

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 29 June 2016 at 10:00 am in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Ipswich.

Present: Councillors Mary Evans (Chairman), John Field (Vice Chairman), Mark Bee, Kathy Bole, John Burns, Jessica Fleming, Mandy Gaylard, Len Jacklin, Robin Millar, Graham Newman, David Ritchie.

Also present: Councillors James Finch, Sandy Martin, Bill Mountford and Richard Smith MVO.

Supporting officers present: Theresa Harden (Business Manager, Democratic Services) and Linda Pattle (Democratic Services Officer).

68. Public Participation Session

Councillor David Ellesmere, Leader of Ipswich Borough Council, spoke in the Public Participation Session in relation to the Call-In of a decision made by the Cabinet on 14 June 2016 concerning the Ipswich Park and Ride service (Minute No. 72 below refers). He said that the Borough Council was concerned about the future of the service. The Council considered that the best way of providing Park and Ride was by providing a dedicated service. However, the councillors were prepared to support the proposed new model which would not be a dedicated service, provided that infrastructure improvements were put in place before the service was changed. This approach had been supported by the Ipswich Vision Board.

Paragraph 29 of the report to the Cabinet had stated that “improvements may have to be implemented on a phased basis”. Therefore Councillor Ellesmere, Ben Gummer MP and Mark Pendlington, Chairman of the Local Enterprise Partnership, had emailed and written to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, stating their view that the necessary infrastructure changes must be undertaken before any changes were made to the service. At their meeting on 14 June the Cabinet Members had been made aware of an email from Councillor Ellesmere dated 10 June 2016 and of a letter from Mark Pendlington dated 13 June 2016. However, they had not been made aware of an email from Ben Gummer MP dated 13 June 2016. Councillor Ellesmere was concerned that the comments in these emails and letter had not been circulated to the Cabinet, despite a request that this should be done.

Councillor Ellesmere also expressed concerns about an article in the East Anglian Daily Times on 15 June 2016 which stated that the Leader of the County Council had said that Councillor Ellesmere had given the proposals “a ringing endorsement”, as this did not reflect the views set out in the letter he had asked to be circulated to the Cabinet.

A copy of the email from Ben Gummer MP dated 13 June 2016 and an extract from the East Anglian Daily Times of 15 June 2016 were circulated at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Councillor Ellesmere expressed the opinion that the Cabinet's decision-making process had not been as open as it should have been. Therefore he urged the Committee to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

69. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Trevor Beckwith, Councillor Peter Beer (substituted by Councillor Mark Bee) and from Councillor Sandra Gage (substituted by Councillor Mandy Gaylard).

70. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

71. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72. Call In of Cabinet Decision on Ipswich Park and Ride

The Committee considered a report at Agenda Item 5, setting out: a decision made by the Cabinet on 14 June 2016 in relation to Ipswich Park and Ride; the reasons why the decision had been called in; and the response by the Director of Resource Management to the call-in. The Committee was asked to consider whether the grounds for calling-in the decision (when considered against the principles set out in the County Council's Constitution (Part 2, paragraph 13.7)) were sufficient for the matter to be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

The Chairman welcomed the following people, who were asked to provide evidence:-

Councillor Sandy Martin, proposer of the call-in

Councillor Leonard Jacklin, seconder of the call-in

Councillor James Finch, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Aidan Dunn, Assistant Director, Procurement and Passenger Transport, Resource Management

Belinda Godbold, Business Development Specialist

Consideration of Call-In

On 14 June 2016, Agenda Item 7, to which this minute refers, was considered by the Cabinet. The Cabinet's decision was as follows:

- a) To approve the principles of the new operating model for the Ipswich Park and Ride bus service as set out in paragraph 25 of the Cabinet Report.
- b) To delegate 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.
- c) To delegate 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.

Decision: On a vote being taken, 10 members voted in favour of referring the decision back to the Cabinet and 1 member abstained.

