced, 'the additional income would be ring-fenced for affordable housing'[1], using new council tax to protect their communities.*

*This Council resolves to:*

- *Explore the option of ringfencing this additional income to fund Community Land Trusts to provide local social housing for rent in the wards affected by second homes.*
- *As per the precedent set by Norfolk County Council, to reach out to Suffolk County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner to explore the possibility of working together to utilise the entire increase in council tax income to provide local social housing.*

*[1] Printed minutes: Agenda for Council on Wednesday 16th November 2022, 6pm.*

The Chairman invited Councillor Beavan to move his Motion and say a few words in support.

Councillor Beavan reported that people in his Ward were better off than most in East Suffolk and they contributed three times the average, per person, in council tax. Southwold residents have broad shoulders and do not complain about helping other less well-off Wards. However, there were some people in Southwold who were not so well off. There were few private rents, as landlords preferred to earn more as holiday lets, house prices were 21 times the average wage and old Southwold families were being squeezed out and had to commute into work. In 2020, comparethemarket.com advertised Southwold as the top destination in England and Wales for investment in a second home.

Councillor Beavan reported that, according to the 2011 census, Southwold was the

coastal community with the highest proportion of household spaces with no usual residents, 50%, in the whole of England and Wales. By the 2021 census, this had increased to 63% and nearly two out of three houses were not lived in. In contrast, the average rate in England and Wales as a whole, for household spaces with no usual residents, was just 4.4%.

In Southwold, there were now 500 second homes, 400 holiday lets and just 500 homes with residents. The second homes in Southwold alone would raise an extra £1 million a year in tax, from doubling second home taxes. That million would mean an extra £140,000 for the extra policing in Southwold, how can that be justified? It would also mean an extra £770,000 to Suffolk County Council for all the extra potholes caused and the social care, needed by these second homes. This would leave just £90,000 for East Suffolk, to mitigate the real damage caused to Southwold's disappearing community, through lack of affordable housing.

Councillor Beavan reported that second home-owners themselves agree that the extra tax should be used to save the community. Southwold's population had dropped by another third this century and there were now less than 1000 residents, most of whom were retired. Southwold really needs homes for young working families, to boost the community and economy. There are ten years left. If there was no community, will workers be bussed in from outside? There would be no need for the local school, no arts centre, no parades, no fishermen, no sport and no banter. Will tourists want to visit a soulless, toy town where no one lives anymore? If the tourism collapsed, this extra income would disappear and Southwold would not be able to contribute to the General Fund, as now. He urged Members to support this Motion so that Southwold could be saved for future generations.

Councillor Beavan then moved his Motion and this was seconded by Councillor Daly, who reserved his right to speak. The Chairman then invited Members to debate.

Councillor Cook stated that this was a pre-emptive Motion, as the required legislation had not yet been passed, therefore, the Council was only able to make a decision in principle about this matter. In respect of the figures quoted in the Motion, Councillor Cook explained they were only informative, as the funds would only be counted when the money had been received by the Council. It was noted that the Council was not bound by the decisions of other Councils and East Suffolk would need to act in the best interests of the district.

Councillor Cook then proposed an amendment to the Motion, which was also shown on screen. The proposed amendment was as follows:

*This Council resolves that:*

- a) Subject and subsequent to the necessary legislation passing through Parliament*
- b) Subject to this Council giving the appropriate notice to introduce the 100% Council Tax Premium on second and empty homes when such legislation is passed*

*This Council will recommend to the new administration that a significant and appropriate amount of funding will be invested in the Council's development and investment companies, at the current and appropriate rate of return, for the building*

*and / or acquisition of affordable and social housing.*

*This Council will further recommend to the new administration that Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to invest significant and appropriate amounts of funding in the Council's development and investment companies, at the current and appropriate rate of return, for the building and / or acquisition of affordable and social housing.*

Councillor Cook then moved the amendment, which was seconded by the Leader.

The Chairman invited Members to debate the amendment.

Councillor Beavan confirmed that he was content with the proposed amendment and would support it. There followed some discussion and it was noted that the amendment provided an opportunity for the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner to invest in society.

The Chairman invited Members to vote on the amendment and it was unanimously **CARRIED**. The amendment then became the substantive Motion.

