

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 25 October 2022 at 10.00am when there were present:

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

Apologies: Councillors: N Harpley and K Leggett.

Substitute Members: Councillor S Clancy (for K Leggett).

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: J Emsell and J Leggett.

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Assistant Director of ICT / Digital and Transformation (C Lawrie), the Strategy and Intelligence Manager (S Carey), the Assistant Director for Community Services (S Phelan), the Internal Consultancy Lead Waste Services, (S Bruton), the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Democratic Services Officer (D Matthews).

56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Harpley and Cllr K Leggett.

57 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 September and 20 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record, save for the following amendment:

Minute No: 42 Digital Connectivity (6 September 2022)

Members noted that some of the most vulnerable residents in the District might not have landlines and that this should be taken into account when providing services.

58 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed back James Overy, the Democratic Services Officer following his illness. He would initially be taking up his duties remotely.

CABINET REPORTS

59 FIRST CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, PHASE ONE

The Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation introduced the report, which proposed seeking consultancy support to further explore the One Team vision for delivering a first-class customer experience from a people, process and technology perspective.

Members were reminded that Cabinet had already agreed to earmark £49,500 for the development of a full business case for a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and the report was seeking authority to use these reserves for the Council's contribution to the £110,000 cost of the discovery phase.

The discovery phase would include an analysis and assessment of where and how the customer journey and experience could be improved along with a future-state analysis and construct of how a first-class customer service and customer experience should look.

The report set out the principles of providing an effective customer service, which included a reduction in the cost of end-to-end service delivery, whilst enabling customers to interact in a more efficient way and accessing Council services 24/7.

Members were advised that the benefits of delivering a first-class customer service would provide real cost and efficiency savings. Examples of the savings achieved elsewhere by the introduction of CRM systems were set out in the report at paragraph 5.1.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee had amended the recommendation in the report to more accurately reflect Broadland's contribution of £49,500 to the discovery exercise. He also reminded the Committee that the proposal was for the

appointment of consultants and that any issues regarding the levels of service should be raised outside of the meeting.

In response to a query about how the collection of multiple customer records would accord with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation confirmed that anonymised data would be used for the discovery phase to better understand what information was needed. This would, in turn, allow protocols to be put in place to align with GDPR for the CRM system.

In answer to a concern that the project was placing a greater emphasis on technology, efficiencies and savings than on the Council's customers, the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation reassured the Committee that the technology would be an enabler for an improved customer experience. However, it was recognised that some services might not be appropriate for inclusion within the CRM and these would be addressed by more conventional means.

Some members noted that many of the most vulnerable residents did not have access to the internet and could require a face to face or telephone service and that it was important that these people were not missed, as they were some of the people in greatest need. In response, the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation confirmed that the aim of the discovery phase was to assess the different demands on Council services, so that the right channels could be directed at the right customers. This would allow those who could self-serve to access services themselves and those who needed more help to be assisted in ways that were more appropriate for them.

It was also emphasised that there was no intention of ceasing telephone access for Council services. Telephone performance data continued to be monitored by managers and Corporate Management Team received this data on a weekly basis. In addition to this Cabinet Performance Reports included telephone data as part of its customer satisfaction measures, so that members were kept informed about how the Council was responding to telephone enquiries.

The Committee was also informed that the consultants had experience, knowledge and technical skills that were not available at the Council and were essential for informing the vision of first-class customer service.

In reply to a query about the provision of satellite offices for residents who did not want to access services digitally, the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation confirmed that the discovery phase would collate the outputs

from customers, but it could not be confirmed at this early stage what options would eventually be proposed for determination by Cabinet.

Members were informed that, when in place, the CRM system would update customers automatically on the status of the services they had requested. For example, planning applicants would be informed of progress with their applications at each stage of the process.

In summary, it was confirmed that the discovery phase would seek to better understand the services and transactions that would benefit from using technology to deliver them. This would then progress to the production of a suggested programme of work, which would inform a full business case for a CRM system. This would then be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before being taken to Cabinet for a final decision.

The Managing Director also confirmed that the CRM would be a complementary system that would provide choice for how and when customers engaged with the Council. But it was also recognised that for some residents telephone or face to face contact was more appropriate and there was no intention that the introduction of the CRM would make it more difficult for residents to access Council services through these channels.

Following a show of hands and with 10 in favour and 2 against it was

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

1. To agree to initiate the discovery phase as the first phase towards establishing the current state, the future state and the underpinning technology to inform a fully-costed business case for investment to deliver a First-Class Customer Service; and
2. To utilise Broadland District Council's contribution of £49,500 from the Earmarked Reserves agreed by Cabinet on 8 February 2022 on consultancy resource to support in the development of a full outline business case.

