

## 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 6 September 2022 at 10.00 am when there were present:**

**Committee Members Present:**

Councillors: M Murrell (Chairman), S Riley (Vice-Chairman), N Brennan, P Bulman, S Catchpole, J Davis, S Holland, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K Kelly, K Leggett MBE, G Nurden and S Prutton

**Officers in Attendance:**

Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Customer Experience & Insight Lead (J Tovee-Galey), the Senior Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer (SW), and the Democratic Services Officer (LA)

Kris Barnard from Norfolk Police and Steve Cunningham from Norfolk County Council were also in attendance.

### 36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

### 37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Potter and Cllr N Harpley.

### 38 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

### 39 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the request of the Chairman the Committee stood for a minutes silence in tribute for Councillor Nigel Shaw.

### 40 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There was no public speaking

### 41 COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Superintendent Kris Barnard to the meeting

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families introduced the item which provided an opportunity for the Broadland Police command to engage with members on the current community safety priorities and issues in Broadland.

Superintendent Kris Barnard presented the report, which provided members with an overview of police and crime matters within the Broadland District, where the following key areas of focus were identified:

- District Perspective (Call received)
- Child Exploration
- Engagement with the Community

Supt. Barnard reassured members that Broadland was a safe district and summarised the data within the report which set out the changes the local police force had seen over the last couple of years. Members' attention was drawn to the average number of acquisitive crimes per month. It was noted that since the onset of Covid-19 and the national lockdowns, there had been an increase in 'hidden' crimes such as domestic violence, which were often complex cases.

Concerning cybercrime and fraud, it was noted that cases could be difficult to investigate, and more officers experienced in cyber-related crimes were being appointed and trained.

Discussion turned to child criminal exploitation and Supt. Barnard informed the Committee that the policing relating to matters around at-risk children was a growing challenge, as often the incidents occurred across district borders.

Several members expressed thanks for the local officers stationed within their wards, noting that the support they provided had a positive impact on the local communities.

In response to a question raised on the figures reported for violence within care homes, members noted that these had been included within the overall statistics but could be separated, if required.

Conversation turned to the large-scale housing developments set to be built within the district and whether the Police would have enough resources to cope with the increased population. Supt. Barnard explained that regular engagement between developers and the Police were taking place, and any protentional issues were raised at an early stage.

Members discussed the online meetings of the Local Community Safety Forum, generally agreeing that the sessions, which were promoted throughout the communities via Parish newsletters and on social media, were useful and informative. However, one member suggested that a hybrid approach to

encompass both online and in-person engagement might be more appropriate. He also expressed concerns about residents not being able to report incidents quickly. In response, the Police representative reassured the member that he would investigate the matter.

In response to further questions arising from the discussion, members noted that there had been a push in digital engagement, and a further position within the policing team had been created to help with demand. As part of the role, the newly appointed officer would investigate alternative methods of engagement with the understanding that not everyone had digital access. Street surgeries, both in and around pivotal areas of the district, alongside engagement within supermarkets, would also provide key points of contact for residents.

Discussion turned to issues around children's mental health and whether this was being reported through statistics. It was noted that the Police were still seeing the effects of the pandemic on certain policing areas and therefore could not provide full data on the subject. Supt. Barnard reassured members that there had been low number of incidences reported where school-aged children had been involved in crime in the area and that the Police would continue to promote and engage with young people within school settings.

One member promoted the Park Walk Talk scheme in his area, adding that anti-social behaviour had decreased alongside a build in public/officer engagement.

After several members expressed concerns over the resourcing issues faced by the Police force in the year to come, it was noted that work had been carried out to evaluate how officers could be utilised in the current climate. It was further noted that the Police force had seen an increase in emergency calls relating to mental health issues and that operational demands were continually being reviewed and fed into the policing model to help deal with these demands.

In summing up the report, the Chairman expressed the need for stronger relationships between the Police and its partners to help with the increased calls and pressure relating to mental health issues. Further explanation of the stronger connections and pathways would also enable people to receive the appropriate care with a faster response. It was noted that the police call centres had mental health specialists who were trained to help with demand. The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families agreed that these issues would be investigated further with the Police working alongside the Help Hub to ensure that community safety could be improved throughout the district.

Following a show of hands, it was;

### AGREED

To endorse mental health as a topic to investigate further to improve community safety in the district.

## 42 DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Steve Cunningham from Norfolk County Council provided members with a brief overview of the current and future provisions for broadband in the Broadland district. The presentation contained details of the Better Broadband for Norfolk contracts past and future:

### Contract one

- Signed in December 2012
- Successfully bid for and awarded £15.4M from BDUK, which was matched by another £15M, to upgrade Norfolk's broadband infrastructure to Superfast broadband (FTTC)
- Superfast broadband coverage (24Mbps +) was improved from 42% to 84%.
- Covering an additional Circa 156,000 Superfast properties

### Contract two (SEP – Superfast Extension Programme)

- Signed in December 2014
- Successfully bid for additional funds for the BBFN programme
- Superfast broadband coverage (24Mbps +) was improved further to 95%
- Covering an additional Circa 45,000 Superfast properties

### Current projects

#### BBFN contract 3 (Better Broadband for Norfolk)

- Due for completion in December 2023
- Circa 9,000 sites across Norfolk
- 1103 premises are in Broadland. Of which;  
505 premises complete to date

#### LFFN (local Full Fibre Network)

- 394 public buildings across Norfolk
- This project is now complete.
- Circa 4,700 premises have benefitted from LFFN

#### Project Gigabit

- Procurement phase has now launched.
- Circa 86,000 premises included with the procurement phase.