The Chairman then invited Members to debate the substantive Motion.

Councillor Daly stated that he welcomed the Motion and commented that social housing was desperately needed throughout the district.

Councillor Jepson reported that he was the Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel and they had recently agreed an increase to the PCC precept of £14 which equated to 6%, to support Suffolk Police. It was noted that whilst social housing was important, the Police and Crime Commissioner would need to ensure that a good policing service was provided to all Suffolk residents too.

Councillor Lynch noted that funding would need to be looked at in more detail, once the final figures were known and the legislation was in place. Other matters, such as training and jobs, were crucial to the district and these should not be overlooked.

The Leader confirmed that many issues were important to the district - policing, jobs, education, health, transport and housing. All of these issues were competing for the limited amount of funding available. These matters would all need careful consideration in due course.

There being no further debate, the Chairman invited Members to vote on the Motion and it was unanimously **CARRIED**.

## **9 General Fund Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24**

Full Council received report **ES/1457** by Councillor Cook, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources. The report presented a General Fund Budget for 2023/24, the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as of February 2023 and the

## Council Tax Resolutions.

Councillor Cook reported that the MTFS and the proposed Budget had been the subject of extensive updating, scrutiny, and consultation over the course of this year's budget process, with the Final Local Government Finance Settlement announced on 6 February 2023. Overall, the Settlement was favourable to the Council, with a new Funding Guarantee Allocation which increased the funding to ESC by £1.1m for next year, plus another one-year allocation of New Homes Bonus of £0.447m.

Alongside the 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement the Government had announced £100m Council Tax Support Funding for local authorities to provide further support to households already receiving Council Tax Support. This report set out the Council's proposed approach for distributing these funds.

Members noted that the report also detailed the award of a range of Discretionary Rate Reliefs proposed for 2023/24, including a continuation of the Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure Rate Reliefs.

Councillor Cook reported that the 2023/24 referendum limit for Council Tax had been increased from 2% to 3%, but the £5 threshold for Shire Districts in two-tier areas remained. The report proposed a Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk of £181.17 for 2023/24, an increase of £4.95 or 2.81%. Appendix A presented the updated Budget and MTFS, which reflected the Final Local Government Finance Settlement and included more detail on the Budget and budget movements, and detail on reserves and balances. The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy in Appendix B needed to be approved annually, with planned use of the flexibility in 2023/24 of £1m for the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood project.

It was noted that Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 placed a personal duty on the Chief Finance Officer to make a report to Council about the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the Council Tax calculations and the adequacy of reserves and balances. The Report of the Chief Finance Officer was provided in Appendix C, and the Act required the Council to have regard to this report, before it made its budget and council tax decisions. The Chief Finance Officer's conclusion was that the estimates were robust, taking into account known risks and mitigating strategies, and the reserves were adequate for the 2023/24 Budget plans. The Council had a statutory requirement to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year and the Statement to be approved for 2023/24 was provided in Appendix D.

It was noted that the formal Council Tax Resolutions for 2023/24 were set out in Appendix E. In addition to the Council's own Council Tax Requirement, this Appendix provided the Band D Council Tax for Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk, and the Parish Precept requests by each individual Parish.

Councillor Cook stated he was pleased to confirm that the report presented a balanced position for the current year and 2023/24. To ultimately balance the budget in 2022/23, £1.098m had been used from the In-Year Savings Reserve. A key factor in balancing the budget for 2023/24 had been the deferral of Business Rates system changes until 2025/26 at the earliest, as East Suffolk was in an advantageous position under the current system. Due to the level of Business Rates income for 2023/24, use

of reserves to balance the budget had not been required, and the Council was actually in a position to make a contribution to reserves of £2.46m.

In the MTFS, considerable increased expenditure and income pressures were being dealt with by a combination of measures, including a thorough analysis of current and projected savings, and the release of a number of earmarked reserves into the General Fund. It should be noted that there were prospective activities not yet factored into the MTFS, which had the potential to make inroads into the budget gap towards the end of the MTFS period. These include Council Tax Premium on second homes and expected efficiencies from East Suffolk Services Ltd. However, despite these factors, and the uncertainty due to local government finance reforms, the range and scale of expenditure and income pressures, indicate that a combination of actions would be needed to ensure a longer-term sustainable position including a phased use of reserves, maximisation of income and the achievement of savings.

