

## 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 15 November 2022 at 10.00 am when there were present:**

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

**Cabinet Members Present:** Councillors: J Leggett and F Whymark

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director of Place ( P Courtier), the Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer) (E Hodds), the Assistant Director for Regulatory (N Howard), the Assistant Director for Economic Growth (G Denton) the Assistant Director for Finance (R Fincham) the Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) (T Garland), the Food Safety and Licensing Team Manager (L Chant) and the Democratic Services Officer (L Arthurton)

### 62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

### 63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs K Leggett (with Cllr Clancy appointed substitute) and M Murrell.

### 64 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chairman informed Committee that the item on the Frettenham Depot award of the redevelopment had been withdrawn from the Cabinet meeting.

He further explained that Cabinet requested further information. Members noted that the item would be heard at the next Cabinet meeting.

Members noted that the additional recommendation proposed by Overview and Scrutiny regarding minute no.60: Findings of the Peer Review Team was not accepted by Cabinet. The Chairman informed members that the Managing Director had confirmed that a member workshop would be arranged to discuss the report further. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this would take place before the end of the year and would provide members with the opportunity to ask further questions and review the action plan.

### **65 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman noted that the annual budget workshop had taken place and the proposed questions from the discussions would be review in the Work Programme section later in the meeting.

### **66 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There was no public speaking

### **67 REVIEW OF EARLY INTERVENTION ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OFFICER PILOT SERVICE – REVIEW OF PROGRESS**

The Assistant Director for Regulatory introduced the report, which presented a review of the progress of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service following its introduction in April 2022.

The Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service was started in April 2022 with the planned project outcomes to:

- Gather more early intelligence, identify and tackle root causes of anti-social behaviour in the Council's Regulatory services, in order to produce long-term improvements in neighbour relations and community safety.
- Increase the capacity and drive, speed and impact of the Council's service by taking an early intervention approach to anti-social behaviour and environmental offending.
- Offer stronger visibility and community reassurance.
- Detect better and earlier any wider victimisation, vulnerability and support needs, and safeguarding issues.
- Optimise the deterrence, investigation and enforcement of anti-social behaviour (within the Council's remit) where offences have been committed causing harassment, alarm, distress or environmental harm.
- Test the scope for stronger coordination of responses and tactics for dealing with significant ongoing anti-social behaviour issues and incidents, operating (within the Council's remit) closely alongside Norfolk Constabulary as a key regulatory partner.

The early intervention operating model had proven effective and efficient, as indicated by the results against its success measures. The indications were that this service remodelling and transformation would offer significant benefits to the Council and to local communities.

The added value overall of the early intervention pilot service could be summarised within the following two key benefits:

- Hundreds of cases had been quickly resolved, with sound and accurate background information enabling proportionate responses and quickly completed service delivery meeting the expectations agreed in advance with service users.
- The Community Protection Team was able to focus more time on those cases that needed more in-depth investigation and more formal interventions and enforcement. As a result, the Council could demonstrate a growing body of successful outcomes and – where informal interventions were not complied with – robust enforcement action ranging from written warnings and formal notices to fixed penalty notices and, where necessary, prosecutions.

Strong support for the service had been expressed from several partner agencies. Officers were exploring whether partnership funding could be found to sustain the early intervention service going forwards in an extension of the pilot service through 2023-24, enabling a further period of evaluation to focus on the longer-term outcomes.

One member queried the increase in cases and asked officers for further information on the reasons. Officers explained that the COVID pandemic had an impact on the rise of cases, with more people spending time at home and working from home. Officers further reassured members that any issues were being addressed earlier and faster to minimise disruption.

In answer to a query the Assistant Director for Regulatory informed the meeting that the Community Protection Team had received 1,801 anti-social behaviour complaints in 2018, 1,054 in 2019 and 2021/22 2,700, which showed the uplift that the Council had seen. The report highlighted that during the service's peak month of August this year demand had been 70 percent higher than it was four years ago. On an annual basis there remained a continuing increase in service demand of around 32 percent above pre-Covid levels.

