

**Agenda Item: 4**

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday 19 July 2021 at 1.00pm.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), M Edney, R Elliott, L Neal and A Thomas

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors: K Mason Billig and J Worley

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillors: D Bills, V Clifford-Jackson, F Ellis and T Laidlaw

**Officers in Attendance:** The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Chief of Staff (E Hodds), the Assistant Director Economic Growth (T Armstrong), the Assistant Director Planning (H Mellors), the Assistant Director Regulatory (N Howard), the Assistant Director Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Senior Community Planning Officer (R Squires) and the Senior Heritage and Design Officer (C Bennett)

**Also in Attendance:** The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager (Mike Burrell)

Mr R Mackenzie (Long Stratton Town Council) and Mr S Adcock

### **2911 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman explained that Cllr J Worley was currently on paternity leave. On behalf of Cabinet, he sent best wishes and congratulations to Cllr Worley and his partner on the birth of their daughter, Grace.

### **2912 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Concerning minute number 2914, the Greater Norwich Local Plan – Submission to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination, Cllrs Fuller and Neal both declared an “other” interest, by virtue of being a member of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership.

With regard to minute number 2915, concerning the Long Stratton Area Action Plan, Cllr A Thomas declared an “other” interest by virtue of being a district member for Long Stratton. With regard to minute 2919, regarding Emergency Planning Structures, she declared an “other” interest as having been personally impacted by the recent flooding in the District and having to vacate her home.

Under minute 2918, regarding the Skills and Training Programme, Cllr D Bills declared an “other” interest as a member of the County Council’s Adult Learning Committee.

Under minute number 2921, regarding the Pensions Discretion Policy, Cllr J Fuller declared an “other” interest as a member of Norfolk County Council’s Pensions Committee.

## **2913 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## **2914 GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN (GNLP) – SUBMISSION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION**

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager, which sought approval to submit the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager outlined the background to the report and explained that the Regulation 19 consultation stage of plan-making for the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), had sought representations on its soundness and legal compliance. The representations made had all been assessed and officers had concluded that they had identified no significant issues that could not be addressed or were such a risk to the GNLP that it should not be submitted to the Secretary of State for Public Examination. Members noted that the intended date of submission to the Secretary of State was 30 July, with the examination planned for November and December.

Members noted that some representations had raised issues which had to be addressed before submission, in particular relating to mitigation necessary to protect sites protected under the Habitat Regulations, from increased visitor pressure due to growth. This would be addressed through a Statement of Common Ground with Natural England, which members were informed was close to agreement. The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager explained that ongoing work was also required to proactively identify and bring forward sufficient Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet identified need. The Chairman stressed the need to ensure the proper apportionment of sites across the whole area, and he referred to the Council’s excellent record in traveller site provision.

During discussion, the Chairman raised the need to commit to the identification of a site for a new settlement (Policy 7.6) in the next Local Plan. Members noted that work in this area has already commenced and would take many years to come to fruition.

In response to a query regarding the provision of additional singular dwellings in settlements (three in a smaller settlement, five in the larger settlements), the Assistant Director of Planning advised that these would be permitted outside of current development boundaries, however she stressed that there was a strict criteria base for this new policy.

**RESOLVED:**

**TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL**

1. Agrees that the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is sound and to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination subject to reaching an agreement in principle with Natural England, in the form of a signed statement of common ground, in relation to the mitigation necessary to protect sites protected under the Habitat Regulations.
2. Commits to proactively identify and bring forward sufficient Gypsy and Traveller site to meet identified needs in accordance with the criteria-based policies of the current and emerging Development Plans.
3. Agrees to request that the appointed independent inspector make any Main Modifications necessary to make the plan sound and legally compliant.

and,

4. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for External Affairs and Policy and Stronger Economy, and in conjunction with Broadland District and Norwich City Councils, to:

- a. agree minor modifications to the GNLP prior to its submission.

and,

- b. negotiate any main modifications necessary to make the GNLP Sound as part of the Independent Examination.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure that the Council's Development Plan remains effective and that the policies continue to have full weight in determining planning applications. The representations received have identified no significant issues.

**Other Options Considered**

To defer submission of the Plan

## **2915 LONG STRATTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – CONSIDERATION OF EXAMINER’S REPORT**

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which outlined the report and recommendations received from the independent examiner, appointed to inspect the submitted Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan.

The Senior Community Planning Officer presented his report, explaining that the examination had concluded that the Plan should proceed to referendum, with 11 recommended modifications. These modifications were minor, and officers were recommending that Cabinet should accept them and that the Plan should proceed to a referendum. If approved, the referendum would take place towards the end of September.

Members noted that once adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan would become part of the statutory development plan for the area, would carry the same weight as other adopted plans, and would not conflict with the Area Action Plan.

Cllr A Thomas, local member for Long Stratton wished to thank the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan Team (made up of both Long Stratton Town Councillors and members of the public), on behalf of herself, her fellow local member, Cllr Worley, and the community of Long Stratton. She acknowledged the huge amount of work that had been invested in the Plan’s production and consultation process and she looked forward to the referendum in September.

