

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 16 December 2019 at 7.30pm

Members Present:	Councillors: Minshull (Chairman), Amis, Bendle, Bills, Burrill, Clifford-Jackson, Curson, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Glover, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hudson, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Mason Billig, Neal, Nuri, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Spruce, Thomas, Thomson, Wilby and M Wilby
Apologies:	Councillors: Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Edney, Elliott, Hornby, Legg, Rowe and Worley
Officers in Attendance:	The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer) the Assistant Director, Governance and Business Support (E Hodds) and the Assistant Director, Chief of Staff (H Ralph)

3520 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 September and 11 November 2019, were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

3521 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members noted the civic engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, for the period 16 September 2019 to 15 December.

3522 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

(a) Cabinet meeting 11 November 2019

(i) Treasury Management Quarter 2 Report 2019/20

Cllr A Thomas presented the Cabinet recommendations to members, relating to the Treasury Management Quarter 2 Report 2019/20. She drew members' attention to the rise in investments of over £7 million over the first two quarters.

Cllr Thomas explained that members of the Finance, Regulation, Audit and Governance Committee had recently received training with regard to Big Sky Ventures Ltd and subsidiary companies, and that this would be rolled out to all members in the new year.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

- a) Note the treasury activity for the first half of the year and that it complies with the agreed strategy.
- b) Note the 2019/20 prudential indicators for the first six months of the year.

(ii) Joint Domain Name

Cllr K Mason Billig presented the Cabinet recommendations to Council, regarding a joint domain name for both Broadland and South Norfolk.

Cllr Mason Billig advised members that a shortlist of names had been produced, following member and staff suggestions, and following an all member and staff survey, "South Norfolk and Broadland" proved to be the most popular first choice. She stressed the importance of creating a new joint domain name, to enable the collaboration to move forward, in terms of a single email system and website.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To agree to submit "South Norfolk and Broadland" as the preferred choice to Central Government, for the single domain name for Broadland and South Norfolk.

(b) Cabinet meeting 9 December 2019

(i) Joint Commercialisation Strategy

Cllr A Thomas presented the Cabinet recommendation to Council regarding the proposed Joint Commercialisation Strategy.

Cllr Thomas drew attention to the main objectives of the proposed joint strategy, outlined at paragraph 3.3 of the report. She stressed that whilst the Strategy recognised a common approach to commercialisation across the two Councils, it also allowed for the differing appetites to risk and ambition.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To agree to adopt the Joint Commercialisation Strategy

(ii) Adoption of Conservation Area Appraisals and Boundary Amendments for Fritton, Pulham St Mary, Pulham Market, Seething, Starston and Wacton Conservation Areas

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations of the Cabinet to Council, regarding the adoption of conservation area appraisals and boundary amendments, for Fritton, Pulham St Mary, Pulham Market, Seething, Starston and Wacton conservation areas.

Local members who had attended the village “walkabouts” stressed the value of the process, referring to it as a most enjoyable and useful exercise. Members agreed that the right outcomes had been achieved for all the villages involved.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

1. Approve and adopt the proposed changes to the boundaries of Fritton, Pulham Market, Pulham St Mary, Seething, Starston, and Wacton Conservation Areas.
2. Approve and adopt the conservation area appraisals and conservation management guidelines for the conservation areas of Fritton, Pulham Market, Pulham St Mary, Seething, Starston and Wacton.

(iii) Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework 2020/21

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from the Cabinet to Council, relating to the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF) 2020/21.

Cllr Fuller explained that the continuation of the NSPF work was worthwhile, in that it assisted the Council in fulfilling its obligations to demonstrate the Duty to Cooperate and through meeting the National Planning Policy Framework requirements to have a Statement of Common Ground. Referring to the contribution costs of £10,000, Cllr Fuller believed this to be excellent value for money.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

1. Approve the proposed NSPF work-plan for 2020/21 (set out in Appendix 1 of the report); and
2. Approve the contribution of £10,000 to the work on the NSPF for 2020/21.

3523 UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH TWO COUNCILS ONE TEAM

Cllr J Fuller presented the report of the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support, and the Chief of Staff, which provided an update of the ambitions set out in the collaboration feasibility report, and a general update on the wider collaboration programme of work, the review of structures, the final terms and conditions for all staff, associated policies and the updated Section 113 Agreement.

