

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Broadland District Council, held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on Tuesday 28 June 2022 at 4.00 pm when there were present:

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: M Murrell (Chairman), P Bulman, K Leggett MBE, G Nurden, S Prutton and N Shaw.

**Other Member in Attendance:** Councillor: F Whymark

**Officers in Attendance:** Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer, the Director of Place, the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families, Housing Standards Senior Manager, Senior Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer (SW), and Democratic Services Officer (LA)

### 14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

### 15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from, Cllr N Brennan, Cllr S Catchpole, Cllr K Kelly and Cllr R Potter.

### 16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the amended recommendations put forward by the Committee detailed in minute numbers 7 and 8 were not accepted by Cabinet as the reports proposals were for enhancements to existing services only and the existing services would not be changed.

*Cllr Bulman raised a point of order regarding the times of meetings of the Committee. As this was not an item on the agenda it was not accepted.*

### 17 REVIEW OF EMPTY HOMES POLICY

The Housing Standards Senior Manager introduced the report which reviewed Broadland's Empty Homes Policy. The policy set out the parameters where discretionary activity would take place in relation to empty homes in the District. Members noted the policy was originally approved by Cabinet on the 15 June 2021 and it was good practice to review how the policy was working within the District a year on.

The Housing Standards Senior Manager further explained the key reasons behind a home becoming classed as an Empty Home under the policy:

- Financially prohibitive for owners to undertake repairs or property upkeep.
- Poor marketing or pricing of the property on the market.
- Difficulty identifying owners of property, for example tracking down heirs to a property or owner disputes.
- Planning restrictions.
- Owners unwilling to sell, let or inhabit the property.

The Committee noted that data gathered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which was informed by the Council Tax Base, showed Broadland District Council having the lowest rates of empty homes in the County. Since the policy has been in place, 14 properties have been reported to the Housing Standards team for being empty and through investigations the properties fall into two categories; properties which need further investigation, and short term empty properties where support is offered to reinstate occupation as soon as possible. Members also noted that a report containing a property deemed as an Empty Home was set to come before Cabinet at the next meeting.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report and the team's work implementing the policy. He noted that the policy was working well and there were no further concerns raised by the Committee.

It was then;

#### **AGREED**

1. To acknowledge the report
2. to continue the procedures as detailed in the current Policy

### 18 BROADLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL STAFF TURNOVER TIME AND TASK PANEL REPORT

The Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer) presented the report which detailed the latest findings from the Time and Task Panel regarding the request to further review the Council's legal position regarding exit interviews.

During the recent meeting, the Panel had focused on its rights to access to the personal data of previous employees. It was explained that personal data was held by the Human Resources team for all staff currently employed and that were different retention purposes for different sets of data that needed to be adhered to in line with data protection principles. In relation to the personal information of ex-employees being used to make contact for the purposes of conducting exit interviews, officers had sought the opinion of an expert in Data Protection Law and Information Governance. Their opinion had been that to access the contact details of ex-employees for this purpose would breach the first principle of the GDPR on the grounds that it would amount to 'unfair processing' of their personal data.

The Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer) concluded that due to further interventions which had been put in place, the uptake of exit interviews had in fact increased over the last two years and more meaningful data was now being received. This was being reported to Cabinet, and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of the Performance and Risk Reports.

The Committee noted the position of the Time and Task Panel and it was;

### **AGREED**

To note the content of the report and the conclusions of the Panel.

## **19 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Senior Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on its Work Programme. Members noted the dates of the upcoming meetings.

(The meeting concluded at 4.17pm)

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Chairman