

Agenda Item: 4

COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting of South Norfolk District Council, held on Tuesday 22 February 2022 at 7.30pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: Ellis (Chairman), Amis, Bendle, Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Elliott, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Glover, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Spruce, Thomas, Thomson and M Wilby

Apologies Councillors: Bills, Clifford-Jackson, Curson, Edney, Hudson, Rowe, J Wilby 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 Chief of Staff (E Hodds) and the Assistant Director of Finance (R Fincham)

3619 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3620 CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the civic engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the period 7 December 2021 – 22 February 2022.

Referring to the entry for 6 February, the raising of the Union Flag in recognition of Accession Day, the Chairman explained that she (not the Vice Chairman) had raised the flag, and that this had taken place at South Norfolk House, not Thorpe Lodge as had been stated in the agenda.

The Chairman was sad to inform the Council of the recent passing of former District Councillor Dave Gudgeon, who had served as a Liberal Democrat Councillor for Poringland with the Framinghams from 1999 until 2007. He had

served as Vice Chairman of the Council in 2006/2007, Chairman of the East Area Planning Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee.

Cllrs J Overton, C Brown and J Fuller all paid tribute to Mr Gudgeon referring to his significant contribution to the community and his fair minded approach. Members also noted the personal tragedy he had suffered, being a survivor of the Herald of Free Enterprise Zeebrugge ferry disaster, in which he sadly lost his first wife.

Members and officers then stood for a minute's silence in memory of Mr Gudgeon.

3621 NOTICE OF MOTIONS – Norwich Western Link

The Chairman explained that three members of the public had contacted the Council to advise that they wished to attend the Council meeting and ask questions with regard to the motion put forward by Cllrs Elliot and Blundell concerning the Norwich Western Link. As none of these members of public were present at the meeting, she requested that the appropriate members respond to the questions by email, after the meeting.

Cllr R Elliott then moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr S Blundell:

“South Norfolk Council reasserts its support for the construction of the Norwich Western Link and recognises that this vital new section of dual carriageway will bring the following benefits:

- **Significantly reduce many journey times**
- **Lead to a reduction in carbon emissions from vehicles**
- **Boost Norfolk's economy and support its businesses**
- **Improve road safety**
- **Take traffic off unsuitable local roads**
- **Create new habitats and improve existing ones.**

Most importantly this new road will improve quality of life for people whose lives are blighted by the congestion caused by vehicles taking short cuts on unsuitable country lanes and residential streets.”

Cllr Elliott explained that the Norwich Western Link would bring many benefits, and he referred to local businesses and the wider economy, and how the new road would help to reduce transport costs and increase productivity as a result of quicker and more reliable journeys. He referred to the benefits to the environment, and how journeys would be more efficient, resulting in a reduction in CO2 emissions, and the opportunities to create more cycling and pedestrian routes throughout the countryside. He added that the most

common concern amongst residents was congestion in villages, with drivers seeking to find short cuts on rural roads, and he suggested that the new road would help to alleviate this and improve road safety. Finally, he referred to the environmental impact of the new road, and stressed that this was not a matter that should be overlooked, and should be fully addressed in Norfolk County Council's planning submission.

Cllr S Blundell, in seconding the motion, acknowledged that the Norwich Western Link was a sensitive issue, but she stressed that she had been elected to represent the residents in her ward, who were very much in support of the new link. The lives of many residents had been blighted by drivers taking shortcuts on unsuitable roads, increasing pollution, speeding and having a detrimental impact on wildlife. She hoped that the new road would create opportunities to open up safe areas for walking and cycling, creating new habitats and protecting existing ones. She reminded members that South Norfolk was a rural district, and many residents relied on their cars, with public transport not being an appropriate option. She urged members to support the motion.

Cllr D Elmer spoke in support of the motion and suggested that Cllrs Elliott and Blundell should be commended for the bipartisan approach and for putting their communities before party politics. He stressed the need for stakeholders to express their view and he referred to Norwich City Council's recent u-turn and decision to oppose the new link. He could not understand why the City Council would not support a road that would lead to less congestion and safer roads, and he urged members to vote in favour of the motion.

Cllr M Wilby, also the Norfolk County Council Cabinet member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, thanked Cllr Elliott and Blundell for their joint motion, explaining that it was really good to have cross-party support. The scheme was a major priority for the County Council, alongside the Long Stratton by-pass and the Great Yarmouth River Crossing, and other major improvements to the A47. The new road would take traffic out of the west of the city, resulting in less congestion and pollution. He was pleased to support the motion.

Cllr M Dewsbury also expressed her support, explaining that it would ease the congestion in lower Easton at peak times, and would enable residents to travel to the airport or the east coast, without having to travel through the city. As Norfolk County Councillor and Cabinet member for Communities and Partnerships, and her work with the Fire Service, she was also pleased that the new road would enable all emergency services to reach incidents in the North West more quickly and avoid roads in the city.