The Chairman commended the report and congratulated Long Stratton Town Council on the Plan, explaining that it was impressive that the examiner had only recommended 11 minor modifications. He did not believe that the minor modifications in any way diluted what the Town Council was trying to achieve.

Addressing the Cabinet, Mr S Adcock explained that the team had tried to build on what was already in the Area Action Plan, so that there were no conflicts of policy, and Mr R Mackenzie thanked South Norfolk Council for all of its support.

### **RESOLVED**

To:

1. Approve each of the recommended modifications of the independent examiner of the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan, as detailed within the examiner’s report, and
2. Publish a Decision Statement, setting out the Council’s response to the examiner’s recommendations and announcing the intention for the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to a referendum

## **The Reason for the Decision**

Cabinet is satisfied with the recommended modifications from the independent examiner.

## **Other Options Considered**

None

### **2916 ADOPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS FOR BURSTON, FORNCETT, GISSING, THORPE ABBOTS, WINFARTHING AND WRAMPLINGHAM CONSERVATION AREAS**

Members considered the report of the Senior Conservation and Design Officer, which proposed amended conservation area boundaries, appraisals and management guidelines for Burston, Forncett, Gissing, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wramplingham Conservation areas.

Cllr L Neal commended the report to members, explaining that officers had worked with the relevant parish councils and had taken into account all comments received through the consultation process.

The Senior Conservation and Design Officer briefly summarised the considerations made for each of the six areas and responded to members' queries on points of detail.

Cllr R Elliott explained that he had been involved in the review as local member for Wramplingham, and he thanked officers for what he felt was a interesting, well managed and supported process.

In response to a query regarding developments adjacent to conservation areas, the Assistant Director of Planning explained that a high quality of design would always be sought. With regard to the future programme of conservation area reviews, she explained that only a small number of the 52 areas were yet to be reviewed, after which a new programme would be devised. The new programme would take into consideration areas where considerable new development had occurred.

## **RESOLVED**

### **TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL**

1. Approves and adopts the amended conservation area boundaries for Burston, Forncett, Gissing, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wramplingham Conservation Areas.

2. Approves and adopts the conservation area appraisals and management guidelines for Burston, Forncett, Gissing, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wrampingham Conservation Areas.

### **The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure that up to date information on the conservation areas is available when making planning decisions.

### **Other Options Considered**

None

## **2917 MOVING TOWARDS A FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Members considered the report of the Transformation and Innovation Lead, which provided Cabinet with an overview of current progress and findings of the Customer Satisfaction and Customer Complaints projects, making proposals for a new Customer Strategy, Customer Charter, Complaints Handling Policy and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr R Elliott, commended the report to Cabinet, expressing his support for the principle of a first-class customer service and “placing the customer at the heart of everything we do”.

The Director of Resources then outlined the key areas of the report and its recommendations to members. She explained that it was proposed that the same policies be implemented across South Norfolk and Broadland Councils.

Cllr A Thomas, as Chairman of the Norfolk Restorative Approaches Board, hoped that Council would use such approaches when dealing with people as part of the complaints procedure, explaining that face to face conversations at an early stage was an effective approach in ensuring a positive outcome for all. In response, the Director of Resources agreed that early engagement with the customer was key, and also stressed the importance of taking any learning points from each complaint made.

In response to queries, members noted that complaints would sit within the service area with the relevant Director taking overall responsibility. The decision to classify a complainant as unreasonably persistent or behaving unreasonably, would need to be ratified at Corporate Management Team.

### **RESOLVED**

1. To approve
  - a) The adoption of the proposed Customer Strategy.
  - b) The adoption of the proposed Customer Charter; and
  - c) To note the appointment of a new Customer Experience & Insight Lead role.

2. **TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL** approves the adoption of:
  - a) The Complaints Handling Policy;
  - b) the Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy

### **The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure the delivery of a first-class customer service.

### **Other Options Considered**

None.

## **2918 SKILLS AND TRAINING PROGRAMME**

Members considered the report of the Economic Growth Administrator, which provided a summary of the Council's current skills and training provision and proposals to tailor support to specific cohorts of residents and start-up businesses.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr L Neal, commended the report to members, referring to the importance of the skills and training provision, and how this could be enhanced and targeted to those more in need.

The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families referred to the joint approach with Economic Growth which would ensure that individuals were supported in returning to employment and were fully skilled to meet the needs of employers.

Attention was drawn to the Apprenticeship Scheme and the need to champion the apprenticeship agenda within the Council. The Managing Director stressed the importance of apprenticeships and attracting, training and retaining future officers of the Council.

Cllr D Bills advised that there were over 100 apprentices working for Norfolk County Council, and he hoped that the councils could work in partnership. The Managing Director assured members that the Council was working with the County Council and other Districts.

In response to queries, officers explained that a central apprenticeship budget fund was proposed, comprised of existing staff budgets and recurring underspends from within directorates. The Assistant Director of Economic Growth added that other funding streams could be utilised to support the skills and learning agenda.

Members welcomed the proposals and also suggested that there were opportunities to work with other large employers in the county who were experiencing staff shortages.

