

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

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: M Murrell (Chairman), N Brennan, P Bulman, S Catchpole, J Davis, N Harpley, S Holland, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K Leggett and S Prutton.

**Apologies:** Councillors: G Nurden and S Riley.

**Cabinet Members in Attendance:** Councillors: J Emsell, J Leggett, T Mancini-Boyle and F Whymark.

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director for Resources (D Lorimer), Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer) (E Hodds), the Assistant Director for Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director for Planning (H Mellors), the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Assistant Director for Economic Growth (G Denton), the Assistant Director for Community Services (S Phelan), the Strategy and Intelligence Manager (S Carey), the Capital and Treasury Accountant (D Slowther), the Senior Housing and Wellbeing Manager (R Dunsire), the Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager (K Gallagher), the National Management Trainee (E Howman), the Strategic Growth Projects Manager (N Cunningham), the Programme Manager (D Baillie-Murden), the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager (A Sommazzi), the Environmental Coordinator (K Burns) and the Democratic Services Officer (L Arthurton).

### 70 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G Nurden and S Riley.

### **71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In respect of item 78 (Electric Vehicle Charging Point Installation on Council Owned Land) and in the interest of openness and transparency Cllr J Davis declared that he was the Company Secretary, Norwich Community Solar.

### **CABINET REPORTS**

### **72 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 2022/23**

The Strategy and Intelligence Manager introduced the report, which provided an overview of the performance of the Council against the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2022/24. In order to improve future performance reporting it was proposed to bring forward an additional performance and finance report in Quarter 3 each year.

The Committee was advised that 18 measures had met the green year-end success criteria. Nine measures had not met the year-end target and were rated amber. No measures had been rated red (not meeting their target by a significant amount).

In response to a query about delays in some project delivery timescales, members were directed to the column in the Delivery Plan, which explained the rationale for any delays for individual projects. For example, the review process of Freedom of Information Requests, which had been paused as this was likely to be implemented as part of the Customer Relationship Management software.

In answer to a question about a possible reduction in planning income caused by nutrient neutrality, the Assistant Director for Planning advised members that there were some undetermined Planning Applications that were delayed subject to nutrient neutrality mitigation measures. Overall, this should not adversely affect Planning income, but could delay the receipt of some fees until the following Financial Year. A report on a Programme of Mitigation for Nutrient Neutrality would be brought to Cabinet in the New Year.

In respect of the measure for progress towards delivery of the predicted £8.6m savings through collaboration, which was rated amber, the Assistant Director for Finance informed members that some of the savings had been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic. The forecast was currently for around £8.4m in savings for the five year period, but it was expected that this savings gap could be closed by year five. Members were referred to the papers of the Collaboration Working Group for details of the individual savings.

In answer to a question about the adverse variance against budget of £311,000, in Community Services the Assistant Director for Finance informed the meeting that this gap was mainly due to a saving made when the Waste Contract was re-tendered which reduced the cost baseline and inflationary pressures that had arisen since the contract was agreed. Discussions with the contractor in respect of this issue were ongoing.

In reference to the £3m allocated to Broadland Growth Ltd to fund development, members were advised that this sum would be carried forward, until a suitable scheme was agreed.

In answer to a query about staff retention, which was rated amber, the Committee was informed that recruitment was proving difficult, which reflected the national picture. To address this a more targeted advertising approach was being taken. To complement this a new and improved induction process had been rolled out across the Council to encourage better staff retention. Work was also currently underway to benchmark against the Council's local government family and local authority neighbours. This information would be reported back in the Quarter 3 performance report.

The Committee was informed that it was proposed that Land Charge fees be increased to better reflect the level of work required. Previously this had not been covered by the fees and a significant proportion of the cost had fallen on Council Tax payers.

In response to a query about ongoing support for infrastructure once it had been delivered through the Greater Norwich Growth Board, members were informed that this was a question that would be better put forward when the Greater Norwich Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan was considered in the New Year.