In response to a query about the Team's ability to cope with any further increase in demand on the Service, the Assistant Director for Regulatory informed the meeting that one aim of the pilot service was to enable little and often contact for the lower risk anti-social behaviour cases. This was an adaptable model that would allow for less or more work to be undertaken as was necessary. In 80 percent of cases the issues were resolved with one contact which demonstrated that this model of intervention worked. Overall,

the Team had the capacity to manage any further increase in demand by taking a flexible approach within existing resources.

The Director of Place drew members' attention to paragraph 6.1 of the report, which showed that there was no budget for the service beyond the pilot period, but there was the possibility that the Police and Crime Commissioner might be able to contribute to the service. Also as much of the demand involved fly-tipping Veolia or other waste services might be able to offer support to extend the service. He was, therefore, optimistic about attracting funding for this service going forward, without drawing from the Council's base budget.

In answer to a query, the Assistant Director for Regulatory informed the Committee that from 1 April to 31 October this year 811 cases had been dealt with, by the two Anti-Social Behaviour officers. More senior officers, with enforcement powers, dealt with the more complex cases and those that could not be resolved by a single visit. The percentages quoted in the report were against the case load as a whole, which totalled 2,600 on an annual basis.

In reply to a query from the Chairman regarding complaints that had escalated to action from the police, the Assistant Director for Regulatory informed the Committee that the Council and the police each had roles in relation to anti-social behaviour under the Crime and Disorder Act and joint powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Policing and Crime Act 2014. Officers worked on a daily basis with colleagues at Norfolk Constabulary, in respect of nuisance related activity, but only a very small percentage of these cases were referred to the police for criminal investigation.

The meeting was informed that officers had daily access to the previous 24 hours of call volumes from the police control room and could select those that were more appropriate for the Council to deal with.

In answer to a query, the Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) confirmed that there was a direct dial telephone number for the Business Support Team, although it was preferred that residents contact the Team via the web form, as they were then triaged and progressed according to their priority. The Council received 80 percent of calls for the service through this channel.

A member noted that some residents had limited access to the internet and that it was essential that services remained available via the telephone. Officers confirmed that the direct dial number for the Team would be placed on the Council's website. It would also be ensured that numbers for other essential services would be forwarded to members

Members were informed that around 40 percent of the cases received were in Broadland and the other 60 percent were in South Norfolk. Most complaints were about noise, such as dogs barking, amplified music and building work. The County Council did not take a significant operational role in respect of anti-social behaviour and most of the work by Broadland was in partnership

with the police, the Council took the lead in anti-social behaviour, whilst the police led on more serious criminal matters.

The Chairman requested that the Committee's Work Programme be updated to include a further review of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service to evaluate how successful the scheme had been in 12 Months.

In answer to a question about the success criteria of the pilot, the Assistant Director for Regulatory confirmed that officers were satisfied that the measures in place were sufficient to assess the pilot scheme and that these would be monitored closely, as it progressed.

The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, to amend recommendation three to make a more robust affirmation of the Committee's support for the scheme.

Following a show of hands, it was;

### **AGREED**

1. To receive the review of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service to date, and to note that this matter will be brought back to the Committee once further information is available to evaluate the success of the pilot.
2. To consider the success criteria and progress to achieve them in section 3 of this report.
3. To commend the service provided to date and propose that the proposed extension of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service to March 2024 subject to funding being secured.

*The Committee adjourned at 10.49am and reconvened at 11.02am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.*

## **68 REVIEW OF BUSINESS REGULATORY SUPPORT HUB PILOT SERVICE – REVIEW OF PROGRESS**

The Assistant Director for Regulatory presented the report, which reviewed the progress of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service following its introduction in January 2022.

Members were informed that the Council's Regulatory Service was responsible for inspecting business compliance and providing support and guidance, as well as enforcement.

The aim of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service was to ensure that businesses had strong pro-active and balanced support for those businesses that the Council had a regulatory relationship with.

One of the planned outcomes of the pilot was to provide a shop window for Council services, including enhanced compliance services such as business start-up support and pre-inspection support.

The pilot tested the potential for the following two elements of service transformation:

- Extending the information and advice offer from the Council's Regulatory services to help businesses to maximise compliance with legal requirements and, as a result, protect the public and consumers.
- Connecting more closely a range of Council services with which businesses engage, so that when businesses contact one of them officers can help those businesses ensure they are fully informed about, and engaging with, others.