The Chairman invited questions to Councillor Cook.

Councillor Herring sought reassurance that there would be no reduction in front line services for residents, whether the service be provided directly by the Council or via ESSL contractual arrangements, as a result of this budget. Councillor Cook confirmed that the budget had been prepared without any reductions to services or restrictions to the Capital Programme.

Councillor Pitchers drew Members' attention to page 58, paragraph 4.33 which referred to the uncertainty surrounding the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and he asked for some clarification. Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer, reported that the NHB was subject to consultation last year, however, the government had not yet provided a response. It was anticipated that a response would be provided in the next financial year.

Councillor Gooch referred to the recruitment crisis in local government and the need to find and retain high quality, experienced staff in order to provide services to residents. She asked if the government understood the difficulties and costs involved in attracting and retaining staff? Councillor Cook reported that the Council had budgeted for a full complement of staff and would approach outside agencies, if appropriate.

Councillor Byatt queried pages 55 and 56 of the report and requested further information on the current level of arrears for both Council Tax and Business Rates. Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer, confirmed that those figures were not included in the report under consideration, however, they were reviewed regularly by the Anglia Revenues Partnership. He confirmed that information on arrears would be circulated to Members outside of the meeting, for information.

Councillor Byatt then sought further information on the cost of the strike at Felixstowe Port, which was referenced on page 59. Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer, advised that the total costs was referred to in paragraph 5.24 and that the cost was approximately £200,000 of lost income.

Councillor Byatt then queried the Customer Experience Strategic Plan and asked if the



Customer Services Centres would be extending their opening hours in the future? Councillor Burroughes, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, ICT and Commercial Partnerships, stated that there were no plans to extend opening hours currently, however, working practices were under constant review. He confirmed that he could speak to Councillor Byatt outside of the meeting, if he so wished.

Councillor Byatt drew Members' attention to page 86 and the £20,000 allocated for Local Air Quality Management. He asked if the fumes coming from Pakefield High School could be assessed, as it had been a problem for around 6 months. Councillor Cook responded that he was sure that the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment had taken note of his request.

Councillor Cook then moved the recommendations within the report and was seconded by the Leader, who reserved his right to speak.

The Chairman invited Members to debate.

Councillor Bird, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, provided reassurance that the budget had been scrutinised in detail by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 19 January 2023. He stated that the level of arrears had been robustly questioned and he had been satisfied with the answers provided by officers. The minutes from that meeting would provide the further detail, if required.

Councillor Beavan stated that he supported the budget and he confirmed it had been thoroughly scrutinised, as stated by Councillor Bird. Councillor Beavan felt that the Council was raising as much funding as it could via Council Tax, however, he was concerned about some service levels, especially within Planning. He also raised the issue of reserves, as the Council had inherited health reserves when it was created, however, the trend with reserves was always downwards and reserves would be used to support the budget over the next 3 years. He stated that the need to maintain healthy reserve levels, during these uncertain times, was something that Councillors ought to keep an eye on.

The Leader thanked Councillor Cook and his Financial Team for their ongoing hard work and for providing a balanced budget for 2023/24. He also wished to thank all Members, as they all played a part in the financial security of the Council, due to the decisions taken at Committee meetings, which impacted upon Council spending. He stated that Members should be proud of the budget, which was prudent and robust.

Councillor Cook took the opportunity to thank and congratulate Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer, and Mrs Rogers, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, and the Finance Team, who all played a crucial role in setting the budget. In response to Councillor Beavan's comments regarding reserves, Councillor Cook stated he was certain that Councillor Beavan would have been pleased to hear that £2.5 million had been added to the reserves this year, which would contribute to closing the budget gap over the next 4 years, helping to ensure future Council Tax increases were less than 3%.