The voting indicated that the majority view of the Committee was to refer the decision back to the Cabinet with a request that the Cabinet consider additional recommendations (as follows), in addition to those recommendations set out in the original report:-

- i) that a Memorandum of Understanding with bus operators be agreed before notice was served on the existing Park and Ride contract; and
- ii) to agree that, if the Park and Ride services had to close, consultation would take place and a further decision by Cabinet would be required.

Reason for decision:

Those members who were in favour of referring the matter back to Cabinet voted to do so in light of the evidence received:

- I. The Committee was concerned that paragraph 39 of the original Cabinet report set out the next steps to progress the project, but it did not make it clear in which order these steps would be taken. In light of the proposal to bring the new service into effect in January 2017, and the contractual requirement to give six months' notice, the Committee considered it was unclear from the information presented to the Cabinet whether notice would be served on the existing service before the viability of the replacement service had been established with the bus operators. The Committee received reassurances from the Cabinet Member and officers present at the meeting that notice would not be served on the existing Park and Ride contract (step e)) until steps a) to d) had been completed. However, the Committee did not consider that this had been made sufficiently clear in the original information presented to the Cabinet at the time of making its decision.
- II. The Committee noted the concerns raised by stakeholders that the principles set out in paragraph 25 of the original Cabinet report did not make it clear whether infrastructure improvements would be put in place before the new service commenced. Evidence presented to the Committee suggested these concerns had not been fully communicated to the Cabinet, despite a request from at least one stakeholder to do so.
- III. The original Cabinet report had acknowledged that "[bus] operators are unlikely to be prepared to operate the new model if these [infrastructure] changes are not made, otherwise the likely loss of passengers will mean the commercial operation will not be viable".
- IV. In the absence of any evaluation of the feasibility of the infrastructure improvements, or timescales associated with the works, the Committee considered it had not been possible for the Cabinet to know which improvements would be implemented or by when, and therefore come to an informed view about whether the proposal for the new service was viable. The Committee was therefore concerned that, in light of the

delegated authority agreed within the report for future decisions about implementation of the proposals, it was possible that the service could close without any further consultation or transparent decision making process.

- V. The Committee received assurances from the Cabinet Member and officers that the original Cabinet report did not give delegated power to the Directorate of Resource Management and Cabinet Member to close the service. However, the Committee considered this should have been made clear in the original Cabinet report.

Alternative options: The Committee could have rejected the call-in and endorsed the Cabinet decision process.

Declarations of interest: There were no declarations of interest.

Dispensations: None noted.

The meeting was adjourned from 11:25 to 11:40 am.

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman altered the order of business, as reflected in the minutes below.

73. Information Bulletin

The Committee received the Information Bulletin at Agenda Item 7.

74. Key Decision Forward Plan and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

At Agenda Item 8 the Committee considered the Key Decision Forward Plan and the Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

Decision:

The Committee agreed that at its meeting on 30 September 2016 it would scrutinise: the process for the East Anglian Devolution Proposal; and the implications of leaving the European Union for the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP). This would necessitate deferring its consideration of Supporting Lives Connecting Communities, of Blue Light Collaboration and of a Highways Contract progress update, all of which had previously been scheduled for September 2016. It was agreed that scrutiny of the Highways Contract update would take place on 20 December 2016.

Reason for decision:

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 30 June 2016 the East Anglian Devolution Proposal would be considered. If it was approved, a statutory public consultation would take place and the Council would meet again by no later than 28 October 2016 to make a final decision on the matter. The Committee wished to scrutinise the proposals once these became clear and prior to the final decision being made. Members thought it would be helpful to invite the chairmen of the scrutiny committees of district and borough councils in Suffolk to participate in the scrutiny.

In addition, as soon as possible the Committee wished to consider the consequences for NALEP of the recent referendum in favour of leaving the European Union.

Members considered that these two items took priority over the scrutiny subjects previously planned for September.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

The meeting was adjourned between 11:48 am and 1:00 pm. When the meeting reconvened, the following councillors were present: Councillors Kathy Bole, John Burns, Mary Evans, John Field, Jessica Fleming, Mandy Gaylard, Len Jacklin, Robin Millar, Graham Newman and David Ritchie.