In answer to a question about the £135,000 capital budget for remote working being brought forward to 2022/23; members were informed that an upgrade had always been scheduled, but with the move to the Horizon building it was considered that it was an appropriate time to bring it forward.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Note the revenue and capital position for Quarter 2 (variance details in Appendix 1).
2. Note the 2022/23 performance for Quarter 2 (detail in Appendix 2).
3. Note the mid-year update of the 2022/24 Delivery Plan (detail in appendix 3).

4. Approve the proposed change in reporting frequency which will bring forward an additional performance and finance report to Cabinet in Quarter 3 each year.
5. Recommend to Council the land charge fees and charges as detailed in paragraph 3.28
6. Recommend to Council that the 23/24 Remote working Capital Budget of £135,000 is brought forward to 22/23.

### **73 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 2 REPORT 2022/23**

The Capital and Treasury Accountant introduced the report, which reviewed the treasury management activity during the first six months of the financial year 2022/23 and reported on the prudential indicators.

The Committee was informed that interest rates had increased significantly since the budget was agreed in February and the Council had taken advantage of this by the use of fixed term investments, some of which had reached five percent.

Members were informed that income received on investments during the financial year was forecast to be around £1,109,600, which is £706,900 above the budget of £403,700. There had been no need to externally borrow so far this financial year and there had been no breaches of the Council's Prudential Indicators.

In response to a query about investments made with countries that had subsequently been removed from the list of countries that met the Council's ethical investment criteria, it was confirmed that this information would be provided to the Committee following the meeting. Currently the majority of the Council's investments were in the UK.

It was emphasised that the main aim of the Council's investment strategy was to maximise the security of its investments, which could be at the expense of yield if necessary.

Members were advised that the return on investments was countered by inflationary pressures, but overall the Council remained in a positive financial position due to its prudent level of reserves.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously:

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Endorse the treasury activity for the first half of the year and that it complies with the agreed strategy.
2. Note the 2022/23 prudential indicators for the first six months of the year.

### 74 BEST IN CLASS HOUSING – TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families introduced the report, which set out a plan to address the anticipated increase in demand for temporary accommodation in the District.

The Committee was advised that the Council had a strong track record of delivering housing services and was highly rated by its partner organisations. However, due to the worsening economic climate, the Council was facing a significant increase in homelessness, caused by the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and pressures on housing stock.

To address this issue it was proposed to increase the amount of temporary accommodation stock that the Council directly owned and managed, by 43 units. This investment would help mitigate the increasing costs of funding bed and breakfast accommodation, which had risen from £35 to £50 per night since 2020.

It was confirmed that the Council sought to ensure that people fleeing domestic violence were housed in secure properties at a safe distance away from their original dwelling. This was an advantage of having One Team working over two Districts. The Housing Team was also working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation for its work.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Housing and Planning emphasised that the proposal would help support the Council's most vulnerable residents, through a well-considered investment that could be sold in the future if the need for temporary accommodation receded. He commended the report and asked members to give it their support

In answer to a final question, it was confirmed that the Council had a number of grants and funds available to help residents stay in their own homes and that temporary accommodation was only used as a last resort.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Housing and Planning Policy and the Portfolio Holder for Finance to purchase individual properties up to £750,000.

#### **Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council to:**

2. Create an additional capital budget of £1,356,000, to purchase additional temporary accommodation and to capitalise the staff costs of any purchases.

3. To increase the current allocated opportunities reserve from £900,000 to £1,000,000, to facilitate the purchase of a property and pay for the renovation works to make the property ready for use.
4. To agree to the increase in establishment of 1 x FTE officer for every additional purchase of 10 units of temporary accommodation, which will be paid for by the additional income received from those properties.

*The Committee adjourned at 11.00am and reconvened at 11.12am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.*

### 75 REPORT ON BROADLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL'S COST OF LIVING RESPONSE

The Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager introduced the report, which set out the Council's response to the cost of living crisis.

