

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday 13 April 2021 at 10.00am.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: S Riley (Chairman), A D Adams (Vice-Chairman), N J Brennan, P E Bulman, S J Catchpole, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K S Kelly, D King, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, S M Prutton and N C Shaw.
Cabinet Members in Attendance:	Councillors: J Copplestone, J Emsell, L Hemsall, J Leggett, T Mancini-Boyle and S Vincent.
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillor: A D Crotch
Officers in Attendance:	The Director of Resources, Director of Place, Director of People and Communities, Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer), Assistant Director Finance, Assistant Director Chief of Staff, Assistant Director Planning, Assistant Director Economic Growth, Senior Communities Manager, Senior Enforcement Officer, Senior Economic Development Officer: Funding and Strategy, Senior Governance Officer (SW) and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

252 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Copplestone declared that she was in receipt of a Covid-19 Business Grant

253 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record, save for the following amendment:

Minute No: 248 – Apprenticeships Levy

It was clarified that apprenticeships training had ceased at Carrowbreck, but that the facility itself had not been closed down.

254 MATTERS ARISING

A Member thanked the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) for sending the Committee the details of long-term staff sickness, as requested and it was suggested that it might be appropriate for the Committee to investigate mental health related absences at a future meeting. Further details relating to long term sickness was also requested. The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) asked the member to email her with the specific areas that he wished to explore.

255 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised members that as the meeting had a large agenda to review a 30 minute lunch break would be taken at midday.

CABINET REPORTS

256 COVID RECOVERY REPORT

The Director of People and Communities introduced the report, which provided an update on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the District and the Council's ongoing response.

Members' attention was drawn to the Council's Recovery Plan (agreed by Council in July 2019) and the progress that had been made and the number of actions completed. These included:

- Supporting businesses to survive and continue to operate where possible
- Delivering an unprecedented programme of Business Support Grants
- Developing the Community Hub to support the vulnerable and communities most in need to manage through the pandemic
- Harnessing and growing the Community Links programme to build capacity in local communities to respond to the pandemic locally

The report also provided an overview of Covid-19 funding sources, allocation, and the spend used to support the pandemic response and recovery. This included an additional £399,000 from the Containing Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and the report set out how this could be allocated over the coming months.

The Assistant Director Finance advised the meeting that a key element of the report centred on the General Covid-19 funding of £891,000 that the Council had available to support the implementation of the Recovery Plan and further reports would be brought forward with proposals for how this should be spent over the coming months. However, in the interim it was requested that £50,400 be released to provide additional resource for the Council Tax and Recovery Team,

who were under significant pressure due to an increase in workloads generated by the pandemic.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Hardship Fund had recently been allocated an additional £25,000 and that it had been agreed that this could be looked at again if it was felt that it was necessary to increase the sum.

In answer to a query about vacancies in the Economic Growth Team, the meeting was informed that four posts had been advertised, but the response had been disappointing. If the posts remained vacant after the interviews had been held, a specialist recruitment agency might be considered. It was added that filling the posts was a priority, as it was proving challenging to maintain projects and carry on with business as usual, whilst managing the Covid-19 recovery, as well.

In respect of homelessness, members were reassured that the Council had in place the resource to manage demand at current levels, although the fluid nature of the Covid-19 environment meant further waves leading to an increase in demand could not be ruled out. The Committee was also advised that the Council worked closely with Registered Providers in order to provide accommodation for homeless people.

In response to a query about the provision of Young Person Mental Health Support Workers, it was confirmed that an allocation of £47,000 was proposed, although this sum had been omitted in error from Appendix E of the report.

It was proposed and duly seconded that an additional recommendation be made to request that the provision of Young Person Mental Health Support Worker funding be maintained.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

1. To note the local impact of Covid-19, together with the activities the Council is taking to mitigate those impacts.
2. To note the progress made towards delivering the actions set out in 'Our Plan for Recovery from the Covid-19 Crisis', and to recommend the update of the Recovery Plan to be considered by Cabinet in June.
3. To release the following sums to further support the Covid recovery (from the Un-Ringfenced Covid money)
 - Council Tax and Recovery Team Resource £50,400.
4. To agree a delegation to the relevant director, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder and the portfolio holder for finance, to release COMF funds to support activities consistent with the projects listed in this report.
5. *To maintain the provision of the Young Person Mental Health Support Worker Funding.*

257 SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

The Communities Senior Manager introduced the report, which highlighted the impact and opportunities that a Social Prescribing approach could have in the District.

Members were advised that Social Prescribing was a nationwide approach that was being utilised to relieve pressure on the NHS through a Community Connector model that provided support and assistance for non-medical issues through local GP surgeries and NHS partners.

The recruitment of Community Connectors in Broadland would enhance community working, whilst placing the Council in a stronger position to support vulnerable residents through the Covid-19 recovery and preventing increased demand on statutory services.

