

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 14 June 2016 at 2.00 pm in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Ipswich.

Present: Councillors Colin Noble (Chairman), James Finch, Tony Goldson, Matthew Hicks, Beccy Hopfensperger, Christopher Hudson, Gordon Jones, Richard Smith MVO and Sarah Stamp

Also present: Councillors Mark Bee, Peter Beer, Mary Evans, John Field, Sandra Gage, Peter Gardiner, Len Jacklin, Sandy Martin, Guy McGregor, Graham Newman, Caroline Page, Bert Poole, Joanna Spicer, Jane Storey and David Wood.

Supporting officers present: Susan Cassedy (Democratic Services Officer).

At 2.00 pm the Cabinet paused for a minute of silence to remember all those who lost their lives in Orlando on Sunday, 12 June 2016.

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor James Finch declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 "Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021" by virtue of the fact that he was Chairman of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee.

Councillor Tony Goldson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 "Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021" by virtue of the fact that he was an appointed member of the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) and was currently Chairman of the Authority.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

5. Standing Item – Update from the Scrutiny Chairman

At Agenda Item 5 the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee provided the Cabinet with an update on recent Scrutiny activity.

Decision: The Cabinet noted the Scrutiny Update.

Reason for decision: The Cabinet recognised the importance of the Scrutiny function.

Comments by other councillors: There were no other comments.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None reported.

6. Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021

A report at Agenda Item 6 by the Director of Resource Management invited the Cabinet to endorse a plan to co-ordinate partnership activity for the nationally designated Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project area that sought to:

- Conserve and enhance its natural beauty and special qualities;
- Enable communities to become actively engaged in their environment;
- Support the economy by supporting new and established businesses; and
- Develop high profile facilities for everyone to enjoy.

Decision: The Cabinet approved and endorsed the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Reason for decision: Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required the relevant Local Authorities to “prepare and publish a plan which formulated their policy for the management of their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it”. The Management Plan would fulfil this duty for the next five years and help protect and enhance this important nationally designated asset and also an area to the north and west of the current designated AONB referred to as the Stour Valley.

Comments by other councillors: The Cabinet Member for Health advised that the IFCA controlled half of the river Stour the other half being controlled by Essex and Kent. He raised concern about land owners abusing their

permission to dig bait and the damage this may cause but noted that there was a land owner's voluntary code of conduct.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills commented that the Stour Valley landscape had changed little in the last 30 years which was a credit to all those involved and had great pleasure in supporting the report.

A Councillor congratulated officers and fully endorsed the proposals and stated what a magnificent return it was for such a small investment. He also noted the value it would bring to Suffolk.

A Councillor referred to the transfer of Clare Country Park which at the time was in a poor state. However the work to transform it had been guided by a voluntary group, guided by AONB staff, which had helped to foster the belief that the Park belonged to the people and she expressed her gratitude to officers.

A Councillor advised that although local authorities had to be careful about modern development in such areas, well designed development should not be ruled out completely.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: Councillor James Finch declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of the fact that he was Vice Chairman of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Chairman of Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee.

Councillor Tony Goldson declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of the fact that he was an appointed member of the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority and was currently Chairman of the Authority.

Dispensations: None reported.

7. Ipswich Park and Ride

A report at Agenda Item 7 by the Director of Resource Management invited the Cabinet to approve the proposed new operating model and then delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Member and Director to finalise and then implement the new arrangements. The Ipswich Park and Ride service currently operated with a £700K per annum subsidy from the tax payer. A working group had been exploring options to remodel the service to make it self-financing.

Decision: The Cabinet:

- i) approved the principles of the new operating model for the Ipswich Park and Ride bus service as set out in paragraph 25 of the report as follows:
 - a) The bus service will no longer be managed through a direct contract funded by the County Council, but instead operate a "commercial service" funded by the passengers.

- b) The service will split into two; Ipswich Buses operating the service from the London Road site and First Buses operating the service from the Martlesham site.
 - c) Both operators would reroute some of their existing commercial services to include a stop at the Park and Ride sites.
 - d) Both operators would provide additional vehicles on those routes, increasing the frequency of buses to ensure the service remains attractive to Park and Ride users.
 - e) The cost to passengers of catching a bus at a Park and Ride site would be unchanged (typically £2.50).
 - f) Car parking would be free for customers using the Park and Ride bus service.
 - g) The services would be clearly identified as a “Park and Ride” service.
 - h) Neither bus operator would require a subsidy from the tax payer.
- ii) delegated authority to the Director of Resource Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to finalise the arrangements for the new bus service, and organise the smooth transition from the existing arrangements to the new model; and
 - iii) delegated authority to the Director of Resource Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to undertake an options appraisal to determine the best use of the sites to minimise their net running costs, and implement that option.

