

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee of Broadland District Council, held on Wednesday 24 August 2022 at 6pm at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Thomas (Chairman), P Bulman, S Catchpole, S Clancy, S Holland, G Nurden, S Prutton, and D Roper

Apologies for Absence: Councillor: I Mackie

Cabinet Members Present: Councillors: J Emsell and S Vincent (for part of the meeting)

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director, the Director of Resources, the Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer, the Assistant Director – Finance, the Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation, the Strategy and Intelligence Manager, the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer and the Democratic Services Officer (DM).

Others present: The press (for part of the meeting)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr I Mackie.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development advised that the purchase of the Horizon building was progressing well and within the expected timeframe.

4 COLLABORATION WORKING GROUP

The Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer presented the covering report and explained that the Collaboration Working Group had been set up at the request of the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development to review collaboration and had agreed its terms of reference at its first meeting. The conclusions of the work undertaken by the Working Group were set out in the report of the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development. The areas of work covered by the Working Group had been: governance, external communications and public affairs, one team culture and employer of choice, finance and performance and customer engagement. A presentation on each topic area had been made at the first meeting, with the subsequent meetings being provided with a report on the topic area containing recommendations which were agreed by the Group. The report before the Committee was a summary of those already agreed recommendations. The Committee was now being invited to consider and endorse the Portfolio Holder's report.

The Leader of the Opposition raised concerns about the process for the preparation of the report. Membership of the Working Group was set out in its terms of reference but the report had been prepared by a member not on the working group. She stated that the report had not been seen by the members of the working group before publication with the agenda papers and that it was not a legitimate report. She suggested that the report be rejected as it was not a report of the Working Group and not in accordance with the terms of reference. When asked for examples of how the report did not accord with the terms of reference, the Leader of the Opposition commented that the author of the report was not a member of the Working Group and that the Working Group had conducted a review run by the Portfolio Holder; it was not a review in accordance with the feasibility study.

The Chairman pointed out that the Portfolio Holder's report had been available to members on sharepoint from 7 July 2022.

The Leader of the Opposition responded that the Working Group had been due to meet on 5 July to prepare its report on the evaluation and review of collaboration to present to the peer review team. The meeting had not taken place. The Portfolio Holder's report which had been available from 5 July was not something the Working Group had contributed to and she was of the view that the Group had been overruled.

The Chief of Staff advised the Committee that the report of the Portfolio Holder was a summary of all the reports which had been considered and agreed by the Working Group. The report had been circulated to all members of the Working Group with a view to it being discussed at the meeting scheduled for 5 July. Members had decided not to hold that meeting.

A comment was made that the terms of reference included the concept of culture and the member questioned the regard for culture in relation to the passage and progress of the report. The member stated that the report was essentially highlights from the minutes of the Working Group meetings and the member made reference to various stages leading to the preparation of the report, including it being examined by a group of conservative members only before being submitted to the Committee for consideration. It was not a report from a member of the Working Group but was being presented as such. The member claimed that the officer's covering report omitted to mention that the Working Group had not concluded its work, yet the findings were being presented as their conclusion and this fell below the standards the member would expect. The member made reference to a suggestion from the Chairman of the Working Group that a meeting be held with Leader and Deputy Leader to find a way forward and the member suggested that further consideration of this matter be deferred until such a meeting had taken place.

The Chief of Staff responded by reiterating that the Working Group had been set up in line with the constitution and had operated in accordance with the constitution.

The Chairman commented that she had reviewed all the minutes of the meetings of Working Group and these accorded with the content of the report. There was a reference to the need to still seek feedback on Planning from the Director of Place and she acknowledged that the final meeting had not been held at which the Working Group would have considered its final report. She did not believe, however, that there was anything fundamentally different in the report to what was reflected in the Working Group minutes. The Leader of the Opposition was of the view that there were recommendations in the report which she did not believe were included in the minutes of the Working Group meetings.

A member commented that it was clear that the report before the Committee had been compiled from the agreed recommendations of the Working Group. With regard to the timescales involved in the resignation of the Working Group and the compilation of the report, it was confirmed that the members had resigned after publication of the report.