The report proposed that the Council employ two Community Connectors to cover the whole of the District for 12 months at a cost of £62,530 per annum which would be funded through external Covid-19 recovery funds. The long-term aim was to bid to run Social Prescribing in Broadland and to draw in full salary costs from NHS sources, which would be a nil cost to the Council.

The Committee was advised that in South Norfolk Community Connectors had been in operation for six years, with funding secured through the NHS for a further three years. However, due to the NHS funding cycle it would not be possible to bid for funding in Broadland until 2022, therefore, if the scheme was to be launched sooner than this the Council would need to fund the posts for the first year through the Covid-19 Recovery Fund.

A member noted that the cost/benefits implications of having staff in place to support vulnerable residents and prevent increased demand on the NHS and Council services at an early stage could be enormous.

Members commended the proposal.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Options 1 and 2)

1. To use COVID money (specifically the “containing outbreak management fund”) to implement a Community Connector service in Broadland district, to work as part of the Council’s early help offer and alongside the existing social prescribing service;
2. To agree to recruit 2 FTEs on a 12-month contract with intention to review as part of setting the 2022/23 budget.

Vice-Chairman in the Chair.

258 THE DEBT RESPITE SCHEME (BREATHING SPACE AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS MORATORIUM) REGULATIONS 2020 & STATUTORY DEBT REPAYMENT PLAN (FINANCIAL SERVICES BILL) – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The Senior Enforcement Officer introduced the report, which explained the additional level of demand that was anticipated to result from the introduction of Breathing Space Regulations and the Statutory Debt Repayment Plan, and requested a temporary additional resource in the Recovery Team to deal with the resulting workload.

The Debt Respite (Breathing Space) Regulations would come into force on the 4 May 2021 and would provide eligible debtors with legal protections from their creditors, including the halting of additional charges and enforcement action. The Statutory Debt Repayment Plan legislation would come into force shortly after.

As a creditor, when the Council was told that a debt owed was in Breathing Space, all action related to that debt had to be stopped and the mandatory protections provided within the regulations applied. It was considered that the existing resource would not be sufficient to cope with the demands of these regulations without significant detriment to the Team's primary function of debt recovery.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1)

To increase the Recovery Team capacity by 1 x FTE for a period of 18 months to deal with work arising from the impact of the new Breathing Space and Statutory Debt Repayment Plan regulations in Broadland and South Norfolk. The cost to be shared 45/55 between BDC / SNC in line with the One Team agreement.

259 ENDORSEMENT OF THE NORFOLK STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK UPDATE

The Assistant Director Planning introduced the report, which sought members' agreement to endorse the third update to the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF).

Members were advised that the Council, as a local planning authority, had a legal duty to engage constructively with other public bodies on strategic cross boundary planning matters and that the NSPF provided a structure for doing so.

The NSPF included 31 formal agreements and was prepared by officers from the constituent Norfolk authorities, under the oversight of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum, on which the Portfolio Holder for Planning sat.

The Chairman of the Place Shaping Policy Development Panel advised the meeting that the Panel had considered the report at its meeting on 8 April 2021 and endorsed the update and recommended that Cabinet recommend the NSPF to Council.

In response to query about a lack of matters relating to education in the NSPF, the Portfolio Holder for Planning advised the meeting that this was because the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum did not deliver education. Specific education priorities locally were included in other documents such as the Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021-2026, which oversaw the allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy to the projects. This included an allocation of £2m for education 2021/22.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Option 1)

It is recommended that Cabinet recommend to Council that it endorses the update to the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and agrees to remain a signatory to the document.

Chairman in the Chair

260 MEMBER IT

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report, which summarised the conclusions drawn from the Members IT Survey and set out the deliberations of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee and their recommendation to Cabinet for the provision of Member IT.

The report confirmed that the majority of the issues raised through the IT Survey were in relation to the software and that these would be addressed through the implementation of O365 and the provision of training.

Paragraph 4.3 of the report was the minute from the 17 March 2021 meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee, where it had considered Member IT. The Committee had given thorough consideration to the matter and had recommended that the current provision of iPads be retained.

In response to a query about connecting to a non-Wi-Fi printer with an iPad the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that she would investigate the matter and report back to the member concerned after the meeting.

A member noted the value of keeping the iPads for the remaining two years of their life, but recommended against investing in any more, as he considered laptops to be preferable.

The Chairman concurred with this view regarding iPads and noted that a budget had been set aside for laptops for members and that he was disappointed that they had not been recommended by the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee.