Members were reminded that key areas of high inflation were currently transport, food and energy and it was anticipated that 33 percent of people in the UK would be in fuel poverty after April 2023. Vulnerable groups included those on benefits and low income, the elderly and lone parents.

To help support vulnerable residents a programme had been developed with the following four work streams:

- **Living Well** – ensuring residents had necessities such as energy, housing, food, and household items.
- **Participating in Daily Life** – reducing isolation and ensuring residents were able to be part of their local communities and carry on with their daily life.
- **Our Businesses** – support for businesses through targeted grant provision and regulatory advice.
- **Our Staff** – support and training to help staff deal with the rising demand on services, alongside the personal impacts of the crisis.

Work currently being undertaken included, the funding of community warm spaces across the District and an Energy Rebate Scheme to support residents across Broadland who were on a low income and needed help with increases to their energy bills. The Council also offered debt, welfare, and budgeting support through the Help Hub and a Household Support Fund to provide grant support to help cover the costs of household bills or essential items for those in need.

It was emphasised that in order to ensure that this support reach those in need the Help Hub was being promoted as the key point of contact.

To identify households that might be in need a new LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) tool would also be used, so that support could be targeted and prioritised.

In answer to a query it was confirmed that the Energy Rebate Scheme was flexible and could provide support on a case by case basis.

Members were informed that their suggestions were welcomed and would be followed up to improve the support offered by the Council. The Committee was also advised that to support staff a series of internal workshops would be held to share best practices and referral pathways to help frontline workers manage the expected increase in demand from residents.

The Committee was also informed that part of the Living Well work stream included access to food through foodbanks, social supermarkets and community fridges.

It was reiterated that the first point of contact for residents in need of support was the Help Hub. A fact sheet summarising the services available would be forwarded to members following the meeting.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Endorse the current programme and direction of travel of the council to support the rise in cost-of-living, as set out in this report, and
2. Comment on other potential areas to explore.

## **76 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families introduced the report, which proposed a new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy for adoption.

The Committee was advised that it was proposed that a common Anti-social Behaviour Policy approach be adopted with South Norfolk Council as a collaborating partner, to reflect common geographic and community concerns across both districts.

Members were informed that the policy was very much about early intervention to prevent problems escalating.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Cabinet to recommend to Council to agree the adoption of the proposed Anti-social Behaviour Policy at Appendix 1.

## **77 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND**

The Strategic Growth Projects Manager introduced the report, which sought approval for Broadland's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) proposal.

The REPF funded capital projects to support business development, farm business diversification and community infrastructure with the aim of improving productivity generating growth to strengthen the rural economies and communities.

The Council had been allocated £569,552, subject to the receipt of a compliant proposal. The report proposed that the funding should focus on the Supporting Business Investment Priority comprising £319,552 for business grants and up to £250,000 to purchase a key piece of food processing equipment to be located at the Broadland Food Innovation Centre, which could actively support the growth plans of a number of micro and small food and drink businesses.

A member suggested that the proposed allocation for the equipment should be spread across a number of projects across the District, instead of purchasing one piece of equipment. In response, the meeting was informed that the project would benefit a large number of micro and small businesses over the course of its life and would more enable locally grown food to be processed locally.

Another member suggested that farmers should be supported through the fund, instead of the proposed project. In response, the meeting was informed that eligible County Farms would be allowed to bid for grant funding.

The Committee was advised that although there was a deadline of 30 November 2022 to inform central Government of the proposed two year investment plan, a detailed piece of work would be undertaken to identify and specify the most useful piece of equipment to deliver the maximum levels of growth. It was also confirmed that any substantive changes to the principal areas of investment would be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

Following a show of hands, with five in favour, four against and one abstention it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**



1. Approve the principal areas of investment as set out in section 4 of this report.
2. Delegate to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Managing Director and the Leader of the Council, for the sign off and submission of an addendum to the UKSPF investment plan to meet the requirements of the funding.
3. Delegate to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Managing Director and the Leader of the Council, to make any non-substantive changes to the principal areas of investment as required by the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs.
4. Recommend a mid-point review of the Rural Business Builder grant programme in March 2024.