The Chairman invited Mr Bing, Monitoring Officer, to undertake the Recorded Vote for this item. The results of the Recorded Vote are shown below:

**For the recommendations:**

Councillors P Ashdown, E Back, D Beavan, S Bird, C Blundell, E Brambley-Crawshaw, N Brooks, S Burroughes, P Byatt, A Cackett, J Ceresa, J Cloke, M Cook, L Coulam, T Daly, J Fisher, S Gallant, T Gandy, A Gee, T Goldson, L Gooch, T Green, C Hedgley, R Herring, M Jepson, S Lawson, G Lynch, J Mallinder, C Mapey, M Pitchers, S Plummer, C Poulter, R Rainger, M Richardson, C Rivett, K Robinson, M Rudd, L Smith, R Smith-Lyte, E Thompson, C Topping, S Wiles and K Yule.

**Against the recommendations:**

None.

**Abstentions:**

None.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Chief Financial Officer's report attached at Appendix C be noted;
2. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2026/27, including the General Fund Revenue Budget revised for 2022/23; the proposed budget for 2023/24; and forecast budgets for 2024/25 to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A5 be approved;
3. That the movements to and from Earmarked Reserves and the General Fund Balance for 2022/23 to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A7 be approved;
4. That the items to be treated as special items in 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 3.20 – the precepts by Town/Parish Councils and parish meetings be approved;
5. That no further changes are made to Council Tax Discounts and Premiums for 2023/24;
6. That the distribution of Council Tax Support funding under s13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as outlined in paragraph 3.6 be approved;
7. That the Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer be granted delegated authority to award any further council tax reliefs in 2023/24 arising from Government announcements under these powers;
8. That a Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk Council of £181.17 for 2023/24, an increase of £4.95 or 2.81% be approved;
9. That the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy attached as Appendix B be approved;
10. That the Pay Policy Statement set out in Appendix D be approved;
11. That the Council Tax Resolutions in Appendix E be approved;
12. That the award of 75% relief on rates bills up to £110,000 per business to eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties using its discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended be approved;
13. That the award of rate reliefs under the Supporting Small Business (SSB) scheme using its discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended be approved;
14. That, for 2023/24, awards of Discretionary Rate Relief to Charities, Non-Profit Making Organisations, (NPMOs) and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CAS) continue to disregard the value of Covid-19 Grant funding from the value of unrestricted reserves and operating surpluses be approved;
15. That the Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer be granted delegated

authority to award any further rate reliefs in 2023/24 arising from Government announcements under these powers.

## **10 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Report 2023/24 to 2026/27**

Full Council received report **ES/1458** by Councillor Cook, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Councillor Kerry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing. It was noted that as Councillor Kerry had given his apologies for the meeting, Councillor Cook would be presenting the report.

Councillor Cook stated that this report brought together the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27, with a forecasted position for 2022/23 and a summary of its reserves and balances. The HRA budgets were fully funded from existing funds to meet the Council's HRA spending plans, including the Capital Investment Programme and reserve balances as per the HRA Financial Business Plan. Under the 2020 Rent Standard, Local Authorities could increase rents by up to CPI +1%. The September CPI value must be used, which for 2022 was 10.1%. To protect current tenants the Government had applied a 7% rent increase cap for 2023/24, which struck a balance between the pressures social housing providers were faced with and affordability for tenants. East Suffolk Council was proposing a 6% rent increase for 2023/24. This rent increase was deemed necessary for the HRA to meet its ambitions within its Capital Programme, deliver required services to tenants and continue to repay the debt.

Councillor Cook reported that social rents were based on a formula rent set by government and affordable rents, although they could be up to 80% of market rent, were set based on the Local Housing Allowance. The Council continued to collect rent and service charges on a 50-week basis, unless being let as Temporary Accommodation. The proposed rent gave an average weekly rent of £96.28 for 2023/24, which was an increase of £3.89 compared to 2022/23. It was noted that service charges could only recuperate the cost of providing a service. The proposed average 50-week General Service Charge for Grouped Homes for 2023/24 was £16.10, which was an increase of £1.53 compared to 2022/23.

The budget proposals gave a forecast HRA working balance for 2023/24 of £2.903 million, maintaining it above the minimum acceptable limit of 10% of total income. It was noted that the HRA Budget had been considered and debated at the following Council Meetings:

- Cabinet on 3 January 2023
- Scrutiny Committee 19 January 2023
- Cabinet on 7 February 2023, following the review from the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman invited questions to Councillor Cook.