Cllr A Thomas expressed her support for the motion and referred to improved road safety and air quality. She explained she was a Long Stratton resident and knew only too well how congestion and busy roads could impact on the lives of residents. She commended Cllr Blundell for speaking up for her community with such passion, and hoped that the Long Stratton bypass would also attract support from the Liberal Democrat Group.

With 36 votes in favour and 2 abstentions, the motion was then carried.

RESOLVED

That South Norfolk Council reasserts its support for the construction of the Norwich Western Link and recognises that this vital new section of dual carriageway will bring the following benefits:

- Significantly reduce many journey times
- Lead to a reduction in carbon emissions from vehicles
- Boost Norfolk's economy and support its businesses
- Improve road safety
- Take traffic off unsuitable local roads
- Create new habitats and improve existing ones.

Most importantly this new road will improve quality of life for people whose lives are blighted by the congestion caused by vehicles taking short cuts on unsuitable country lanes and residential streets.

3622 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET ARISING FROM THE MEETINGS HELD 4 JANUARY AND 7 FEBRUARY 2022

(a) Update to Local Development Scheme

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, explaining that it was a statutory requirement to update the Local Development Scheme accordingly. Members noted that the proposed amendments reflected the changes in timetable to the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations and also introduced proposals for the adoption of the East Norwich Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme.

(b) Food Enterprise Park (South Norfolk) Local Development Order

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations from Cabinet regarding the funding of the preparation of a Local Development Order (LDO) on land within the Greater Norwich Food Enterprise Zone.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree the recommendation as outlined at paragraph 8.1 of the report.

(c) Council Tax Assistance Scheme 2022/23

Cllr A Thomas presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which proposed changes to the Council Tax Assistance Scheme for the financial year 2022/23.

Cllr A Thomas explained that in accordance with the regulations, the Council Tax scheme was reviewed on an annual basis. Officers had been working with members across both South Norfolk and Broadland Councils, to try to align the schemes, and there had been a need for some changes to address issues of inequality and fairness. A public consultation had taken place and the responses had been broadly supportive of the proposals. She reminded Council that the Discretionary Hardship Fund was available to assist those with exceptional circumstances.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the changes to the Council Tax Assistance Scheme for the financial year 2022/23

(d) Greater Norwich Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan and Annual Growth Programme

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which sought agreement regarding the content of the draft Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2022 to 2027, approval of the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to the projects included within the Annual

Growth Programme and the approval of the draft loan agreement for the drawdown of £6.733M to support the delivery of the Long Stratton Bypass.

During discussion, members made reference to a number of existing projects that were still under way, including the Wherryman's Way Access Improvements, the Hethersett Academy, the Costessey Country Park and the Long Stratton bypass.

Cllr C Brown expressed his support for the recommendations of the report and stressed the importance of the appropriate infrastructure being delivered at the right time.

It was then

RESOLVED

To:

- a) Approve the Draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2022-27 (*Appendix 1*)
- b) Approve the proposed 2022/23 Annual Growth Programme (*section 3 of Appendix 1*)
- c) Agree the draft legal loan agreement for the drawdown of £6.733m through the Greater Norwich City Deal, to support the delivery of Long Stratton Bypass (*Appendix E of Appendix 1*) and to allocate £350,000 of the Infrastructure Investment Fund (IFF) to the cash reserve; and
- d) Delegate authority to the Council's Section 151 Officer and Director of Place in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the terms and sign the legal loan agreement on behalf of the Council.

(e) Adoption of the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation (GIRAMS) Strategy

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which sought authority for the adoption of the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS) and the collection of related obligations from applications for residential development, and other relevant development proposals, in accordance with the GIRAMS evidence and Policy 3 of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).

The Chairman outlined the purpose of the report and explained that this was a legal requirement and was a key document, underpinning the Greater

Norwich Local Plan Policy. He explained that the sum collected per dwelling would be £185.93 and would come into effect from 31 March 2022.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree, subject to agreement by all planning authorities, and an immediate review of the GIRAMS mitigation package, to adopt the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation (GIRAMS) Strategy and resolve to begin collecting obligations from applications for residential development, and other relevant development proposals in line with the following requirements of Policy 3 of the Greater Norwich Local Plan:

All residential development will address the potential visitor pressure, caused by residents of the development, that would detrimentally impact on sites protected under the Habitats Regulations Directive through:

- *The payment of a contribution towards the cost of mitigation measure at the protected sites (as determined under the Norfolk Green infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy plus an allowance for inflation); and,*
- *The provision or enhancement of adequate green infrastructure, either on the development site or nearby, to provide for the informal recreational needs of the residents as an alternative to visiting the protected sites. This will equate to a minimum of 2 hectares per 1,000 population and will reflect Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard.*

(f) Proposal for a Community Infrastructure Fund Loan Scheme

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which proposed the creation of a new Community Infrastructure Loan scheme. She explained that the purpose of the new fund was to allow for new development and infrastructure growth to occur concurrently.