### **78 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT INSTALLATION ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND**

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager introduced the report, which sought approval for the installation of Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) infrastructure within Council carparks.

The report proposed that the Council awarded a contract to a third-party supplier for an end-to-end delivery solution. This meant that the supplier would pay the Council an annual licence fee for any EVCPs and be responsible for funding and delivering the necessary civil engineering works, as well as the ongoing management, maintenance and operation of EVCPs on Council owned and managed carparks.

The licences would be for a ten year period, with an option for a further five year extension.

It was confirmed that tenderers for the contract would be required to ensure that their charges were competitive.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously:

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Agree to the principle that EVCPs should be installed at council owned and managed carparks.
2. Delegate to the Assistant Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, decisions regarding an award of contract to a third-party supplier
3. Agree to explore, as per Economic Success Policy Members recommendation, solar canopy carports and the role they may play in

supporting with a phase two roll out of EVCP infrastructure as an additional project.

### **79 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY & DELIVERY PLAN**

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager introduced the report, which recommended the approval and adoption of an updated Environmental Strategy and the associated Delivery Plan.

The report also proposed amending the scheme of delegation to agree that the Assistant Director for Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, had the authority to agree additional environmental projects to be funded from the Environmental Projects Reserve.

Members were advised that the revised Strategy has been drafted to replace the one agreed in 2020 and to demonstrate the Council's achievements to date and to set more ambitious environmental targets.

The revised Strategy included the following two new key commitments:

- 2030 net-zero target for organisational emissions; and
- A commitment to align to the Government's 2050 target for wider District decarbonisation.

The Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan would continue to be living documents, updated regularly to ensure they continued to address local priorities and opportunities. Progress against activities would be presented to Members as part of existing performance management reports.

In answer to a question about community projects, the meeting was informed that there were a number of schemes embedded in the Strategy, such as tree planting and that one of the outcomes of this was to engage with community groups to meet tree planting targets. There were also events at Broadland Country Park, to promote biodiversity and engage people with the projects taking place there.

The Council also provided support for the development of neighbourhood and community led plans, which encouraged a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change by considering issues such as, flooding, water supply and biodiversity.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence commended the revised Strategy and Delivery Plan and informed the meeting that the Council could also provide community tree grants of up to £1,000. Green loans were also available and would be subject to a publicity campaign in the New Year.

It was emphasised that the Strategy aimed to meet the main ambitions of the Council and move quickly to the 2030 net-zero target for emissions. At the same time the Council would welcome suggestions for smaller community led projects that it could support, as part of the green agenda.

A member suggested that the Council should draft a Planning Policy Statement to ensure that new developments met minimum environmental standards, as had been done at other Planning Authorities.

The Assistant Director for Economic Growth confirmed that he would pass on this suggestion to his colleagues in the Planning department.

Following a show of hands, it was unanimously

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Approve and adopt an updated Environmental Strategy (Appendix 1)
2. Approve and adopt the Delivery Plan (Appendix 2)
3. Amend the delegation agreed by Cabinet in December 2021 and agree that the Assistant Director for Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, has the authority to agree additional environmental projects to be funded from the Environmental Projects Reserve, each project to be no more than £100,000 in value.

### **80 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC 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.

### **81 FRETtenham DEPOT - AWARD OF REDEVELOPMENT CONTRACT**

The Assistant Director for Community Services introduced the exempt report, which sought approval for capital funding for the redevelopment of the Frettenham depot.

Following consideration of the report and a show of hands, it was

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

To agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

(The meeting concluded at 12.17pm)

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Chairman