

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 20 September 2022 at 10.00am when there were present:

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

Apologies: Councillors: P Bulman and R Potter

Substitute Members: Councillor S Clancy (for P Bulman)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: J Emsell, T Mancini-Boyle and J Leggett

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Resources (D Lorimer) the Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer (E Hodds), the Assistant Director of Finance ((R Fincham) the Assistant Director of ICT / Digital and Transformation (C Lawrie), the Assistant Director for Regulatory (N Howard), the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer (S Crook) and the Democratic Services Manager (CW).

Before the commencement of the meeting, members stood for a minute's silence in memory of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P Bulman (substitute Cllr S Clancy) and Cllr R Potter.

47 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

48 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There was no public speaking.

CABINET REPORTS

49 USING INTELLIGENCE TO ACHIEVE A FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Assistant Director of ICT / Digital and Transformation introduced the report, which outlined proposals to use data and intelligence to drive delivery of the ambitions, as set out in the Council's Strategic Plan 2020 -2024, to ultimately deliver a first-class customer service for communities and businesses.

The Assistant Director of ICT / Digital and Transformation briefly outlined the salient points of the report to members, explaining that business intelligence involved the use of data, assets and technology to drive strategic decision-making. She referred to an example from another council, where this approach had been used to better target those in need and the use of predictive analytics to improve preventative work, to reduce homelessness. This had enabled the council to anticipate changes, better focus its resources, and reduce costs further down the line.

In response to queries from members, the Assistant Director of ICT / Digital and Transformation explained that this approach would enhance the Council's ethos of "continuous improvement" and also improve mechanisms for monitoring. Monitoring would be more efficient and continuous, enabling data to be collected and analysed at set points. The approach would also help to identify and prioritise future projects. Members noted that work streams would report to the Service and Improvement Efficiency Committee, or the relevant Policy Panels, depending on the nature of each project.

A member referred to the cost benefits of the proposals and the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer explained that data currently collected across the whole organisation was not easily accessible and could not be mapped against other data that was held. It was therefore very difficult to predict any level of savings to be made. However, once the collection of data was automated, officers would be released to run analysis on this data which would identify further efficiencies. Members noted that the number of officers involved in data collection equated to 6.35 FTEs (Full Time Equivalents) and affected approximately 53 staff across the whole

organisation. The time saved would be used instead to better analyse the data available.

In response to a query regarding the use of the Council's corporate contingency, officers confirmed that the proposal was to draw funding from the contingency for 2022/23 only, and that costs would be built into the base budget for future years. The Assistant Director of Finance advised that both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils maintained independent contingency funds. Broadland maintained a contingency of approximately £100k each year, and the proposals would involve the use of just over £20k from this fund.

Referring to paragraph 4.7 of the report, a member referred to the current difficulties with recruitment, and queried whether the buying in of specialist consultancy would affect the budget. The Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer advised that the budget assumed the most expensive option and flexibility had been built in to allow for the use of consultants if required.

During further discussion, the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer advised that the proposals would allow for data to be analysed separately across Broadland and South Norfolk, but also to bring the data sets together where useful, to provide an overall picture. Officers recognised that the two areas were different and that issues might require different solutions, and the Assistant Director of ICT / Digital and Transformation added that it would be possible to provide data and analysis at a ward level. She assured members that both quantitative and qualitative data would be collected and analysed when considering issues across services.

Following a show of hands, it was

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet Recommend to Council

1. The agreement of funding to establish a Business Intelligence Service as set out in section 4.7 of the report.
2. That funding for 2022/23 is drawn from the corporate contingency
3. That funding for the Business Intelligence Service is built into the base budget from 2023/24

50 ANNUAL RE-RATIFICATION OF STRATEGY FOR NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOOD ALLIANCE

The Assistant Director of Regulatory introduced the report, which presented members with an updated Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy, for annual ratification by Cabinet.

The Assistant Director of Regulatory outlined the report and explained how, in collaboration with South Norfolk Council, staffing resources to focus on flooding, had been enhanced.

Members welcomed the integrated approach to flooding across all agencies across the County, and the work being carried out by the district councils. It was suggested that a more detailed update in future reports on the progress of the impact of this approach on those areas at risk of flooding, would be helpful. The Assistant Director of Regulatory explained that the Flood and Water Management Officer was now in post, and he agreed to introduce him to members, particularly those representing the Council on the Internal Drainage Boards.

In response to a query regarding the work of the Environment Agency, the Assistant Director of Regulatory explained that the agency was a key partner of the Alliance and was heavily involved in co-ordinating solutions and delivering objectives.

During discussion, a member suggested that it would be helpful to see tracked changes when proposing amendments to strategies/policies in future.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet ratifies the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, and notes the progress being made.

51 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER – DOG FOULING

The Assistant Director of Regulatory introduced the report, which presented members with a new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for approval.

He explained that a PSPO was the mechanism by which the Council could incentivise people to clean up after their dogs, if they fouled in a public place, and could also enforce non-compliance. Members noted that whilst the Broadland district enjoyed low levels of reports of dog fouling, it still remained an issue that the public were concerned about.