The Chairman of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee advised the meeting that the majority of the Committee felt that as the iPads still had two years remaining it would be more appropriate to wait to review the new software provision that was to be rolled out to see if the new integrated software resolved the issues raised by members.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) advised the meeting that the rollout of O365 would commence shortly and would include a programme of training. This would be followed in three or four months by either a survey or drop-in sessions, to assess if the problems raised by members had been addressed and to receive feedback on what members would want to see replace the iPads in 2022/23. This information would in turn be reported to the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee to develop further. Any recommendations from the Committee would go to Cabinet, so the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to review any recommendations.

The Chairman noted that the Committee could also review Member IT independently, if it so wished.

The Chairman proposed that a full review into Member IT be held six months before the 2023 District Elections and that Cabinet be asked to agree that the final decision should be made by Council.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and by a majority it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Options 1 and 2, *as amended*)

1. That Cabinet approve the recommendation from the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee to retain the current provision of iPads *for the next two years and to hold a full review of member IT provision by October 2022; and*
2. *That Cabinet agree that the final decision on member IT provision would be made by Council.*

The Committee adjourned at 11.55am and reconvened at 12.25pm, when all the Committee members listed above were present.

261 REVIEW OF POLICIES

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the report, which presented updated versions of the Counter Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy, Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Whistleblowing Policy. These policies had been reviewed to ensure they were in line with best practice and had been approved by the Audit Committee at its 11 March 2021 meeting. The reports were presented to Cabinet for review and approval, prior to being presented to Council.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Option 1)

To recommend to Council the adoption of the:

- Counter Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

262 PLUMSTEAD ROAD: PROPOSED COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (CPO) TO ENABLE A NEW ROUNDABOUT

The Director for Place introduced the report, which sought Council approval for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for land adjacent to Plumstead Road to enable a new roundabout to be constructed. The junction was a key piece of infrastructure in facilitating the proper planning of the area, but to date the landowners to the south of the junction would not sign the agreement required to enable highway works to be carried out on their land.

The report and the proposed CPO demonstrated the Council's intention to deliver this scheme whilst, in parallel, also seeking to reach an amicable way forward with the respective landowners.

The Committee was also informed that the land that was subject to the proposed CPO would include an attenuation lagoon to the south west corner, which was likely to be considered by the Planning Committee in May 2021.

In response to a query the Committee was informed that legal advice had been taken before and during the drafting of the report and there was no reason to think that a CPO would be unsuccessful.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Options i and ii)

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- i. That officers continue to engage with the respective landowners with the intention that they sign the s.278 agreement to enable the construction of the proposed roundabout at Plumstead Road; and
- ii. That, in parallel with the ongoing engagement with the landowners, all appropriate steps as set out in this report are taken to secure the necessary land via a compulsory purchase order to enable the roundabout at Plumstead Road to be delivered. In the event that the s.278 agreement is signed to the satisfaction of Broadland District Council and Norfolk County Council as Highway Authority the action being taken to secure a compulsory purchase order will cease.

263 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY ANNUAL REPORT

The Senior Governance Officer presented the report, which summarised the progress made by Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council during 2020 in complying with their duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

This was the second year that the report had been published jointly and during 2020 the responsibility for equalities had passed from the Policy Team to the Governance Team, who now produced the report.

The Equality Act 2010 required the Councils to have due regard to the need to:

- a) *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- b) *Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
- c) *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

The duty covered nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

The Senior Governance Officer then took the Committee through the Annual Report, pointing out and highlighting examples under each of the areas that the Councils must have due regard to, as well as looking at activities planned to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty for the coming year.

The Chairman commended the report and noted that it was very useful to see clear examples of how the Councils had compiled with the Act.

In response to members' disappointment that the report had been received as a late paper the Democratic Services Officer apologised and confirmed that the paper had been received in good time to be included on the agenda, but had been omitted in error.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and by a majority it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Option 1)

Cabinet is asked to approve the joint Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report, as attached at Appendix A.

264 EXCLUSION OF 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.

Vice-Chairman in the Chair

265 ST FAITHS COMMON – LEASE

The Director of Place introduced the report, which asked Cabinet to agree, in principle, the signing of a new lease for land at St. Faith's Common to facilitate the ongoing delivery of Broadland Country Park, as set out in the exempt report.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Option 1)

To agree, in principle, to sign the lease (at Appendix A) subject to final due diligence checks).

266 MANAGED SERVICE – PAYROLL

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report, which sought Cabinet approval to continue with the

agreement for the provision of the managed service for payroll for a period of five years from September 2021, as set out in the exempt report.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Options 1 and 2)

1. Cabinet to agree to enter into a five-year agreement for the provision of a managed service for Payroll and recruitment; and
2. Cabinet to agree to delegate the detail of the agreement to the Director Resources and the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

267 FOOD INNOVATION CENTRE

The Director for Place introduced the report, which provide an exempt update on the Food Innovation Centre project.

Following discussion, voting was carried out by way of a roll call and by a majority it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Options 1 and 2) as set out in the exempt report.

(The meeting concluded at 13.55pm)

Chairman