

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Review of Cabinet Agenda** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Tuesday 21 August 2018** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

	Mr D G Harrison – Chairman	
Mr A D Adams	Mr G K Nurden	Mr V B Tapp
Mrs C H Bannock	Mr F O’Neill	Mrs K A Vincent
Mr J J Emsell	Mr S Riley	

Mr R Foulger was in attendance for item 35 - A47 Alliance Dualling Campaign.

Also in attendance were the Chief Executive, Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Head of Corporate Resources, Spatial Planning Manager, Housing Manager and the Committee Officer (JO).

32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Mr Adams, Mr Harrison and Mrs Vincent	39 - A Case For Change – Business Case for Changing the Governance of The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.	Local Choice Non Pecuniary Interest as a Member of Norfolk County Council

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Catchpole, Mr Everett, Mr Grady and Mr D Ward.

34 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, save for the following amendment:

Minute no: 28 – Council Performance – Broadland Business Plan

The second bullet point under Objective 12 – to effectively manage our finances, was amended to the following:

- Revenue expenditure was approximately 108 percent of budget due to a revaluation of the Pension Fund and a loss on the disposal of the EcoCube (*financial details in respect of the termination of the lease of the EcoCube were forwarded to the Committee following the meeting*).

A Member expressed concern about the loss on the disposal of the EcoCube

and proposed that it should be investigated further. He suggested that there was not sufficient transparency regarding this matter and Members should know how this had arisen and why the Council had failed to find a tenant for the property, when the landowner had let it within a short period of the lease being terminated.

In response, the Chief Executive informed the meeting that the original EcoTown grant was provided on the basis that the Council would build the EcoCube to facilitate the establishment of the EcoTown at Rackheath, whilst occupying the building for a rent free period.

It was **AGREED** to convene a Time and Task Limited Panel to investigate the disposal of the EcoCube. The Panel would be made up of the following Members: Mr Harrison, Mr Nurden, Mr O'Neill, Mr Riley and Mrs Vincent.

Minute no: 31 Land at Reedham Road, Acle

The Chairman advised Members that Cabinet had agreed with the Committee's recommendation to encourage the land at Reedham Road Acle to be developed for housing.

35 A47 ALLIANCE DUALLING CAMPAIGN:

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing advised the meeting that the A47 Alliance had been set up as a special interest group to support the strategic case for improvements to the A47 Corridor between Great Yarmouth and Peterborough. This had since been extended to Lowestoft following the re-designation of the A12 between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft as part of the A47.

Currently funded projects included the dualling of the A47 from Blofield to Burlingham and North Tuddenham to Easton, which when completed would create a dual carriageway from Dereham to Acle. These projects were originally scheduled to commence in spring 2020, but the latest projections from Highways England had delayed the start until spring 2021.

The A47 Alliance considered the delay unacceptable and had raised it with George Freeman, MP for Mid Norfolk, who had confirmed that he would take up the issue with the Roads Minister and be part of a delegation to lobby the Minister at Westminster in the autumn. Overall the aspiration of the Alliance was to see the entire A47 made dual carriageway from Lowestoft to Yarmouth and through to Peterborough.

The Thickthorn Junction A47/A11 was also funded and scheduled for 2015-2020. Dualling the Acle Straight was proposed for 2020 to 2025, but was not yet not funded and there were environmental issues that would need to be addressed before this came forward.

Members commended the work of the A47 Alliance and encouraged the group in their efforts to bring forward improvements to the road.

CABINET REPORTS

36 UPDATE TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The report presented an updated Local Development Scheme, which was recommended for approval and publication.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) set out the Development Plan documents that the Council was going to publish, together with a timetable for their production. The current LDS was published in June 2016 and was in need of updating to reference the timetable for production of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) as well as more general changes and updates.

The revised timetable for the GNLP proposed publication of the Plan in February 2020, followed by submission to the Secretary of State in June 2020 and adoption of the final Plan in September 2021. There would also be further consultation on 'additional' sites in October/ November 2018 and a consultation on a draft Plan in autumn 2019. The GNLP would be reviewed in 2021, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

In response to a query, the Spatial Planning Manager confirmed that the Government was to introduce a new methodology for assessing housing need, which was likely to mean that there would not be a five year housing land supply in the Norwich Policy Area (NPA). It was anticipated that a five year housing land supply would remain available outside the NPA. He advised the meeting that large sites could be delayed through infrastructure requirements, whilst small sites could be hampered by a lack of small builders; the GNLP would, therefore, seek to strike a balance between the two.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1)

to recommend that Council approves the proposed updated LDS (August 2018).