Councillor Beavan sought clarification regarding the £8 million that would need to be repaid to tenants, due to incorrect rents being charged, and where the funding would come from? Councillor Cook invited Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer and Section 151

Officer, to respond to this question. Mr Mew stated that approximately £8 million would need to be repaid to tenants and the DWP. This funding had been accounted for and had been factored into the available balances and reserves shown in the budget figures.

There being no further questions, Councillor Cook moved the recommendations and was seconded by the Leader, who reserved his right to speak.

There being no debate, the Leader thanked the Housing Team for their ongoing hard work during extremely challenging circumstances. The proposed HRA budget report was a good result for all involved.

Councillor Cook thanked Ms Fisk, Head of Housing, and her team, as well as Ms Wellham from Finance for all of their ongoing hard work.

Upon being put to the vote it was

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the draft HRA budget for 2023/24, and the indicative figures for 2024/25 to 2026/27 be approved;
2. That the Movements in HRA Reserves and Balances be approved;
3. That the proposed rent increase of up to 6%. 1% less than the Government 7% rent Cap for 2023/24 rent setting be approved.
4. That the service charges and associated fees for 2023/24 be approved;
5. That the Rent and Service Charges to be charged over a 50-week period unless being used for Temporary Accommodation when a 52-week period will be applied.
6. That a report be made to the Environment Task Group within 12 months setting out a detailed programme to deliver HRA Housing Stock retrofitting projects.
7. That the revised outturn position for 2022/23 be noted;
8. That the changes affecting public and private sector housing and welfare be noted;
9. That the effects of the cost-of-living crisis to the HRA to be noted.

## **11 Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27**

Full Council received report **ES/1459** by Councillor Cook, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources. It was noted that as part of the annual budget setting process, the Council was required to agree a programme of capital expenditure for the coming four years. This report set out the East Suffolk Council General Fund Capital Programme at Appendix B and the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme at Appendix G for the financial year 2023/24 to 2026/27 and incorporated revisions to the 2022/23 financial year. Councillor Cook reported that Appendix H to the report were the pre-submitted Scrutiny Committee questions and responses.

It was noted that the Capital Programme had been compiled taking account of the following main principles, to:

- maintain an affordable four-year rolling capital programme.

- ensure capital resources are aligned with the Council's Strategic Plan.
- maximise available resources by actively seeking external funding and disposal of surplus assets; and
- not to anticipate receipts from disposals until they are realised.

The Capital Programme had completed a thorough and rigorous Officer process and had also been considered at the following Council meetings:

- Cabinet on 3 January 2023
- Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2023
- Cabinet on 7 February 2023, following the review by the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman invited questions to Councillor Cook.

Councillor Gandy drew Members' attention to Appendix A, page 187, which referred to Long Term Debtors in the Capital Programme £1 million in 2023/24, £5 million in 2024/25 and then £0 debts in 2025/26. She sought further information about the debtors and how the debts would be cleared? Mr Mew, Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer, provided clarification that these related to the 'pump priming' of the Local Authority Trading Company (LATCO), to support the business whilst it was starting, but that these technically needed to be referred as long term debtors.

Councillor Byatt referred to page 193 and sought reassurance that there was sufficient funding to ensure the coastal protection works at Thorpe Ness and Pakefield would be completed. Councillor Cook reported that the budget was in place, however, if revisions were required, a further report would need to be taken back to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Cook then moved the recommendations within the report, which was seconded by the Leader, who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Byatt thanked Councillor Cook and his Finance Team for all of their ongoing hard work for the Council. He stated that it would be interesting to see how East Suffolk Services Ltd would dovetail into the Council from July 2023 and he thanked the Cabinet Members and officers for their hard work.

The Leader thanked Councillor Byatt for his compliments. He stated that Members should be proud of what had been achieved within this report. There were funded opportunities to deliver a wide range of exciting projects for the residents of East Suffolk. The new administration, following the elections in May, would then deliver those projects for local residents.

Councillor Cook paid tribute to Mr Sturman, who led the Capital Programme and Treasury Management, and his team for all of their hard work. This Capital Programme was essential to the ethos of the Council, to prioritise projects for the benefit of residents and also ease the financial burden on the Council Tax payers.