Section three of the report included nine success measures for the pilot scheme against which it could be assessed.

Members attention' was drawn to Appendix One to the report, which illustrated the range of contact points that were available to businesses, including licensing, planning, commercial waste, business rates, economic growth and training. The Business Regulatory Support Hub would act as a link to all these services when a start-up business first contacted the Council.

It was intended to seek £32,000 in external funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund, to allow an extension of the pilot to March 2024, in order to evaluate the scheme against the planned outcomes.

In response to a query about any areas that could be improved, the Food Safety and Licensing Team Manager advised members that raising awareness of the service was an area that could be improved to encourage further start-ups and existing businesses to take advantage of the service.

A member suggested that the report did not have enough hard data, with which to judge the success of the pilot so far.

In response, the Assistant Director for Regulatory confirmed that a set of success criteria had been used to design the pilot and it had taken from January to May this year to gather all the existing advice and information for the Regulatory Services for the launch of the pilot. The scheme was, therefore, at an early stage and it was anticipated that more hard data would be available as the scheme progressed.

A member commended the initiative which would be a valuable source of information for small businesses starting out. The Food Safety and Licensing Team Manager added that the advantage of this scheme was that it was a dedicated service for providing advice, instead of being a supplementary element of the enforcement work of the Environmental Health Officers. This

scheme would, therefore, reach businesses faster and more consistently than had previously been possible by operational services.

In answer to a question about advising businesses about reducing carbon emissions and success measures to demonstrate this the Assistant Director for Economic Growth informed the meeting that businesses would be signposted to the Economic Development Team and the Business Builder programme, which provided funding and advice to businesses in Broadland. As part of this businesses were encouraged to consider the green agenda in all of their planning and applications for funding. For example, pollution prevention, zero waste to landfill targets, car-pooling and cycling to work etc.

The answer to some queries from the Chairman, the Director for Place informed members that external funding would be sought to extend the period of the scheme, rather than drawing on the Council's base budget. Of the 187 enquiries for information, support and advice provided by the Business Regulatory Support Hub 61 percent of these were in South Norfolk and 39 percent in Broadland. These figures broadly equated to the number of businesses in each District.

The Chairman noted that most of the enquiries appeared to be from one person start-up businesses.

A member suggested that business continuity should be added as a stream of advice for new businesses. The Assistant Director for Regulatory confirmed that this information could be added to the list of connections cultivated by the Hub and that this would be taken forward as an action.

Another member asked about the format that information was made available in, and if disabilities were taken into account when providing advice.

In response, the Food Safety and Licensing Team Manager informed members that the first point of contact was in English, but translated material was available on a needs basis. The Assistant Director for Regulatory confirmed that the Hub was designed to be an accessible point of contact for businesses and to have the time available to meet individual needs. Firstly to identify what information would be useful and secondly to identify any information that the Council did not hold that could then be located and provided for the caller. Different formats could be provided and a lot of testing to ensure that the information delivered was accessible.

The Chairman proposed amending recommendation two to better reflect the level of support expressed by the Committee for the scheme. He suggested deleting 'To note' and replacing it with 'To support'.

The Chairman's proposal was agreed and following a show of hands it was unanimously:

**AGREED**

1. To receive the review on progress of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service and make recommendations as appropriate, and to note that this matter will be brought back to the Committee once further information is available to evaluate the success of the pilot.
2. To support the proposed extension of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot up to March 2024 subject to confirmation of temporary Shared Prosperity Fund funding, or alternative external funding sources, to enable longer pilot delivery, testing and evaluation.

### 69 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer) updated the Committee on its Work Programme.

The progress reviews of the following two items would be added to the Work Programme for November 2023:

- Review of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer Pilot Service
- Review of Business Regulatory Support Hub Pilot Service

The items scheduled for the 24 January 2023 meeting were: the Joint Budget meeting with Cabinet, the Housing Allocations Policy and the Community Safety Police and Crime Plan. It was hoped that a representative from the Police and Crime Commissioner would be in attendance for the last item.