## **RESOLVED**

To:

1. Note the impacts on skills, training and the wider economy in South Norfolk and Broadland and to note the intended approach to tailor support to specific cohorts of residents and start-up businesses.
2. Agree to the establishment of a centralised apprenticeship budget comprised of existing apprenticeship posts across all directorates, topped up through increasing the vacancy factor from 2% to 3.5% to generate an additional £245,000 from recurring underspend across both councils.

### **The Reason for the Decision**

To maximise the impact of services and fill the gaps within existing local service provision. To also benefit partners already working in the field to create an effective and comprehensive response.

### **Other Options Considered**

To take no action.

## **2919 EMERGENCY PLANNING STRUCTURES**

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director of Regulatory which presented proposals for emergency planning structures, to include an Emergency Incident Officer Scheme.

The Assistant Director of Regulatory Services outlined the proposals to members.

In response to queries, the Assistant Director advised that approximately eight officers would be required and would be sourced from existing staff. The scheme would be in place to respond to emergency threats to local communities and would not be responding to incidents such as major noise pollution. The team would, however, be able to provide some coordinated support in such cases, passing details of incidents on to relevant officers who would take the appropriate action.

Cllr R Elliott expressed his support for the recommendations but stressed the need to ensure that officers appointed had the correct skills to deal with incidents. The Managing Director assured Cabinet that staff would be adequately trained.

Members supported the proposals and the Chairman felt this to be an excellent example of how the collaboration with Broadland Council had allowed the two councils to work together to provide additional reassurances for residents and businesses, whilst delivering efficiencies.

**RESOLVED:**

To agree to establish a 24/7/365 Emergency Incident Officer scheme offering a guaranteed response to defined serious emergency incidents, at an additional annual revenue cost of £13k revenue and £2k equipment, tools and clothing annually borne 45% BDC / 55% SNC

**The Reason for the Decision**

To produce a reliable and fully resourced response that is effective and efficient.

**Other Options Considered**

As outlined in the report.

**2920 INSURANCE CONTRACT – REQUEST FOR DELEGATION TO AWARD CONTRACT**

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Finance, which sought a delegation from Cabinet, to award a new insurance contract.

The Director of Resources outlined the report and explained that South Norfolk and Broadland Councils were currently in the process of tendering for a new joint insurance contract. A delegation to officers was sought to enable a timely award of the contact.

It was

**RESOLVED:**

To agree to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Finance, in consultation with the Broadland District Council Portfolio Holder for Finance and the South Norfolk Council Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, to award a new insurance contract.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure the procurement of the Council's Insurance cover within the necessary timescales

**Other Options Considered**

As outlined in the report.

## **2921 PENSIONS DISCRETION POLICY**

Members considered the report of the Chief of Staff, which presented Cabinet with a Pensions Discretion Policy.

The Chief of Staff briefly presented the report and drew members' attention to the draft joint policy with Broadland District Council, outlined at Appendix 1 of the report.

It was

### **RESOLVED**

To approve the Council's Pensions Discretions Policy

#### **The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure that a Pensions Discretionary Policy is in place, in line with statutory requirements.

#### **Other Options Considered**

None

## **2922 CABINET CORE AGENDA**

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

## **2923 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

## **2924 FINANCE SYSTEM BUSINESS CASE**

Members considered the exempt report of the Assistant Director of Finance, which sought consideration of a business case for a joint Finance System, across both South Norfolk and Broadland Councils.

The Director of Resources outlined the salient points of the report

Cabinet considered the options available and it was

**RESOLVED:**

To agree the recommendations as outlined in paragraph 11 of the report

#### **The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure a single joint finance system, to allow significant operational benefits.

#### **Other Options Considered**

As outlined in the report.

### **2925 ICT AND DIGITAL STRATEGY REVIEW**

Members considered the exempt report of the ICT and Digital Manager, which presented members with the ICT and Digital Strategy and proposals for the delivery of digital services to customers, for approval.

The Chief of Staff drew members' attention to the salient points of the report.

It was

#### **RESOLVED:**

To approve:

- 1) the ICT & Digital Strategy in terms of its direction and action plan
- 2) the proposals to deliver Digital services for customers.

#### **The Reason for the Decision**

To allow the Council to drive forward the alignment, development and expansion of ICT and Digital Services, in a coordinated and efficient manner.

#### **Other Options Considered**

None.

### **2926 SHARED PROCUREMENT SERVICE BUSINESS CASE**

Members considered the exempt report of the Assistant Director of Finance which sought consideration of a business case for a shared Procurement Service.

The Director of Resources presented the report and drew attention to Appendix A of the report which set out the business case for a shared Procurement Service.

Members agreed that there was a strong strategic case to combine procurement resources, and management capacity to implement the shared service.

**RESOLVED:**

To agree

- 1) To the establishment of a shared procurement service, with Breckland Council being the host authority (subject to Broadland District Council and Breckland Council also agreeing this)
- 2) To agree to delegate the detail of the agreement to the Director Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To support a knowledgeable and resilient service, which focuses on social and environmental value, whilst achieving savings

**Other Options Considered**

As outlined in the report.

(The meeting concluded at 2.43 pm)

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Chairman