

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 15 November 2016 at 2.00 pm in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Ipswich.

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

Also present: Councillors Peter Beer, John Burns, Tony Brown, Mary Evans, John Field, Jessica Fleming, Inga Lockington, Sandy Martin, Bill Mountford, Stephen Searle and David Wood

Supporting officers present: Linda Pattle (Democratic Services Officer).

34. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

35. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

36. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37. Public Questions

There were no Public Questions received.

38. Implementation of the Apprenticeship Reform Programme for Suffolk County Council

A report at Agenda Item 5 by the Director of Resource Management provided an update on the government apprenticeship reform programme due to be implemented from April 2017 and invited the Cabinet to consider proposals for how the authority might respond to these reforms.

Decision: The Cabinet agreed:

- i) To approve the additional non-recoverable annual expenditure in relation to the Apprenticeship Levy which is estimated to be approximately £2m per annum.
- ii) To note the significant workforce and financial implications the apprenticeship reforms will have on Suffolk County Council.

- iii) The organisation's response to the reforms and associated timescales as set out in paragraphs 29 to 34 of the report at Agenda Item 5.
- iv) To delegate authority on the implementation of the Council's response to the reforms to the Director of Resource Management in consultation with Councillor Jane Storey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband, Rural Issues and Localities and Councillor Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills.

Reason for decision:

The government apprenticeship reform programme aimed to deliver more apprenticeships of a better quality in order to benefit employers, individuals and the economy.

UK GDP / per hour worked was significantly lower than other countries and the government wanted to use apprenticeships as a way to boost the skills of the UK workforce and help improve economic productivity as well as providing an opportunity for more individuals to pursue a successful career and increase social mobility.

In order to achieve these aims the apprenticeship reform programme would focus on three main areas: a new approach to funding; changing the way apprenticeship training was designed; and the introduction of a new Digital Apprenticeship System.

Comments by other councillors:

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and several other councillors warmly welcomed the proposals and expressed their support for the recommendations in view of the benefits to both the individual and organisations of developing a skilled workforce.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills recognised the challenges involved, but strongly supported the proposal to establish an Apprenticeship Training Agency for care leavers. As the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Board he was mindful of the need to give care leavers the best possible opportunity to improve their career prospects.

In relation to Recommendation 2 (paragraph 30), the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport highlighted the need for skilled highway engineers and expressed the hope that this would be an area on which the Apprenticeship Programme could focus. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities stated that currently 10% of the Council's apprentices were highways technical trainees.

In response to a comment from another councillor, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities confirmed that care leavers would have the freedom to choose the sort of work they were interested in. However, the Council would continue to try to encourage young people to take up apprenticeships in areas of work where there was the greatest need.

In response to a question, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities confirmed that currently there was no stated sanction if the Council failed to meet the target of having 2.3% of the workforce as new apprenticeship starts each year. Nevertheless, the Council would do its utmost to reach or exceed that target.

A number of councillors asked why the proposed Apprenticeship Training Agency would be solely for care leavers, and expressed the view that it should be made available to all young people in Suffolk. In response, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities highlighted the fact that there was financial risk involved in setting up an agency and explained that the aim was to limit the risk by initially making the agency available solely to care leavers. However, it was possible that the agency could be extended to other young people at a later stage.

A councillor highlighted the fact that in some parts of the county young people would have problems accessing transport to enable them to take up apprenticeships. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities recognised that there would be difficulties but confirmed that in this regard the Council would seek to learn from the good work done elsewhere, for example by the One Haverhill Partnership. She confirmed that there was no intention to exclude any part of the county from the scheme.

In response to a question from another councillor, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities confirmed that there would be one Apprenticeship Training Agency based within the County Council. The Council would consider the transport needs of apprentices on an individual basis.

A councillor drew attention to the relatively large number of apprenticeships which would need to be offered by schools, and asked whether it would be possible to define a Newly Qualified Teacher as an apprentice. In response the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues and Localities said that currently just under half of the apprentices in schools were teaching assistants who might in time go on to become teachers. Others were learning support assistants or had “back office” roles in administration or IT. The Schools Forum would discuss how Suffolk’s schools would respond to the apprenticeship levy with the support of the County Council.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

39. 2016/17 Forecast Revenue and Capital Spending

A report at Agenda Item 6 by the Director of Resource Management invited the Cabinet to note the forecast outturn position for 2016/17 for revenue and capital spending, and to consider whether the budget was being appropriately managed by Officers to try and remain within the resource limit agreed by the Council. The report also invited the Cabinet to note the significant transfers (virements) in accordance with the Council’s Financial Regulations and a mid-year report on the performance of the treasury management function.