Upon being put to the vote it was

**RESOLVED**

1. That the General Fund capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27, including revisions as shown in Appendix B, be approved.
2. That the Housing Revenue Account capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27, including revisions as shown in Appendix G, be approved.

## **12 Appointment of Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer**

Full Council received report **ES/1445** by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council. The Leader reported that the post of Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer role was a statutory requirement, in accordance with The Local Government Act 1972.

The Leader reported that the current post-holder, Brian Mew, had given notice of his intention to retire on 31 March 2023, following a wide and varied career across many local authorities and the private sector. Brian had worked in East Suffolk since 2017, initially as a Financial Consultant, and following the tragic and very sad circumstances surrounding the previous post-holder, Brian had joined the Council as Section 151 Officer in 2020.

During his time with East Suffolk, Brian had become a trusted and well-respected member of the Council's Corporate Management Team. He had overseen the last 3 budgets and, during a period of great uncertainty around local government finance had been pivotal to the leadership and good stewardship of the financial strategy and planning process. Members were very grateful for his work for the Council and wished him all the very best for the future.

In view of Brian's impending retirement, the Leader advised that arrangements must be made to cover the role until a permanent replacement could be found. Lorraine Rogers was the Council's Deputy Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Section 151 Officer and had worked for East Suffolk Council, and its predecessor councils, for 25 years. She currently worked closely with Brian and was well qualified, with extensive knowledge of the Council and its procedures, as well as being a member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. She was well respected within the organisation and a very capable senior financial manager. Since the Council was approaching its financial year end, it was proposed that the recruitment process would commence, once the busy year end procedures had calmed. It was therefore, envisaged that a new post-holder would be recruited within the next six months.

There being no questions, the Leader moved the recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Cook.

Councillor Cook stated that he wished to personally thank and pay tribute to Brian Mew. Since being in post, Brian had dealt with the huge impact on the Council involving Covid and the Cost of Living Crisis. He had ensured that Covid business support grants were paid out swiftly and over £350 million of payments had been processed by the Council. This much needed support had ultimately led to an increase in business rates receipts once lockdown ceased, which was evidenced by £2.5 million additional funding going into Council reserves this year. He stated that he had enjoyed working with Brian and he wished him a very happy and long retirement.

Councillor Cook stated that he enjoyed working with Lorraine Rogers, the current Deputy Chief Finance Officer. She had worked her way up through the ranks, was very well qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. She also had the confidence and full support of the Finance Team, so the Council would be in safe hands with her temporary appointment.

N.B. Councillor Brambley-Crawshaw left the meeting at this point in the proceedings at 8.19 pm.

There being no further comments, the recommendation was put to the vote and it was

### **RESOLVED**

That the temporary appointment of Mrs Lorraine Rogers to the post of Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer until a permanent replacement is recruited be approved.

## **13 Halesworth and Oulton Neighbourhood Plans**

N.B. Councillor Andree Gee declared an Other Registerable Interest during the consideration of this item, as she was the Council's representative on the Broads Authority, which was responsible for part of the Oulton Ward.

Full Council received report **ES/1461** by Councillor Ritchie, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management. This report was presented by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, as Councillor Ritchie had given apologies for the meeting.

It was noted that after several years of hard work from Halesworth Town Council, Oulton Parish Council and their respective communities, both Neighbourhood Plans had successfully passed their referendums on 2 February 2023. For Halesworth, 875 people voted (21.7% turnout) and 85% voted 'yes'. For Oulton, 535 people voted (13.7% turnout) and 85% also voted 'yes'.

Both Neighbourhood Plans had been built around wide engagement with the community and each had undergone several rounds of consultation. Each Neighbourhood Plan contained a distinctive shared vision for the Parish, which responded to the matters which were important to the community. Policies and actions were set out in each plan to help achieve their vision.

It was noted that Officers at East Suffolk Council and the Broads Authority had provided support and guidance to the Parish and Town Councils throughout the course of the development of the plans. The neighbourhood area for the Oulton neighbourhood plan covers part of the Broads Authority executive area. The Broads Authority would be making their own decision to 'make' the Oulton neighbourhood plan at the Broads Authority meeting on 7 March 2023.

The Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan addressed the matters of (amongst others):

- o Protecting green spaces and important views
- o Enhancing biodiversity
- o Supporting homes to meet local needs
- o Protecting heritage assets
- o Supporting tourism and employment
- o Delivering high quality design
- o Improving routes for pedestrians and cyclists
- o Enhancing the town centre

The Oulton Neighbourhood Plan addressed the matters of (amongst others):

- o Shaping delivery of homes to meet local needs
- o Securing high quality design
- o Safeguarding local green spaces and green corridors
- o Protecting important views and a special character area
- o Sustainable transport
- o Protecting heritage assets

The recommendation in the report was moved by the Leader and it was seconded by Councillor Rivett, who reserved his right to speak.

As there were no questions, the Chairman invited Members to debate.

Councillor Gooch commented that she was impressed by the scale and ambition within the Neighbourhood Plans, including the number of Green Principles. She took the opportunity to raise concerns about the viability of plans to building a swimming pool in Halesworth, due to the cost of energy.

Councillor Robinson took the opportunity to thank the public who had worked tirelessly over many years to produce these Neighbourhood Plans. Their dedication and hard work were very impressive.

Councillor Goldson referred to the swimming pool mentioned by Councillor Gooch and he confirmed that it would be designed with the local residents of Halesworth in mind, in particular older people and school children, as they would be using the facilities the most and an application would be submitted to the Planning Department shortly, for consideration. He then took the opportunity to thank officers for their support for the Neighbourhood Plans.

Councillor Mallinder commented he was pleased with the environmental aspects contained within the Neighbourhood Plans, which helped residents to have control over the destiny of their local area.

Councillor Gee endorsed the comments received in relation to the Oulton Neighbourhood Plan. It had been a labour of love and taken a significant amount of hard work to complete. She commented that the Broads Authority had discussed the matter and the Inspector had commented that it was one of the best Neighbourhood Plans that he had ever seen. During discussions, Councillor Gee also declared that she



had an Other Registerable Interest, as she was the Council's representative on the Broads Authority. Mr Bing, Monitoring Officer, confirmed that it was prudent to make such a declaration, as she had previously declared being the Council's representative on the Broads Authority as an Other Registerable Interest within her Declaration of Interests.

Councillor Byatt noted that electrical vehicle charging points were mentioned in both Plans and he wondered if the Council would look at economies of scale and engage with Town and Parish Councils to see if more charging points could be provided across the district? He also commended the thorough public consultations that had taken place in relation to both Plans.

Councillor Cackett wished to thank the residents of Halesworth and those involved in the creation of the Plan. She confirmed that the Plan was an important step towards getting much needed improvements undertaken in the Town. She also took the opportunity to thank Halesworth Councillor Joyce Moseley, for all of her hard work.

Councillor Rivett took the opportunity to commend the public involvement in the development of the Neighbourhood Plans. The public consultation process was extremely important and it was vital that local residents had the opportunity to feed in their views on their local areas. He commented that Supplementary Planning Documents would also greatly benefit from public input during the consultation process.

Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, took the opportunity to congratulate all those involved in the creation of these Neighbourhood Plan.

There being no further comments, the recommendation was put to the vote and it was

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Council make the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum version, February 2023) and the Oulton Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum Version, December 2022) part of the statutory Development Plan for East Suffolk for the whole of the Halesworth Neighbourhood Area and the part of the Oulton Neighbourhood Area within East Suffolk.

## **14 Cabinet Members' Report and Outside Bodies Representatives' Reports to Council**

Full Council received report **ES/1446**, which was presented by Councillor Gallant, Leader of the Council, and provided individual Cabinet Members' reports on their areas of responsibility, as well as reports from those Members appointed to represent East Suffolk Council on Outside Bodies. The Leader stated that the written reports could be taken as read and he invited relevant questions on their contents.

The Chairman invited questions to the Leader and the Cabinet.

Councillor Byatt took the opportunity to thank Councillor Mallinder, Cabinet Member

with responsibility for the Environment, for his support for a group involving Lowestoft Town Council, it had been much appreciated.

The meeting concluded at 8.33 pm

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Chairman