Cllr Fuller congratulated the Chief of Staff and the Assistant Director for their hard work in ensuring that the two Councils had progressed so far, so quickly. He also thanked his deputy, Cllr K Mason Billig, for her contributions, and her work with the Joint Lead Member Working Group (JMLG), the member group that had overseen the collaboration process. Referring to the new Terms and Conditions, he explained that these had been negotiated and agreed with Unison, and that this provided a solid and fair foundation on which to move forward. He was also pleased to be able to provide staff with one extra day's leave over the Christmas period, as a thank you for their positive contribution in what had been a difficult period for some.

Cllr N Legg also expressed his thanks to officers, suggesting that it had been a huge task to satisfy the Union and the diverse range of opinions from staff across both Councils. He was confident that the benefits of all the hard work, would become evident in the coming year.

Cllr C Brown recognised that a lot of hard work and goodwill had been necessary to achieve current progress. He stressed that this was an ongoing process and he hoped that the appropriate support would be provided to those staff who had/would find the process difficult and unsettling.

Cllr K Mason Billig was pleased that the process had involved no redundancies and stressed that throughout the process, best practice had been sought, and she hoped that the new structure created real "career paths" for staff. She thanked the Staff Forum and UNISON for their helpful contributions, stressing that the best possible deal for staff had been sought by all.

Cllr A Thomas was pleased that staff structures and appointments were in place before Christmas, stressing that the impact on staff and their families could not be underestimated.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

1. To note the final structures for the two councils, one team contained within Appendix A
2. To ratify the terms and conditions for all staff employed with effect from 1st January 2020 contained within Appendix B
3. To delegate to the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support, in consultation with the Staff

Consultation Forum, finalisation of all those policies that are impacted on by the new terms and conditions outlined in Section 3.8 of this report.

4. To note the updated Section 113 Agreement contained within Appendix C of this report

3524 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Cllr J Fuller presented the report of the Monitoring Officer, which sought agreement to appoint a new Section 151 officer, approval of the terms of reference for both Joint Informal Cabinet and Joint Lead Member Group, and an appointment to an outside body.

Cllr Fuller briefly outlined the recommendations of the report, and welcomed Mr R Fincham, the new Assistant Director for Finance, and the proposed Section 151 Officer, to the Council.

Cllr Fuller hoped that by February the MO report would be proposing a common approach to the Schedule of Meetings, and he stressed the importance of compromise from both Councils, to achieve alignment for both the meeting schedule and portfolios.

Referring to the proposed appointment of Cllr P Hardy as the Council's representative on the Queens Hill Community Interest Organisation (CIO), Cllr T Laidlaw made the point that it would make good sense for a local district member from Costessey, with more local knowledge, to be appointed to that Group. He did however stress that he was not doubting the capabilities of Cllr Hardy, and that he would respect the final decision of the Council.

In response, Cllr Fuller stressed the importance of the role, and explained that operationally, it would make sense for a member of the leading group to represent the Council, and he reminded members that a member of Costessey Town Council would also be represented on the Group.

In response to a query regarding substitute members on the Joint Informal Cabinet, Cllr Fuller explained that substitutes were not permitted by law on the Cabinet.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED:

1. To appoint Rodney Fincham as the Council's Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), with immediate effect.
2. To establish a Joint Informal Cabinet with Broadland District Council including:
 - a. adopt the Terms of Reference for the Joint Informal Cabinet, attached at Appendix A,
 - b. agree the membership to be the Councils Cabinet,

- c. agree that meetings be included as an approved duty in line with Members Allowances Scheme,
 - d. authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the consequential changes to the constitution.
3. To formalise the Joint Lead Member Group with Broadland District Council including:
- e. adopt the Terms of Reference for the Joint Lead Member Group, attached at Appendix B,
 - f. agreed the membership,
 - g. agree that meetings be included as an approved duty in line with Members Allowances Scheme,
 - h. authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the consequential changes to the constitution.
4. To appoint Cllr Hardy as the Council's representative on Queens Hill Community Interest Organisation.

3525 CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

Cllr A Thomas presented the report of the Procurement Consortium Manager, which presented members with proposed updates to the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

Cllr Thomas advised Council that the proposed changes had been reviewed at a meeting of the Council's Finance Resources, Audit and Governance Committee. She drew attention to one of the proposed changes relating to procedures where the value of goods was less than £20,000, and only one quotation was required. She was satisfied that this was sufficient due to the need for the "demonstration of value for money".