Decision: The Cabinet agreed:

- i) the forecast outturn position for 2016/17 for revenue and capital spending;
- ii) that the budget was being appropriately managed by Officers to try and remain within the resource limit agreed by the Council;
- iii) the significant transfers (virements) in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations;
- iv) the mid-year report on the performance of the treasury management function.

Reason for decision:

The Cabinet recognised that the paper presented a forecast for the 2016/17 revenue and capital budgets based on expenditure trends and information available at the end of September 2016.

Comments by other councillors:

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills spoke about two areas of overspending on Children and Young People's Services. Referring to Special Educational Needs, he explained that in consultation with colleagues in the Schools Forum, measures were being taken to transfer further funds to the high needs block. Referring to Children in Care, he stated that expenditure was being closely monitored and it was hoped that measures already taken on foster arrangements would produce some savings. However, the Council took its responsibilities for children in care very seriously and would continue to give priority to keeping children safe.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport drew attention to the fact that, whereas previously Highways capital expenditure had been considerably under budget, that figure had now been reduced in variance, because the Beccles Relief Road had been given the go ahead by the Secretary of State.

A councillor expressed the view that there must be very few savings left to be identified. He believed the Council might need to consider increasing the Council Tax, in order to protect services for the large number of vulnerable people in the county.

The Leader referred to the fact that the Council had now delivered six years of zero Council Tax increase, apart from applying the national adult social care levy of 2% in 2016/17. He acknowledged that there would need to be a debate about whether the Council Tax should be increased, but expressed the view that before considering such increases, the public wished to be assured that the Council was working as efficiently as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Heritage confirmed that since 2010 the Council had made savings of £200 million, and he considered that in general the public was still satisfied with the services delivered. However, each year it was becoming more difficult to find additional savings. He was aware that the situation was similar for all county councils. He anticipated that there would be an opportunity to debate the issues more fully when the budget was put before the Council in 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Care confirmed that the Council's highest priority was protecting the vulnerable, and that Cabinet Members were lobbying nationally for additional funding for social care for the most vulnerable. In response to a comment from a councillor about carers waiting for assessments, she acknowledged that assessment capacity in Social Work Services had had to concentrate on reviewing existing customers where care needs or provision had changed. The Cabinet Member outlined efforts being made to speed up the assessment process by means of Trusted Advisors and by adding additional resources into that area.

A councillor referred to plans for improvements to Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and the decision to give priority to the Suffolk Operational Hub at Bury St Edmunds and the East Suffolk transfer station in Ipswich. He drew attention to the fact that the Haverhill HWRC was currently not fit for purpose and should be relocated. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection recognised the difficulties at Haverhill. In his view the problem was not simply a lack of finance, but also one of finding an appropriate site for growth. He confirmed that efforts were being made to address the issue.

A councillor referred to the fact that for 2016/17 it was forecast that £1.9 million would be spent on premature retirement costs, and asked in which departments these premature retirements were expected. The Cabinet heard that this figure referred to a series of old premature retirement costs which had been spread across all departments. In the 2016/17 budget they had been brought together to account for them centrally. It was a fixed cost relating to historic premature retirements which would reduce over the course of time.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

40. Suffolk Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2015 - 16

A report at Agenda Item 7 by the Corporate Director, Children and Adults invited the Cabinet to receive the Suffolk Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) Annual Report 2015 – 16 and endorse the proposed programme of work for 2016-17.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Care reminded the meeting that the Care Act 2015 had set out the requirement for each Local Authority to ensure that there was an Adults Safeguarding Board with three core duties: to develop and publish a strategic plan; to publish an annual report detailing how effective the Board had been; and to commission safeguarding adult reviews (SARs) for any cases that met the criteria. This was the first annual report to be published since the Board had become a statutory body.

The Chairman welcomed Sue Hadley, Independent Chair of the SSAB to the meeting. She had taken over as Chair of the SSAB in September 2016. She provided the Cabinet with an overview of the SSAB Annual Report and proposed programme of future work. In doing so, she acknowledged the work of her predecessor, Tim Beach.

Decision:

The Cabinet agreed to receive the Suffolk Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2015-2016 and endorse the proposed programme of work for 2016-17, in conjunction with the governance arrangements of the statutory partner organisations forming part of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Reason for decision:

The Cabinet recognised that the Council was the lead authority for safeguarding adults at risk of abuse in Suffolk. The SAB had become statutory as a result of the Care Act in April 2015.

The Annual Report outlined safeguarding activity for the reporting period of 2015-2016 and set out the proposed annual programme of work to be undertaken in 2016-17 as part of the [Suffolk Safeguarding Adults Board Strategy 2015-17](#).