60 FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW TEAM

The Strategy and Intelligence Manager introduced the report, which presented an overview of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge, which took place between the 11 and 15 July 2022 and the feedback report from the Peer Team, as well as an Action Plan that had been developed from their work.

The Peer Team had considered the following five themes which were critical to performance and improvement.

1. Local priorities and outcomes
2. Organisational and place leadership
3. Governance and culture arrangements
4. Financial planning and management
5. Capacity for improvement

In addition to these areas the Peer Team had considered the joint partnership.

Overall the Peer Team praised the work being done with town and parish councils and were impressed with the work carried during the Covid-19 pandemic across organisational boundaries, especially through the Help Hub. The Team also highlighted that the Councils had some of the highest performing results in the country with tax collection rates being spotlighted.

The Team also provided the following constructive recommendations for the Councils to consider:

Recommendation 1 - Better celebrate your innovation and best practice initiatives – you are underselling your achievements and role as place leaders.

Recommendation 2 - Clarify member and officer roles and responsibilities across both councils and create a culture of trust, mutual respect, confront poor behaviour and encourage challenge.

Recommendation 3 - Establish a clear outcome based joint vision for the partnership – political relationships are undermining the aspiration. Members from both councils need to be on board, standing together to promote the benefits you are achieving.

Recommendation 4 - Review the office accommodation move project-listen to the specialists, agree a realistic timeline and milestones and then communicate.

Recommendation 5 - Streamline processes and procedures around governance to improve officer capacity, resilience and accountability and take the partnership forward.

Recommendation 6 - Strengthen corporate oversight of project and programme management, performance management and transformation portfolios – empower managers

Recommendation 7 - Review, refresh, refine and stress test the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at the start of the budget process.

Recommendation 8 - Remember the power of consistent and timely communication.

Following the Peer Team's feedback a draft Action Plan had been produced by senior officers in consultation with Portfolio Holders and the Leaders to consider how the recommendations could be taken forward and implemented.

The Committee was informed that the Peer Team would be returning in six months' time to conduct a review to assess progress with the implementation of the recommendations.

In answer to query, it was confirmed that changes to the Action Plan could be made by the Committee at this stage, if required.

A member expressed concern that the report had found that junior officers were shielded from poor member behaviour. He asked who was responsible for this poor behaviour and why the members responsible were not being brought before the Standards Committee.

In response, the Managing Director advised the meeting that the Peer Team had been impressed by the organisation, but had noted that some work needed to be done on improving behaviours. The Peer Team had stressed that this should be kept in context, but that there were improvements to be made to how the organisation worked. In particular, they were mindful of the move to a single building in this process.

This would, provide an opportunity to work on this area that covered behaviour between members and officers, members and members and officers and officers. It was, therefore, proposed to look at values and behaviours and robustly challenge any bad behaviours. As part of this process the Monitoring Officer would be meeting with Committee Chairmen and conducting a review of the member/officer protocol. Senior officers were also working to ensure that officer to officer relations were strong and positive.

The Managing Director emphasised that the comments about behaviours should be taken in context against the very good work being carried out in Broadland and South Norfolk, which in some cases was exemplar.

A member suggested that it would be difficult to approve the publication of the Report and Action Plan without more time to consider it carefully. She also considered that there was too much emphasis on the political rather than the administration of the Councils and the implication was that the political side needed to change. She suggested that the report had not taken a balanced view as to how well the administration was working, whilst recognising that they were two sovereign Councils, which might choose to differ in their political approach.

In response, the Managing Director informed the meeting that the Action Plan was only the starting point of this process and that the Peer Team would return in six months' time to assess progress with the recommendations. The Team had been made up of both members and officers, led by an experienced politician and had considered both the political and the administrative side of both Councils and was not commenting on their

sovereign nature. The recommendations about behaviours were about how members and officers worked together, not what they did together and was intended to be constructive.

A member noted the Action Plan recommendation for a review of the member/officer protocol, as well as training for Chairmen and he suggested that senior officers might also require training on interacting with members.

In response, the Managing Director advised the Committee that the member/officer protocol would cover both parties in the relationship. In respect of Chairman training it would not be specific to members, but would cover all aspects of what took place in meetings.

He also confirmed that work on the recommendations in the Action Plan was not time critical and it was entirely up to both Councils how they were progressed. The Action Plan would also be brought back to members with a progress report ahead of the return of the Peer Review Team.

The Chairman noted that a number of the Actions had completion dates by the end of 2022, so that members could consider progress in the New Year.

A member suggested that a decision on the Action Plan should be deferred until members had the opportunity to debate its content and she proposed that a member workshop should be held to do this.

