

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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 27 August 2019** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr S Riley – Chairman

Mr A D Adams
Mr N J Brennan
Mr P E Bulman
Ms S J Catchpole

Ms S I Holland
Mr M L Murrell
Mr G K Nurden
Mrs S M Prutton

Mr N C Shaw
Mrs K A Vincent

Mrs Coplestone and Mr Emsell also attended the meeting for its duration.

Also in attendance were the Director People and Communities, Director Place, Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer), Economic Development Manager, Evaluation and Data Analyst and the Committee Officer (JO).

47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Mrs Catchpole	37 – Options for Council Owned Land	Local Choice Non-Pecuniary Interest, Member for Aylsham.

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Kelly, Mr King and Mrs Ryman-Tubb.

49 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 August 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Minute No. 46 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

It was confirmed that the ex-Member of the Eco-Cube Time and Task Limited Panel would not be permitted to attend the final meeting of the Panel.

CABINET REPORTS

50 ECONOMIC SUCCESS PANEL

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development advised the meeting that the Economic Success Panel had considered a report on car parking in Broadland at its meeting on 19 August 2019 and had made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- (1) initiate a comprehensive review of car parking, in consultation with Town and Parish Councils, which would provide the necessary information to fully develop a Car Parking Management Plan for Cabinet approval, to improve overall space availability and mitigate the financial impact of the Norfolk Parking Partnership; and
- (2) make an application to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) to take advantage of the grant funding available to extend the Electric Vehicle Charging Point network and set aside a budget of £7,500 for implementation if successful.

The first recommendation would involve a full review of car parking across the District, which would identify issues, including parking space blocking and the churn of car park usage, as well as any opportunities to increase car parking in Broadland.

Recommendation 2 was time sensitive and would need to be acted upon more rapidly to access grant funding.

A Member noted that it would need to be clarified if any leases would require renegotiation where Vehicle Charging Points were to be installed.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1) and (2)

- (1) initiate a comprehensive review of car parking, in consultation with Town and Parish Councils, which would provide the necessary information to fully develop a Car Parking Management Plan for Cabinet approval, to improve overall space availability and mitigate the financial impact of the Norfolk Parking Partnership; and
- (2) make an application to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) to take advantage of the grant funding available to extend the Electric Vehicle Charging Point network and set aside a budget of £7,500 for implementation if successful.

51 JOINT INCLUSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY

The report presented a Strategy Framework that aimed to improve social mobility and inclusive growth in Broadland and South Norfolk, by building the foundations for a strong and prosperous community with a healthy environment, low-crime and good-quality sustainable housing.

Broadland and South Norfolk were the two best performing authorities in Norfolk when measured against the Social Mobility Index, but both authorities were keen to improve this figure further and the Framework would assist in this aim. The Framework would also clarify how both Councils could ensure that resource was better directed at priority areas for the long term in a co-ordinated approach. The Framework would then feed into a Norfolk-wide Inclusive Growth Coalition.

A joint Inclusive Growth Member workshop was held on 1 July 2019 to develop the Framework and the policy proposals. The Workshop produced a number of topics for inclusion in the Framework and the following five priority areas:

- Access and Transport
- Business Development and Productivity
- Aspiration and Career Routes
- Supportive Home Environments
- Supporting Low Paid Workers

In response to a query about the Apprenticeship Levy leading to a greater number of higher apprenticeships, but a reduction in lower level apprenticeships, it was confirmed that this was a national, as well as a problem, which could be explored within the Framework under skills and training.

The Chairman noted that whilst there were a lot of good statistics for Broadland there were also pockets of deprivation in the District. He requested that a tracker be established to better understand how collaborative work through the joint Framework was performing in comparison with current performance.

In response, Director of People and Communities emphasised that the Framework was a long-term project and that the statistics generated would be compiled on a Norfolk-wide basis. However, data could be collated at a District level and brought to the Committee at some time in the future.

He also confirmed that the Framework would be subject to a periodic review by Members.

The Director of People and Communities also confirmed that as both authorities had different, but complementary, offers they could both benefit from sharing best practice and expand services across each District if required.

A Member suggested that the recommendation in the report be amended to allow Member input into the development of Action Plans and the direction of resources for the Framework.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1) as amended.

That Cabinet recommend Council to agree to adopt the Inclusive Growth Framework as a Council Strategy, to allow officers to direct resources and continue to develop action plans, in consultation with respective Portfolio Holders *and Members*.

52 OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL OWNED LAND

The report set out the initial stages of a proposal to enter into a new Partnership Agreement with BVR Ltd to secure investment in the Bure Valley Railway.

The Director of Place advised the meeting that the decision by Cabinet in June 2017 to agree to the conditional transfer of the Bure Valley Railway and Path to the BVR Ltd had been delayed due to a number of factors, including a requirement for an Act of Parliament to make the transfer.

During this delay it has become apparent that a sale of the asset might not be the most suitable approach, not least because the County Council had secured £1.2m of funding from an Interreg Visitor Economy Programme that could be used to deliver green infrastructure improvements at the Bure Valley Railway and Path.

It was, therefore, proposed that a partnership agreement be negotiated by the Director of Place, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, which when fully developed would be brought back to Council for final determination.

The draft Heads of Terms for the initial negotiations were the following:

- (i) allow BVR Ltd to secure a 'break even' return on its significant investment into the asset;
- (ii) seek cost neutrality to the Council for the maintenance of its remaining liability, (excluding bridges); and
- (iii) where appropriate the rental income could be reinvested back into the asset using BVR Ltd as a preferred contractor.

The above Heads of Terms were intentionally brief, as they represented only the starting point of the negotiation process, but they were intended to give Members and indication of the desired outcome.

In answer to a query about the potential of a rent review being re-visited and backdated to 2016 in September 2021, it was confirmed that a new rent level would be part of the negotiations for a new agreement and this would negate the need for a rent review.

Members were advised that investing rental income back into the asset, with BVR Ltd as the preferred contractor, could provide joint benefits through reduced costs and greater value for money due to their range of skills and large volunteer workforce.

The Chairman noted that BVR Ltd had significant reserves and the Council must ensure that the public purse was protected when negotiating the agreement.

It was confirmed that the draft Heads of Terms, which would allow BVR Ltd to secure a 'break even' return on its significant investment into the asset; was for future, not past investments. Members were also advised that an increase in the resource provided by the Council under any new arrangements was likely to increase as a result of a partnership agreement.

The Chairman requested that the recommendation reference paragraph 5.2 to clarify that any additional resource implications would be brought back to Members for further consideration in due course.

Members also requested that the BVR Ltd be asked to remove the 'railway users only' signs from the carpark as it was also for use by users of the Bure Valley Path.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1) and (2) *as amended*.

Cabinet is recommended to recommend to Council to:

- (1) Retain the freehold asset of the Bure Valley Railway and Path; and
- (2) Enter into negotiations to establish a partnership agreement with the BVR Ltd having regard to the draft Heads of Terms in paragraph 3.6 *and the resource implications in paragraph 5.2*.

53 NORFOLK STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK – JUNE 2019 UPDATE

The report presented an updated Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework. The Framework was not a statutory planning document, but set out a Norfolk-wide foundation for strategic matters to be taken account of in the production of Local Plans, including the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1) and (2)

That Cabinet **recommend that Council** agree to:

- (1) Be a signatory to the updated Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (June 2019); and
- (2) Support the continued work of Members and Officers to ensure that the NSPF remains up to date.

The meeting closed at 11.14 am.