75. Provision of library services in Suffolk

At Agenda Item 6 the Committee considered a report setting out how the County Council was delivering its statutory responsibilities in relation to library services, and the current opportunities and challenges faced by Suffolk Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Ltd.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the following external witnesses:

Alison Wheeler, Chief Executive, Suffolk's Libraries IPS Ltd
Tony Brown, Chair of Suffolk Libraries IPS Ltd
Peter Robinson, Friends of Thurston Library

The Chairman also welcomed the following County Council officers:

John Lewis, Assistant Director, Adult and Community Services
Richard Hunt, Head of Service Development, Culture, Libraries, Sport and Communities
Stephen Taylor, Development Manager, Libraries, Information and Culture

Richard Hunt and Stephen Taylor introduced the report. The witnesses were invited to make comments. Committee members had an opportunity to ask questions and comment on what they had heard.

Recommendations: The Committee agreed:

- a) To congratulate Suffolk Libraries and officers in Adult and Community Services on: the considerable progress made since 2011 when the Council decided to move away from the previous “in-house” approach and to establish Suffolk Libraries Industrial Provident Society Ltd in order to deliver library services in the county; and on the fact that nationally Suffolk Libraries have been described as the “gold standard” of a modern library service.
- b) To endorse Suffolk Libraries’ view that its role should be to improve the service by working with its staff to update the service offer and encourage more engagement with customers, communities and volunteers, and not be one of managing a decline in service.

- c) To recommend that a councillor should be given specific responsibility for library services in order to champion the interests of library users and represent the Council in discussions with Suffolk Libraries. Further, to recommend to that councillor that he or she should:
 - i) consider ways in which the Council could assist Suffolk Libraries to make the necessary contacts and gain support for developing opportunities to broaden the use of libraries, for example by siting post offices or job centres on the same premises; and
 - ii) consider how to encourage town, parish, district and borough councils to support their local libraries in developing their role as community hubs and making best use of community assets.
- d) In light of the role Suffolk Libraries played in helping the County Council to achieve its corporate priorities, to ask the Corporate Management Team to consider whether resources could be provided from within the corporate centre, on a fixed term basis, to assist in identifying commercial opportunities and developing a strategy to make Suffolk Libraries more sustainable, including investigating the possibility of seconding a staff member to work with Suffolk Libraries on a time limited project to help plan and evaluate service development options.
- e) To recommend to the Corporate Director for Children's and Adults Services that plans for the future development of rural provision should be expedited in light of the need for three active mobile library vehicles to be replaced in the next 12 to 18 months.
- f) To recommend to Suffolk County Council Commissioners that in discussions concerning extension or a re-tender of the Library Services contract, they explicitly recognise the emerging role of libraries as community hubs and catalysts for community engagement; and prioritise measures that promoted beneficial social and community outcomes, alongside the statutory duties of a Library Service.
- g) To highlight the importance of developing new ways of measuring the performance of library services, which were relevant and reflected the range of services and different ways of delivering services, in order to gauge how well Suffolk Libraries were enabling the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities and contributing to the Council's priorities.
- h) To ask that the County Council take action to ensure that accurate and efficient measurement devices for footfall were maintained in library premises and renewed when necessary.
- i) To request an Information Bulletin item providing:
 - i) a summary of the activities which contributed to the success of those libraries in the county which had a high footfall;
 - ii) details about how Suffolk Libraries was working to develop its marketing expertise.
- j) To keep the service under review as part of the Committee's forward work programme, with a particular focus on:-

- i) the emerging proposals for the development of services in rural areas. This should be pre-decision scrutiny, timed to provide an opportunity for the Committee to make recommendations during the development of the proposals; and
- ii) the arrangements for commissioning or renewal of the contract in July 2017.