In response, the Managing Director confirmed that an all-member workshop would be useful. He asked that the Headline recommendations in the Action Plan be agreed, as they had been drawn up from the Peer Review recommendations and provided the framework for moving the work along and that an all-member workshop be arranged as soon as possible to go through the Action Plan in detail.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that the recommendations in the Action Plan were unclear and lacked detail about what some of the Actions entailed. He also suggested that the greater alignment of the One Team served to restrict the political independence of each authority. For example, the proposed alignment of Portfolios. He was also concerned that Peer Team members might have had preconceived views on collaboration.

The Managing Director advised the meeting that the Peer Team had no political preconceptions and the recommendations in the Action Plan had not been influenced by the Leaders. He added that whilst alignment was sought it was not prescriptive. Different practices were in place at each authority where they were required by members, but he reminded members that the areas where the most significant progress had been made were in collaborative working such as the first class housing service, which was being held up as an exemplar. He also emphasised that there was no suggestion that the Peer Review Team were trying to restrict or erode the political independence of either Council.

The Managing Director added that one focus of the Peer Review had been the number of items that were considered at multiple meetings before they were approved and it had been recommended that this be reviewed to assess if this process could be made more streamlined and efficient.

A member commented that he was disappointed that the Collaboration Working Group had not been able to finalise its report, which included many of the issues raised in the Peer Review report. He suggested that a series of themed workshops might be needed to fully assess the Action Plan.

Members generally concluded that the Peer Review Report should be published, but that the Action Plan should be subject to consideration by an all member workshop before it was approved.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

1. To approve the publishing of the Peer Review Report; and
2. That an all-member session/s be arranged to review the proposed Actions in relation to the Peer Review Report recommendations, including further member involvement regarding devising and agreeing outcomes. The outcome of the sessions and proposed Action Plan to be reported to a further meeting of Cabinet to be agreed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also resolved that progress with the Action Plan be reported back to the Committee in due course

The Committee adjourned at 11.44am and reconvened at 11.54am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.

61 FRETtenham DEPOT AWARD OF REDEVELOPMENT CONTRACT

The Assistant Director for Community Services introduced the report, which presented the outcome of the tender exercise completed by Veolia on behalf of the Council for the redevelopment of the Council owned Frettenham refuse depot.

Members were informed that the Council owned the refuse depot site, which had been leased to Veolia for over 30 years and that the current site was no longer fit for purpose and therefore Cabinet had agreed that the redevelopment of the site go out for tender.

The following three tenders for a fixed price design and build contract were received with all bids meeting the requirements of the contract:

£ 2,791,938 + 12.5% contingency - Contractor A
£ 2,813,911 + 12.5% contingency - Contractor B

£ 2,807,101 + 12.5% contingency - Contractor C

An independent assessment of the tender pack and an estimate of the cost of the works based on current market conditions had been commissioned, which estimated that the scheme should be £5,235,955 including the contingency. As the tenders received were significantly lower than this figure the tenders were being checked to ensure that they met the required specification.

The costs of the tenders received included £400,000 of enhanced renewables which includes the following:

- A heat recovery and ventilation system
- Air source heat pump
- Workshop Ceiling Heating, included low voltage lighting
- 80 PV to the main building roof area including 6 No. EV charging points.
- 96 PV on south and east facing parking bays Including 10 No. EV Charge points.
- A rainwater collection system
- 40 PVs on top of the lorry parking bays

The enhancements would greatly improve the carbon footprint of the depot and help the Council meet its target to reach carbon zero by 2030. The solar panels would generate enough electricity for the site to initially be self-sufficient, up to the point when a number of the Refuse Collection Vehicles might be switched to electric and would yield a carbon reduction of approximately 30,000 CO₂ kg/year.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that batteries were included for the storage of excess electricity generated on the site. However, the National Grid had confirmed that it would not buy electricity from the site. The current electrical supply was not being upgraded as the estimated costs would be in the order of £500,000 and it was still not clear whether this would be needed in future, as the technology for powering Refuse Collection Vehicles was still developing.

It was confirmed that the contract required procurement to be carried out on an ethical basis and this was to be verified by the Council's consultants.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

1. Approve the release of the capital funding required for Veolia to proceed with awarding the Contract to Bidder A; and

2. Allocate £400,000 from the Opportunities Project – Net Zero Reserve to fund the enhanced renewables as part of the depot redevelopment; and
3. Recommend to Council that the approved Capital Budget for Waste Vehicle/Depot is increased by £275,561 to £2,740,930 – giving a total budget allocation of £3,140,930 for the depot redevelopment.

(The meeting concluded at 12.11pm)

Chairman