The Chairman of the Working Group thanked members of the Working Group and officers for the time they had given to the Group and stated that a great deal of good work had been done. The Group had however not been able to conclude its work and had not been able to hold a final meeting to pull together a summary of its findings. The report before the Committee was not from the Working Group. He stated that there were a number of recommendation within the existing report which the Working Group would have endorsed but there were a few which it wanted to change which would have come forward at the final meeting. In answer to a question, he advised that he was not able to identify these items on the hoof. He commented that he was a supporter of collaboration and of the

opportunity to have a meaningful, comprehensive, cross party review of collaboration. Unfortunately this had not been concluded and the Working Group did not wish to be associated with the report. Another member suggested the work of the group had been tainted and concerns raised gave doubt as to the legitimacy of the report. There was a need to see the process properly completed and that a pragmatic approach should be taken to allow the work of the Group to be completed by delaying consideration of the report. They added that this would also enable the omitted Planning issues to be explored as this area was underperforming and it would be helpful to examine the impact of collaboration in this area.

The Chief of Staff expressed concern at the reference to the report being tainted and stated she believed the report accurately reflected the excellent work undertaken by the Working Group.

It was then proposed, duly seconded that discussion on the two reports be deferred and the Committee requests members of the Working Group meet and arrange a meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader and report back to the Committee. On being put to the vote, with 4 members voting for, 2 against, and with 2 abstentions, the proposal was carried.

AGREED

that discussion on the two reports be deferred and the Committee requests members of the Working Group meet and arrange a meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader and report back to the Committee.

5 USING INTELLIGENCE TO ACHIEVE A FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation presented the report which set out how the Council proposed to use data and intelligence to drive delivery of the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024, and ultimately deliver a first-class customer service for communities and businesses. She drew attention to the three key recommendations in the report and went on to explain that business intelligence was about seeking to use data to make decisions now and to plan for future decision making rather than making reactive decisions. She made reference to the strategic plan priorities and how data intelligence could contribute to achieving these priorities. The availability of business intelligence would enable the Council to profile its customers and target efforts to predict and prevent issues and to enable early intervention based on data insight. An example given was homelessness needs and the ability to target the Council's approach to this area. It would aid decision making and performance reporting and facilitate more timely decisions.

The Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation drew attention to the costs involved as set out in the report which were mainly for resources and consultancy with a smaller sum for technical products.

The Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer then took members through an example of the kind of data available for a snapshot of the telephony system. Data included number incoming calls, answered calls, missed calls, the date and time of calls and data regarding trends in calls received over periods of time. Through Microsoft teams, this information could be delivered to teams.

Members welcomed the proposals and reference was made to the recent improvements in the Council's response to phone calls. The Housing and Benefits team was also congratulated on its continued high performance. A comment was made that there was a need to continue to ensure that those who were not able to access council services online were still able to secure assistance when needed.

A question was raised regarding the legal and environmental implications of the proposals, and if the proposals would be compliant with GDPR and if information gathered could help inform the development of the environmental strategy.

The Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation commented that the Council continued to recognise that not all residents had access to the internet and that the proposals would help to identify and better target these residents and take services to them. The team worked closely with the Governance team to ensure compliance with GDPR. Most of the data collected was not personal data.

With regard to a comment about the cost of the service and its impact on savings from collaboration, officers responded that the cost of commissioning 3rd parties to undertake the work would be significantly higher than the proposed service and it was possible that the opportunity to strip out inefficiencies and focus on high performance could result in a contribution to savings and the collaboration journey rather than an additional cost.

In response to a question regarding the 45/55 share applied across the two councils as part of collaboration, the Director of Resources commented that the arrangement was regularly reviewed and was still currently an appropriate split.

It was, on being put to the vote, with 7 members voting for, 1 abstention,

AGREED to recommend

1. Cabinet to recommend to Council the agreement of funding to establish a Business Intelligence Service as set out in section 4.7 of the report.

2. Cabinet to recommend to Council that funding for 2022/23 is drawn from the corporate contingency.
3. Cabinet to recommend to Council that funding for the Business Intelligence Service is built into the base budget from 2023/24.

6 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

[The press then left the meeting]

7 OPTIONS ON PROVISION OF A FUTURE FRAUD SERVICE

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the exempt report which provided options on the future resourcing and delivery of a fraud service for Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council. He went on to explain that, in the interests of expediency, the report was being considered by this Committee rather than the Audit Committee which would have considered such matters but that the Audit Committee members had been updated on the proposals.

Members expressed their support for the proposals commenting on the importance of work to prevent and detect fraud across all services. They noted that, if the proposals were supported, the Fraud and Corruption Strategy would need to be updated and the Assistant Director Finance commented that this would be done. A suggestion was put forward and agreed that, as part of negotiations for the contract, a requirement for performance data be included.

AGREED to recommend that:

Cabinet agrees to the fraud function being delivered in conjunction with Anglia Revenues Partnership, via a S113 agreement with Breckland District Council.

(The meeting concluded at 7.15pm)

Chairman