The Assistant Director of Regulatory explained that the Council had, as required, formally consulted with the local police and local communities regarding the proposal to introduce a new order. Members queried whether the consultation was valid as no response had been received from the Police and Crime Commissioner, however, the Assistant Director explained that it was the policy of the constabulary to only comment by exception, and he was satisfied that the Order would be legally compliant.

A member commented on the lack of dog bin facilities in some areas, and the Assistant Director confirmed that it was not uncommon for some dog walkers

to have to travel some way to a bin, when walking in country parks or woods. However, he would look into the areas referred to, to ensure that facilities were sufficient.

In response to a comment regarding horse manure, members noted that complaints referring to this were few and far between. It did not pose the same health risk to humans as dog fouling, and therefore it was not considered justifiable to include it in any future PSPO.

Referring to bin collection, members were informed that this was carried out by the Council as part of its statutory duties, and also by special arrangement, when bins were provided by parish councils. He confirmed that if bags were left next to bins, when bins were full, then the Council would not look to take enforcement action in such cases. In cases where bins were regularly overflowing, the local parish councils might need to consider the need for the additional provision of bins.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet approves the Public Space Protection Order No.3 as proposed in paragraph 4.5 and Appendix 1 over the geographical areas identified in Appendix 2, for a period of three years.

52 AWARDING OF CONTRACTS IN RELATION TO THE MOBILISATION OF THE HORIZON CENTRE

Members considered report, which sought approval for a delegation to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to award contracts in relation to the mobilisation of the Horizon Centre.

The Director of Resources reminded members of the background to the report and explained that following the decision to purchase the Horizon Centre, and relocate the Council's office, there was a need to procure the fit out and other contracts associated with the mobilisation. The report sought delegation to award these contracts, so as not to impede on the project's timescales, especially in light of escalating costs. She stressed that contracts could only be awarded within the budget which had already been agreed at the Council meeting held 12 May 2022.

Referring to the recommendations, Cllr G Nurden proposed an amendment, explaining that he felt it would be appropriate for the portfolio holder for Transformation and Organisational Development to also be consulted on the contract awards, along with the Leader of the Council. This amendment was seconded by Cllr K Kelly.

In response to queries, the Director of Resources informed the meeting that South Norfolk Council would also consider the delegation of contracts at its

next Cabinet meeting, and its decision would be entirely independent of that made by Broadland Council.

Members then asked a number of questions relating to the fit-out costs of the building and members were reminded that these figures could not be discussed in a public meeting, but had already been provided as part of a confidential appendix in the Council report considered on 12 May, when the purchase of the Horizon building had been agreed. Some members felt it necessary to refer to these figures during consideration of the report, and it was therefore suggested that the meeting went into private session. It was proposed, seconded and then

RESOLVED

To exclude the press and public from the meeting because otherwise, information which was exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part I 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.

During discussion, members were referred to Appendix P of the Council report, for the meeting held 12 May, and the budget set aside for the fit out and mobilisation costs for the move to the Horizon Centre. Members noted that Wi-Fi costs were already included in the capital programme at both councils for the two separate sites, and that these budgets would be reassigned to the Horizon Building.

A member queried the final purchase price of the Horizon building, and the Director of Resources explained that this could not be disclosed, however, it was within the parameters set out in the business case, agreed by Council at its meeting on 12 May.

During further discussion, some members felt that it would be more appropriate to consider the contracts at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and Cabinet, as was the current requirement, calling emergency meetings if necessary. The Director of Resources explained that this could result in a number of additional meetings as numerous different contracts were required, and that this would delay progress. She also stressed that the awarding of each contract would be subject to a strict procurement framework, which no level of scrutiny could change.

In response to queries regarding escalating costs, the Director of Resources confirmed that a contingency budget was in place, and that the budget spend would be carefully monitored.

The Chairman then suggested, and members agreed that the meeting should move back into public session.

Members then voted on the proposed amendment, and this was carried.

Following a further show of hands, it was

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet approves the delegation to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, to award contracts for the fit out of the Horizon Centre and other contracts, that are over £100,000, as long as they are within the overall budgets as outlined in section 2 of the report.

53 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business 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.

54 STRAY DOG COLLECTION CONTRACT

Members considered the exempt report of the Environmental Protection Manager which sought Cabinet approval for the appointment of a contractor to carry out the stray dog collection services for the Council.

The Assistant Director of Regulatory outlined the report, explaining that the Council was legally required to deal with stray dogs within its area. He referred members to the results of a recent tender, and the recommendations made for a future contractor.

In response to queries, the Assistant Director explained that it was not unusual to receive a low number of tenders for the service required. He added that the Council was called upon to deal with hundreds of stray dogs each year, and that these dogs were not always found and collected. He assured members that the quality of the contractor was scrupulously checked and weighted heavily in the selection process.

Following a show of hands it was

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet approves the appointment of the Stray Dog Collection contractor, as outlined in paragraph 8.1 of the report.

55 OPTIONS ON PROVISION OF A FUTURE FRAUD SERVICE

Members considered the exempt report of the Revenues Manager, which provided options on the future resourcing and delivery of a fraud service, for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

The Assistant Director of Finance presented his report to members and outlined the options available to the Council, and the reasons for the preferred way forward. He responded to a number of queries from members and following a show of hands, it was

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet agree with the recommendations outlined at paragraph 8 of the report.

(The meeting concluded at 11.55am)

Chairman