

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 18 March 2019 at 9.00am.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, M Edney, K Mason Billig and L Neal

Apologies: Councillor: K Kiddie

Non-Appointed Councillors: B Bernard, D Bills, M Gray, N Legg, T Lewis, G Minshull, J Overton and A Thomas

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer (E Hodds) and the Consultant (S Bizley)

Also in Attendance: Mr S Adcock (Acting Chairman of Long Stratton Parish Council)

2710 URGENT ITEM – DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS

The Managing Director announced that following the Joint Appointment Panel meeting, held the previous Friday, Debbie Lorimer had been appointed as Director of Resources, and Jamie Sutterby, as Director of People and Communities, subject to the five-day objection period by members of both Broadland and South Norfolk Cabinets, and ratification at both Council meetings. He added that both Mrs Lorimer and Mr Sutterby would begin their new roles with immediate effect, on a secondment basis, until their positions had been confirmed.

Cabinet expressed its congratulations to both officers.

2711 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2712 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members considered the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

The Chairman referred to a number of potential items for consideration, including the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Annual Monitoring Report and the Five-Year Land Supply.

Cllr M Gray sought clarification from the Cabinet regarding the current position with the Council's five-year land supply, referring to a recent article in the Eastern Daily Press.

The Chairman explained that following recent Government guidance, it was believed that the Council had attained the five-year land supply, and officers were currently working to evidence this belief. Cllr Gray stressed the need for urgency, referring to a Planning Appeal which was to be heard that very week, and members were assured that any new information regarding the five-year land supply, would be fed in to the appeal process.

2713 LONG STRATTON TOILETS

Members considered the report of the Director of Communities and Wellbeing which presented members with a number of options, with regard to the future of the Long Stratton toilets.

The Chairman began by outlining the background to the report and reminded members that the Council had no statutory duty in providing public toilet facilities. The practicality of running and maintaining the public conveniences across the District had led the Council to consider a different approach, and the Council had sought to divest itself of these assets. This divestment was made on the basis that where parishes wished to take over the facilities, the Council would refurbish them to an acceptable standard and provide a one-off payment in lieu of revenue funding based on a five-year estimate. The Chairman reported that every affected parish/town council had taken up this offer from the Council, with the exception of Long Stratton.

The Director of People and Communities outlined the options set out in section 5 of the report, referring in particular to the negotiations with Britannia Enterprises, which would, in line with the Council's Community Asset Strategy, retain a public access toilet, whilst adding social value.

The Chairman invited Mr S Adcock, Acting Chairman of Long Stratton Parish Council, to address the meeting. Mr Adcock explained that the Parish Council had declined the offer to take on ownership of the toilets, due to a lack of resources and being unable to afford the costs associated with running a public convenience. The Parish Council had been disappointed that the Council had failed to recognise these concerns, and that at a second meeting with the Parish, it had failed to revise its original offer. He went to explain that circumstances had since changed; the Parish Council had employed a full-time member of staff and there was now no requirement to pay business rates on public conveniences. This had made the

proposal to take on the toilets much more viable for the Parish Council, and it sought to reopen negotiations with South Norfolk Council.

Mr Adcock referred to public concerns regarding the toilets' closure and referred to a recent petition that had attracted approximately 400 signatures. He could not accept that the toilets at South Norfolk Council offices, or the Leisure Centre, could substitute for the loss of these facilities, suggesting that these were hardly central in the village, and would not be convenient for public use. He also expressed concerns regarding the proposed café, which would be in direct competition with the three existing cafes, already located in the village.

Cllr K Mason Billig explained she had been the relevant portfolio holder whilst negotiations had taken place with the Parish Council, and she had been very disappointed that it had chosen to decline the fair and generous offer made by South Norfolk Council. The idea of transforming the block in to a base for the Parish Council had also been suggested, but again this had not been welcomed by the Parish Council. She stressed that status quo was not an option, and ultimately the Council needed to seek an option which added social value, whilst being best value for money.

County Councillor for Long Stratton, Cllr A Thomas, then addressed the meeting. She referred to the strength of feeling in the village, the comments on social media and the petition signed by hundreds of local people. Whilst she was grateful that the Council had allowed the public to use its toilets at South Norfolk House, and at the Leisure Centre, she felt that these facilities were not central or convenient enough to cater for residents. Whilst she fully supported the spirit and objectives of the proposed Britannia café, residents were concerned that it would impact upon other local businesses, and the public perception was that the new venture was to receive "preferential treatment" with only a "peppercorn" rent to pay. She drew attention to the current cafes and fast food facilities, which would be in direct competition, and reminded members that only a few months previously, the village had lost the bakery and attached café, as it could not make ends meet. Having read all the papers, including the financial due diligence undertaken, she stressed that she could not support the Britannia proposal on this occasion.

Following considerable debate and recognising the political sensitivity of the issue so close to the election, Cabinet agreed that discussions with Long Stratton Parish Council should recommence, with a view to the Parish accepting its previous offer. This was subject to a letter of intent from the Parish Council, to be received by South Norfolk Council by the end of that day, and a signed transfer agreement in place by 31 May 2019.

Members agreed that should Long Stratton Parish Council fail to comply with the above terms, or decide again to decline the Council's offer, then it would pursue an alternative use of the premises, either through Britannia Enterprises, (as outlined at paragraph 5.1), or through an alternative social enterprise or voluntary sector partner (as outlined in paragraph 5.4 of the report).

It was then

RESOLVED:

1. To reopen discussions with Long Stratton Parish Council with regard to transferring the ownership of the Long Stratton toilets, subject to:
 - a) a letter of intent from the Parish Council, indicating its intentions for taking on the asset (based on South Norfolk Council's previous offer), to be received no later than the end of Monday 18 March 2019;
 - b) that the signed transfer agreement is in place by 31 May 2019.
2. That should Long Stratton Parish Council decide not to take on the ownership of the facilities, that South Norfolk Council consider pursuing options 5.1 or 5.4, as outlined in the report.

The Reason for the Decision

Having noted the concerns of residents, and the changes in circumstances relating to the Parish Council resources, it was felt appropriate to allow a further opportunity for the Parish Council to take on the management of the facilities, in line with the original proposal.

Other Options Considered

To work with a social enterprise or voluntary sector partner, which whilst maintaining a toilet provision, would also provide additional social value.

2714 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was

RESOLVED: To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

2715 STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Director of Growth and Business Development, which sought approval to purchase land and buildings, to open up and accelerate development on a key strategic site.

The Director of Growth and Business Development, outlined the salient points of her report, referring to the proposed area for investment and the economic benefits of development. Members also noted the financial benefits the development would bring to the Council.

Cabinet expressed its support for the proposals, and it was

- RESOLVED:**
1. To approve the purchase of 4.93 acres of employment land and the development of 60,000 ft² of commercial space, subject to final contract negotiations.
 2. To delegate the final arrangements to the Managing Director in consultation with the S151 Officer, the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Resources.

The Reason for the Decision

To provide economic benefits to the Greater Norwich area, whilst providing additional financial benefits to the Council.

Other Options Considered

None.

(The meeting concluded at 10.12 am)

Chairman