37 HOUSING BRIEFING – YEAR END REPORT 2017/18

The report provided the 2017/18 year end summary of housing related services delivered by the Council, as well as an overview of any relevant

policy, practice and legislative changes and the potential impact they might have on housing services in Broadland.

Since the report was published the Government had published its Rough Sleeper Strategy. It had been suggested that the Strategy would come with significant additional funding, but there were no details of how much the Council would be able to access at present.

The Government had also published a Social Housing Green Paper, which aimed to provide safe decent homes, empower residents, expand the supply of housing and widen opportunities for home ownership. The Council would be submitting a response to the Green Paper shortly.

In answer to a question, Members were reassured that a reduction in the amount of Council resource to tackle empty homes and other enforcement activities was only a temporary reduction and was being addressed by the Private Sector Housing Manager.

A Member noted that a major house builder had announced a 30 percent increase in profits, but that developers were still arguing successfully for a reduction in their affordable housing commitment through viability assessments. In response, the Housing Manager advised the meeting that this was a national issue and each planning application was assessed on a case by case basis. The Vice-Chairman also noted that the Council had enabled 177 affordable homes over 2017/18, which was still a significant number.

Members were informed that most affordable homes in Broadland were being delivered by Saffron Housing Trust, Victory Housing Trust and Orbit Housing Association, although Clarion Housing Group, who had the largest stock of social housing in the district, were now making positive responses to the Council.

In response to a query, the Housing Manager confirmed that she would identify if any grants or loans above £30,000 had been awarded, since Cabinet had approved the removal of the grant cap in April, and forward the information to Members after the meeting.

Members were advised that the Handy Person+ service was operating at close to capacity. The Private Sector Housing Manager was looking at this issue. The Housing Health Partnership Officer had recently taken a paper to the Wellbeing Panel, in which she had reviewed the performance of the service. She would also be liaising with colleagues at South Norfolk Council, who had proposals to outsource the Handyperson Service, to see if anything could be learned from their model.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1)

to note the contents of the report.

38 INTERIM MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The report provided an update on progress with the current temporary interim management arrangements in the Housing and Environmental Services department and suggested appointing internally a Head of Housing and Environmental Services on an interim basis until such time as the new Managing Director had agreed a new joint management structure with Members of both councils.

Since the departure of the Head of Housing and Environmental Services, the Team Leaders of the four main teams in the department had each been 'acting up' to take on the responsibilities of their Head of Service, whilst reporting to the Deputy Chief Executive. It was agreed when these arrangements were put in place that they would be revisited once the Feasibility Study was published and a decision about collaboration was made.

Given that this decision had now been made and the Council was, therefore, facing a period of significant change and although the arrangements had worked well so far, there were some concerns in the department about the lack of a Head of Service providing a single point of leadership. It was, therefore, proposed to recruit internally, from Broadland staff a Head of Housing and Environmental Services, on an interim basis, until the joint management structure across Broadland and South Norfolk Councils was in place. As the appointment was to be on an interim basis it was suggested that it be made by the Deputy Chief Executive with a Panel of one or two other Heads of Service with HR support. However, the option to convene the Appointments and Pay Panel was also available if Members thought it necessary.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Environmental Services departments at Broadland and South Norfolk had different staff structures; there was no intention to align these services, as had been done for the planning departments, at this stage.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1, 2a, 3b, 4a and b)

to

(1) note the progress made under the interim arrangements agreed in

November 2017;

- (2a) agree to appoint internally a Head of Housing and Environmental Services on an interim basis until such time as the new Managing Director has agreed with Members the joint management structure across Broadland and South Norfolk; and
- (3b) request that the appointment is made by the Appointments and Pay Panel;
- (4a) request the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to amend the temporary delegations in the Constitution to appropriately reflect this decision; and
- (4b) authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to arrange the back filling of posts if required.

39 A CASE FOR CHANGE – BUSINESS CASE FOR CHANGING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The report presented a draft proposal from the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner setting out a business case for the adoption of a new governance model for the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. The proposal would see the service moving from the current governance model under the auspices of Norfolk County Council, to a new governance model under the control of a new Norfolk Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Members generally considered the business case for the new governance model to be flawed and they were not convinced that the predicted savings could be made without making drastic cuts to the Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee therefore proposed a negative response to the proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (2)

recommend to Council a negative position on the proposal.

The meeting closed at 11.37 am