Reason for decision: In February 2016 the Council approved the 2016/17 Council budget which included a requirement to review the Park and Ride service to *‘find savings during 2016-17, with the intention of the service being self-funding by 2017-18. If the service is not able to become self-financing then the Council will consider closing the entire operation in order to achieve the required savings’*. Since that time officers had worked with transport operators and other stakeholders to develop a solution. The project was now at a stage where Cabinet approval was required to move into the next stage of implementation.

Comments by other councillors: The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development recalled that some years ago discussion had taken place with regard to the high cost to run the Ipswich Park and Ride services and the challenge was given to officers to find solutions and that he was impressed with what was now being proposed. He noted that Ipswich Borough Council had endorsed the proposals and had commented that it could mean quicker journey times.

The Cabinet Member for Finance considered this to be a good news story that would provide an income stream which would help secure the future of the Park and Ride schemes. He also advised that if resources were able to be freed up these could be targeted to benefit the most vulnerable in society.

The Cabinet Member for Ipswich advised that he sat on the Ipswich Vision Board for which the communication levels were very positive. Members of the Ipswich Vision Board were anxious, willing and able to deliver the goals.

In response to a question from the Cabinet Member for Health, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport advised timings for bus journeys were a critical part of the plan and that changing from the dedicated bus service to using commercial bus routes showed indicative timings for Copdock to the centre of Ipswich increasing from 19 to 25 minutes. The bus operator was however proposing an increase in frequency from every 12 minutes to every 6/7 minutes. He emphasised that the time from when a service-user parked their car to when arriving at their destination could overall, be quicker than before.

The Cabinet Member for Communities welcomed that there would be no increase in cost to the service user, a decrease in cost to the tax payer, with a better service and that the Council was protecting, not cutting services.

In response to a councillor's comment that if this saving could be made why hadn't the proposal been implemented previously, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport advised that the bus operators had been providing a subsidised dedicated park and ride service which had now been challenged in order to provide a more effective service for less money. He also advised that the proposals had been put forward by the bus operators themselves.

A councillor expressed concern about what was actually being done in order to continue the service and the queues the proposals would lead to. In response the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport reiterated that the bus operators themselves, who understood their own business, had put forward the proposals and it was important to work together with them with regard to certain road junctions.

The councillor also raised concern about letters from other agencies with regard to the proposals not being included in the report and there being no timescales included in the report. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport confirmed that he had received a letter from the Leader of Ipswich Borough Council but had decided not to include this in the papers. He also acknowledged that he had received letters from the Ipswich Vision Board and the local MP. He advised that this was an 'in principal' paper and that the Council wanted to develop some detail before spending any money. The key element in the letter from Ipswich Vision was that all improvements should be implemented. The Council however, was not yet in a position to say they would all be implemented as it was still not known if all were worthy. In response the councillor questioned whether recommendations b) and c) were appropriate due to the uncertainty.

Councillors commented that the Ipswich Park and Ride services had become a challenge due to the number of low cost car parks in the town with one councillor also expressing concern with regard to emissions. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development advised that a car parking strategy was currently being written. The Cabinet Member for Highways

and Transport advised that this outline plan had come to Cabinet for it to then be integrated into the parking strategy for the town which both the County Council and Ipswich Borough Council were working towards.

A councillor congratulated the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and his officers for supporting Park and Ride but expressed concern about whether the use of bus passes would be permitted on the new services. In response the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport confirmed that as the services would utilise commercial bus operators, bus passes could be used. The councillor also queried which bus numbers the proposals included. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport advised that no decision had been made and options would be discussed in the following six months in order to provide the best routes and services.

In response to a councillor's question the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport advised that the contracts with the bus operators would ensure they adhered to the agreed frequency of buses so that they would work in everyone's favour. He advised that providing an Express Service was currently being debated to overcome some concerns with regard to peak times.

A councillor raised concern about the timeline and the notice period required to the current bus operators and asked if the Park and Ride would be closed if the necessary infrastructure improvements were not in place by January. He also asked if a decision paper would come back to Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport advised that no further report would come to Cabinet and he and his officers would be working with the bus companies to work out the detail. He advised that the Council was planning to give the six month notice period at the end of the month and the present a park and ride service would continue until the end of 2016. He confirmed that it was not the intention to close the park and ride services and if all went wrong and extra time was required, the decision would be reviewed and an extension considered.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None reported.

8. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 3.24 pm.

Chairman