Reason for recommendation:

- a) The Committee heard that the model adopted since 2011 had enabled Suffolk Libraries IPS to contribute to the achievement of the Council's objectives and had put them in a good position to meet future challenges. The evidence suggested that there was a strong, mature commissioning and contract management relationship, and this was a result of the hard work of Suffolk Libraries and the rest of the Commissioning Team. Members were aware that Suffolk Libraries had an enviable reputation nationwide. Whilst delivering the required savings, Suffolk Libraries had adapted to offer increased access to information, learning, and advice about skills and employment.
- b) The Committee heard that Suffolk Libraries had a highly motivated workforce and an enthusiastic customer base. Members were aware that nationally in some parts of the public sector there was a view that library services faced managed decline, but Suffolk Libraries had rejected that approach. The Committee supported the ambition of the IPS to continue to promote high expectations about what could be achieved by a modern library service.
- c) Councillor Sarah Stamp, whose remit had included specific responsibility for libraries, had recently resigned as Cabinet Member for Communities. The Committee was aware that new arrangements would need to be made with regard to Cabinet responsibilities. Members highlighted the importance of having a member of the Cabinet to continue to be responsible for libraries. They wished to see that person working closely with Suffolk Libraries to help identify the appropriate people to contact in order to develop opportunities for new areas of collaboration and expand the role of libraries as community hubs.
- d) The Committee heard that Suffolk Libraries recognised the need to make more people aware that the service had changed and expanded. This was seen as a key marketing and communications challenge which needed to be resourced. In addition to the savings already made, a further £300,000 was required from the contract price, currently modelled into 2017/18. Members heard that Suffolk Libraries had started to model ways of making savings, but doing the work to modify the service would involve additional costs which the IPS could not bear, or it meant taking staff off their day to day operational tasks to do this work. Suffolk Libraries had set aside a small amount of funding for marketing and business development, but the Committee wished to see consideration given to ways in which the Council could assist, possibly through the secondment of an employee of the Council for a limited period of time.

- e) The Committee heard that there were currently no proposals to reduce or remove services provided to rural parts of the county, but that it was not yet clear how the three active mobile library vehicles would be replaced within the next 12 to 18 months. Members considered it important that at the earliest opportunity clear plans should be developed, taking into account the need to think creatively and consult appropriately about how the Council intended to provide a range of services to people in rural areas.
- f) Members recognised that libraries could provide an excellent means of fulfilling many of the Council's priorities, as a library was a safe place for social interactions and could be a source of help and advice on keeping active and staying well, especially for vulnerable people. Therefore the Committee wished to see the role of libraries as community hubs explicitly recognised in any extension or re-tendering of the contract for library services. Members heard that Suffolk Libraries had structured its management arrangements to make community development a core part of the work of library staff, and that the IPS had an excellent record of providing opportunities for voluntary work.
- g) The Committee was aware that the main comparison tool for core library functions was an annual survey carried out by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which produced a number of reports that showed each individual library service's performance against national, regional and "near neighbour" groups. However, members heard that these statistics tended to be retrospective and did not necessarily reflect the fact that it was no longer necessary to visit a library building in order to access its services. Therefore the Committee considered that the CIPFA comparisons should be treated with caution and that there was a need to develop new ways of measuring performance which recognised the new services offered by libraries.
- h) Whilst accepting that footfall in libraries was only one of a number of ways of assessing the performance of a library, the Committee considered that nevertheless it was important to ensure that the number of people visiting a library building was measured accurately. Members heard that currently this was not always the case, and they wished to see the problem resolved.
- i) Members questioned why some libraries in the county appeared to be more successful than others. They heard that, in summary, success depended on the number of activities organised in a library, and that sometimes high footfall could be explained by the fact that premises were shared with important community assets such as a post office, an adult learning centre or a children's centre. The Committee wished to receive further information about such activities and sharing of premises.

The Committee heard that Suffolk Libraries had set aside £15,000 in order to bring in expert external advice about marketing and communications. The IPS intended to use this expertise to produce a toolkit of best practice for fundraising and to develop in-house knowledge about raising the profile of the brand. Members wished to know more about this initiative.

- j) The Committee recognised the importance of library services in contributing to the Council's ambitions. Therefore at a future date members wished to reconsider the opportunities and challenges faced, particularly in relation to services in rural areas and to the contract for services beyond 2017.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

Councillor Jessica Fleming left the meeting at 2:36 pm.

76. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 3:43 pm.

Chairman