In April the Committee would receive a presentation on Digital Connectivity – Better Broadband for Norfolk, as well as a report on the Council Partnership Register Review and the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In respect of the Water-supply, management and climate change item that was scheduled for updates, as and when appropriate, members were informed that a £268,000 precept, was paid to the Broads Authority and Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board and they were proposing a ten percent increase over four years. It was suggested that the Chief Executive of the Water Management Alliance be asked to attend a meeting of the Committee to explain why they were seeking this increase and to set out the proposed measures for ensuring water security for Norfolk residents in the future. Cllr Kelly suggested that an invitation to the January meeting, ahead of the budget, would be most appropriate. Members agreed with this as an action.

It was confirmed that normal business could continue during the pre-election period, so there were no restrictions on the Committee considering the items on the Work Programme scheduled for the 4 April 2023 meeting.

A Review of the move to the Horizon building would be placed on the Work Programme, with a date to be confirmed. The date of the move would be



confirmed following the procurement process and associated works were finalised.

A member expressed disappointment that the Horizon building was not going to have a changing place facility. The Monitoring Officer suggested that the member email the concern directly to her and the Managing Director for a response.

The date for the Peer Review Action Plan would be confirmed following the all-member workshop.

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families had confirmed that the proposal for the Task and Finish Group Review of Housing Providers throughout Broadland had been scoped out. Once this was agreed by the Task and Finish Group in December a meeting would be arranged for early January 2023.

The Assistant Director for Finance reminded members that a Finance Workshop was held last week, which allowed for suitable questions to be formulated to ensure Cabinet were making appropriate decisions and drawing valid assumptions when setting next year's budget.

Members had been sent copies of the questions that were drafted as a result of the Workshop, which the Committee were requested to consider and agree for submission to Cabinet.

*The Committee adjourned at 11.45am and reconvened at 11.49am, when all the Committee members listed above were present, except for Cllr J Davis and Cllr Karimi-Ghovanlou.*

Members were informed that the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) would be published along with the Budget.

The current budget figures had been based on the assumption that the Council's settlement from the Government would be the same as last year, but this would not be confirmed until the settlement was announced.

The following questions were agreed by the Committee.

1. What budget assumptions have been made regarding the disposal of Thorpe Lodge? And what would be the impact on the budget if the disposal is delayed, or the value achieved is less than anticipated, or if it was not sold?
2. What are the costs, risks and opportunities arising from the Council decision, on 13 October 22, to adopt an organisational 2030 target for achieving net zero carbon emissions? And how have these been factored into the 23/24 budgets?

3. The Council has seen a significant increase in homeless presentations and associated temporary accommodation costs. What assumptions are included in the 23/24 budget regarding these pressures? And what actions are being taken to mitigate these pressures?
4. The Capital Programme includes £7m for investment in Broadland Growth. How likely is this spend?  
Will nutrient neutrality affect this investment?  
Will the current economic climate affect this investment?  
What return is anticipated on this spend?  
If an investment is made in Broadland Growth how will the investment be overseen by Members?  
If the return on this investment is intended to help fill the £1m funding gap in the MTFP, what if it fails to do so?
5. The capital budgets tend to be fixed amounts for each year i.e. £220,000 a year for the server and PC replacement programme. Should future year's budgets be increased to take account of future inflationary pressures?
6. First Class Customer Service is a key Council priority. What changes are being made to the 23/24 budgets to help improve our customer service?
7. The Capital Budget includes a provisional allowance for investment in a Taverham hub. Will this amount be sufficient? And if successful, is their provision for expansion of this model to other locations?
8. It is understood that we are still in discussion with the waste contractor on the 'true up' provisions in contract. What assumptions are being made regarding the Waste Contract cost in the budget? And what risks are there if agreement is not reached prior to the budget being agreed?
9. The Council is looking to upgrade the Frettenham Depot. This is likely to include energy efficiency measures which will benefit the contractor as they will benefit from lower running costs. How will the Council ensure that it receives the benefit from the lower running costs?
10. How will nutrient neutrality effect planning income? And what assumptions have been made in the 23/24 budget relating to this?
11. What safeguards had been put in place to address the Council's financial position in the event that the financial settlement is less than anticipated?

(The meeting concluded at 12.03pm)

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Chairman