Comments by other councillors:

Cabinet Members and councillors asked a number of questions about the work of the SSAB. The meeting heard the following responses:

- a) The purpose of the Government's "Prevent" strategy was to identify young people or vulnerable adults who were at risk of radicalisation. Under the "Prevent" agenda there was a programme of work called CHANNEL. This involved a multi-agency meeting where information was shared about young people or vulnerable adults who might be at risk of radicalisation, and where plans and preventative activities were put in place to reduce the risk.
- b) The Board's aim was that in each year 85% of staff and volunteers across the partnership would attain appropriate levels of competency in safeguarding. Ideally this should be 100%, but a target of 85% was considered to be realistic, taking into account turnover of staff and volunteers.
- c) When information about a safeguarding matter was received, it was reported to be a 'concern'. Each concern was considered in detail by the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub which decided whether the concern should be treated as a safeguarding enquiry or in some other way, for example as a quality and improvement issue. The data showed that on average about 30% of concerns became safeguarding enquiries. The remaining 70% were taken very seriously but were treated differently. The number of concerns had increased, and this was to be welcomed since it showed that people were confident about reporting safeguarding issues. It was anticipated that the number of concerns would continue to rise because the agencies were working with very vulnerable people to raise awareness of the issues.
- d) There was a great deal of activity across Suffolk in relation to violence against women. The Police had a strong strategy to deal with honour based violence, and Public Health had a robust strategy in relation to Female Genital Mutilation. There was also an emerging Domestic Abuse strategy. The Board was developing a more robust forward work plan and intended to call agencies to account for the quality of the planning and to consider

whether the strategies were reducing the prevalence of violence against women.

- e) The SSAB Chair intended to make future annual reports more robust and more indicative of the effectiveness of the Board. This would include providing information about: the number of referrals received; the number of referrals investigated; the outcomes; and the contribution of the partners whether in terms of money or resources. The Chair undertook to ask the agencies to break down their data in such a way as to disaggregate the 18 to 24 year olds from the 25 to 64 year olds.
- f) Year on year the number of referrals was increasing and funding to run the Board was decreasing. Funding for the Board was intended to cover its running costs, and efforts were being made to prevent these from rising. Funding for service delivery was the responsibility of the agencies. In early 2017 the Board would ask each agency to provide a robust analysis of their budget pressures for the year 2017/18 and of the impact they would have on the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. The role of the Independent Chair was to challenge and ask questions, whereas it was the responsibility of the individual agencies to decide how to spend their money.
- g) The SSAB Chair confirmed that she would welcome councillors to attend Board meetings as observers, on the understanding that the matters discussed were confidential.
- h) The SSAB Chair considered herself to be accountable in two ways. She was accountable for her performance in the role to the Council's Chief Executive and the Director for Children and Adults. She was also accountable in general terms for the Board to three key statutory partners: Health Services; the Police; and the Local Authority.
- i) Self-audit was considered to be a good way for organisations to take responsibility for understanding themselves, their strengths and the areas where they needed to improve. However, alongside it there was a need for a challenge and overview process which would be provided by the performance group of the Board.
- j) The membership of the Board included the county's three clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). However, the Ipswich & East and West Suffolk CCGs had agreed to be represented on the Board by one person.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

Councillor Tony Goldson left the meeting at 2:56 pm.

41. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

42. The Cabinet considered whether Agenda item 10 should be taken without the Public (including the Press) present

Decision: The Cabinet agreed to exclude the public (including the Press) from the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 9.

Reason for decision: The Cabinet was satisfied that:

- i) the report contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person including the authority holding that information,
- ii) in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information;
- iii) although the public might have benefited from the decision being taken in public in terms of accountability and transparency, there was a risk that disclosing information about the financial or business affairs of a particular person including the authority holding that information might have an impact on future partnerships and purchase negotiations.

Comments by other councillors: There were no other comments.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None reported.

43. Concertus Loan

A report at Agenda Item 10 by the Director of Resource Management invited the Cabinet to consider making a loan to Concertus Design and Property Consultants Limited (its wholly owned company) to enable it to purchase its own property in Ipswich to house its rapidly growing and expanding team.

Decision: The Cabinet agreed:

- i) A loan to Concertus of £2.5m (for the specific purchase of office accommodation for the company to occupy).
- ii) To delegate the agreement of the interest rate and details of the loan to the Director of Resource Management in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Heritage.

Reason for decision:

The Cabinet was aware that Concertus had almost doubled in turnover since it had been set-up in 2013 and had now outgrown its current accommodation. The staff numbers over this period had increased from 63 staff to 114 staff and to achieve the future business targets would need to increase further over the next two years.

Suffolk County Council was not in a position to offer Concertus more space in Endeavour House and the space created by Concertus moving out would contribute to the development of the One Public Sector Estate on the Ipswich Campus.

Comments by other councillors: The Cabinet Member for Finance and Heritage addressed the questions and concerns received from the other councillors at the meeting.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

The meeting closed at 3:38 pm.

Chairman