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the Contract Standing Orders attached at Appendix A

3526 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Cabinet

With regard the recent election, Cllr K Kiddie asked Cllr J Fuller whether he felt the organisation of three counts for South Norfolk, Broadland and Norwich North, at one location, had gone well.

Cllr Fuller felt that it had been a satisfactory operation in an excellent location, but felt that it was more appropriate for the Returning Officer to respond to the question.

The Managing Director explained that the location of the count had been a big step but was the right thing to do. Staff had worked extremely hard to make it work. The timeliness and accuracy of the count was good, and the venue had worked well. He wished to thank all the 900 staff involved in the election process, whether they worked at polling stations, at the Count, or behind the scenes in the Election or IT teams, for all their contributions.

Cllr C Brown referred to a recent Cabinet meeting, where members had expressed the wish for more ambition in relation to the Council's Environmental Policy Statement. He asked Cllr K Kiddie how the Council was going to encourage less waste and more recycling over the Christmas period.

Cllr Kiddie explained that staff continued to run campaigns to ensure that residents were well informed as to recycling and reuse. He added that although the Council did not yet collect food waste, this was part of discussions for the future. Cllr Fuller added that an area of the Council's website provided festive tips and advice on how to reduce, reuse and recycle over Christmas, and also advised that Norfolk County Council was providing a Christmas tree recycling service.

Cllr J Savage referred to the new roundabout on the A140 at Hempnall crossroads, and asked Cllr Thomas whether she had been pleased with the outcome. Cllr Thomas explained that this had been an excellent example of the County Council, District Council and Local Enterprise Partnership working together in partnership, to deliver a roundabout at what had been a notoriously dangerous junction. She commented on the speed of its construction, and how clean and tidy the operation had been, with contractors causing the minimum disruption possible. She now looked forward to the construction of the Long Stratton bypass.

(b) Scrutiny Committee

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee

(c) Licensing Committee

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Licensing Committee.

(d) Development Management Committee

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Development Management Committee

(e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee.

3517 FEEDBACK ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr J Knight fed back on recent developments at the Broads Authority. Cllr Knight explained that two years ago the Broads Authority had undergone an LGA Peer Review, from which arose a number of recommendations. He was disappointed that it appeared that the Broads Authority had failed to act on these recommendations.

He went on to refer members to the Authority's recent announcement that it was to terminate the ongoing management of Whitlingham Country Park; its management of the site and visitor centre. He explained that as the Park was located within the South Norfolk district, he had looked in to this decision more closely, and felt there were unanswered questions, leaving him with serious concerns. He, along with three other members of the Authority, had addressed these concerns in a confidential letter to the Chairman, and he was disappointed that despite the request for confidentiality, this letter had been shared with the Chief Executive and others. Cllr Knight believed that he had since been denied access to relevant information and that this, in addition to other matters, was stopping him from carrying out his duties as a representative of South Norfolk Council. He hoped that the Council would support him and request a meeting with the Authority to seek answers.

Cllr S Ridley expressed his concerns and suggested that the Broads Authority had acted "ultra vires". He proposed that South Norfolk Council's Managing Director wrote to the Broads Authority, requesting, in the strongest terms, a meeting with their Chairman and Chief Executive, asking them to explain the Authority's actions.

Cllr V Thomson seconded this proposal, explaining that he represented Norfolk County Council on the Broads Authority, and he shared the concerns of Cllr Knight.

Cllr K Mason Billig expressed her support for the proposal, explaining that she had regularly received complaints regarding the Authority from residents in her ward.

Cllr F Fuller agreed that a meeting was required urgently to discuss recent events.

Cllr C Brown explained that he could not comment directly on what was being said as he had not previously been made aware of any of these issues, however, it was clear that there were matters to be resolved, and a meeting with the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Authority seemed an appropriate way forward.

Members then voted unanimously to support the proposal.

It was

RESOLVED: That the Managing Director write to the Broads Authority, requesting in the strongest terms, a meeting with the Chairman and Chief Executive, asking them to fully explain the Authority's recent actions.

(The meeting concluded at 8.46 pm)

Chairman