Members noted that by the end of the current projects, the overall coverage across Norfolk would be improved to 97% connectivity. Circa 11,000 premises were in the scope of the Gigabit project.

Norfolk County Council was in support of the government Gigabit voucher scheme, which launched in 2021 and issued grant monies for local communities to implement Gigabit broadband. Grants were available for £1,500 per resident and £3,500 per business.

In response to a question on how companies offered packages of both mobile data and broadband to improve connection, members noted that this type of coverage allowed for a stronger connection to be built through the two input sources. It was further explained that these packages would not be covered under the voucher schemes as they could only be utilised for sole broadband use.

Several members raised concerns over rural connectivity within the Broadland area and agreed that improvements needed to be made. The Committee noted that broadband connectivity within the District had increased, with 96.73% of the District now having the ability to access superfast broadband coverage.

The conversation turned to the support available for residents and how the voucher scheme could be optimised. Members noted that if multiple residents applied for the vouchers in one area, the impact and funds available would increase. Promotions through community groups or local parish councils would allow further residents the opportunity to access improved broadband connections within their areas.

Steve Cunningham from Norfolk County Council advised members to direct residents to email [bdfn@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:bdfn@norfolk.gov.uk) if they had any enquiries regarding the voucher scheme. Members also noted that Better Broadband for Norfolk website contained further information on the scheme, alongside an online form which residents could complete.

In response to a question on whether members could receive updates from companies regarding the schedule of planned improvements within areas, it was noted that this would be considered commercially sensitive information and therefore could not be shared.

A brief discussion followed, during which it was confirmed that details regarding low connectivity areas in the District would not be ready until March 2023. The Committee requested and it was agreed that a review should come back to the Committee in March 2023.

### AGREED

To note the progress of the broadband rollout throughout the District and to undertake a further review in March 2023.

#### 43 CUSTOMER STRATEGY UPDATE

The Director of Resources provided members with an update on the Moving towards a First-Class Customer Service strategy, which included details of the actions for awareness for public consultations.

The Committee was given a further update on the progress of the Customer Panel, and it was confirmed that over 210 people had joined. Officers were confident that this number would increase over time and reassured members that work was being undertaken to ensure diversity of participants within the membership of the Panel. Members noted that teams within the Council had started investigating ways of utilising the Panel for further engagement on future area schemes.

Members noted that call abandonment rates had fallen during quarter 1, with an eight per cent drop in the overall figures. Officers reported that work was being undertaken to understand further phone configurations to improve the phone statistics.

The Customer Experience & Insight Lead explained that feedback options for customers calling the Council were currently being trialled in certain departments. A further suggestion was made for customers to have the opportunity to provide feedback through text messages after the phone call had taken place.

Other improvements had been made to the phone system, including a call back function, where customers could request a call back from a department instead of waiting for an appropriate officer to become available. One member welcomed this function, adding that it allowed and ensured that customers would get through to the appropriate officer more quickly.

In response to a concern raised on streamlining the out-of-hours service provision over the coming months, officers explained that work was currently being undertaken to review and understand ways to offer extra support through the service.

Following a query relating to the website search facility, the Customer Experience & Insight Lead explained that work was currently being carried out to review and improve the function.

The Director of Resources explained that officers were looking at the reasons behind customer contact. The information collected would allow the Council to target key service areas and understand their busy times in the day/month. A further report titled Using Business Intelligence would be coming through the committee process at a later date, which would review this data.

During further discussion, it was confirmed that detailed breakdowns of service area statistics would be provided to members, when these became available.

Following a show of hands, it was;

### **AGREED**

1. To endorse the approach to continue to gather insight and develop our customer service approach through the next steps set out in the report and
2. To endorse the approach to deliver a First-Class Customer Service through the work incorporated in our First-Class Customer Service portfolio to ensure services are designed around customer needs, available through multiple channels, and at times that are convenient to them.

## **44 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.

One member questioned why an item regarding the material recycling facility and NEWS, which had been agreed in 2017, had been removed from the work programme. After the meeting, it was confirmed that the Committee had actually already considered this item at its meeting held on 29 March 2022.

In response to a query on when there would be an update on water management in the District, the Senior Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed she would contact the Council representative for an update in time for the next meeting.

After a member requested whether an item on the cost-of-living increase should be added to the work programme, officers explained that a report was already being taken through the committee process route and would be then be considered by Cabinet.

Several members raised queries which were outside the scope and remit of the Committee and it was agreed that these issues would be dealt with outside of the formal meeting.

Conversation turned to a review of the Council's partnerships scheduled for January 2023, and it was suggested that there should be an earlier review to investigate the services provided to residents by the various housing associations throughout the District. After further discussion, it was agreed that a Time and Task Limited Panel should be convened, and it was confirmed that the Panel members would be:

Cllr Martin Murrell  
Cllr Steve Riley  
Cllr Jan Davis  
Cllr Susan Holland  
Cllr Caroline Karimi-Ghovanlou.

(The meeting concluded at 12.13pm)

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Chairman