Cllr Fuller commended the recommendations but stressed that this was an interim solution until more details had been worked through for the larger settlement fund.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the creation of a new Community Infrastructure Fund Reserve of £1,500,000 to cover the cost of loans to parish and town Councils

(g) In Year Budget Options

Cllr A Dearnley presented the recommendations from Cabinet, regarding the use of surplus income, for one off projects, to accelerate the Council's Delivery Plan.

Cllr Dearnley explained that the surplus funds had come about due to good financial management, savings and additional income throughout the year. This was a rare one-off opportunity to use the funds positively and speed up the delivery of projects.

Cllr Fuller explained that since the last Cabinet meeting, it had become clear that some of the planned projects, such as the installation of more electric car charging points, would attract significant government funding, and he therefore advised that the £1.5m earmarked for a post-carbon economy would be reduced to £1.3m, with the extra £200k being used instead to support the communities theme. Members noted these changes, and also the suggestion that the proposed projects should be considered by the relevant policy committees, and then recommended on to Cabinet for approval at its meeting in April.

A number of members expressed their support for the proposals with suggestions being made for a number of projects, including:

- Infrastructure in those areas where development was proposed
- Repairs to the footbridge over the River Chet at Loddon, as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations
- Support to develop the Health and Wellbeing Park at Poringland
- Additional funds to assist in developing and working on a carbon audit action plan

Cllr C Brown expressed his support for the proposals and welcomed the thematic split of funds. He was pleased that significant sums had been allocated to positive planning for a post carbon economy and he looked forward to members being involved in planning some of the detail. He also welcomed the Acceleration Growth and Prosperity theme, suggesting that many businesses were still struggling post Covid and required support.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree the proposed thematic apportionment of the quarter 3 outturn and to invite bids for projects that meet the objectives listed in section 3 of the report, to be considered by the relevant policy committees.

The Budget:

Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2022/23

Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23

Delivery Plan 2022-2024

The Chairman then explained that the following items would be debated together; (h) the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2022/23, (i) the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27, (j) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23, and (k) the Delivery Plan 2022-2024. Members noted that each item would be voted on separately. The Chairman proposed, seconded by Cllr Easter, that Group Leaders be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes in total whilst debating the items, and this was agreed by Council.

Cllr J Fuller began by explaining how proud he had been of the last 15 years, since the Conservatives took control of the Council back in 2007. He explained that during this time, the Council had grown sustainably, the quality of life for residents had improved, the district had been independently recognised as one of the top ten places to start a business, one of the top two places to bounce back from Covid, and had built its reserves and diversified its income. This, he felt, was an enviable record, and was in stark contrast to the position the Council was in under a Liberal Democrat administration 15 years' ago.

Cllr Fuller then referred to the work carried out during the Covid pandemic. The Council had ensured that the vulnerable were looked after and he referred to the excellent work by the Help Hub. Thousands of businesses had been supported and he thanked staff for all their hard work, especially those who had been redeployed to other areas, not only within the Council, but also in hospitals. Staff had ensured that the Council had been able to operate "business as usual" in most areas and he was proud that the long term plans of the Council had not stalled, making reference to the Harleston scheme where work would shortly be commencing on the £750k plan to improve the public realm. He was grateful that the Council had the foresight to ensure that all staff were adequately equipped with modern IT which had allowed staff to seamlessly move to working from home during the lockdowns.

Looking forward, he stressed the need to support the economy, support residents in need, and to positively prepare for a post-carbon future. Referring to the proposed increase in council tax, he advised that the increase

was just half the rate of inflation and that it was effectively splitting the difference on the cost of living, with residents, whilst building a better Norfolk.

Cllr Fuller stressed the importance of working with Broadland District Council and he referred to the £1.2m the collaboration had saved South Norfolk alone over the last year. The Council was now able to afford to release some of the reserves it had set aside.

Turning to the Delivery Plan, he reminded Council that all members had had the opportunity to help shape it. It laid out in detail the breadth and depth of what the Council was doing for the district and its residents.

Cllr Fuller then went on to announce that the level of Community Action Fund (CAF) would be tripled, with an emphasis on helping smaller parishes that were not able to take advantage of the £6m CIL co-investment fund. An open invitation was planned for every parish and village hall committee to install electric charging points. He referred to plans to invest in the economy with commercial space that would create jobs at the Norwich Research Park, and he advised that the Council would do what it could to support the superhighway between Norwich and Cambridge. He made reference to the regeneration of important sites in Wymondham and was pleased that finance had been secured for the surgery in Hethersett. He was also proud to announce that there was enough finance to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee through the appreciation of the environment and the promotion of active and healthy life styles.

Referring to the Council's ambitious but affordable capital programme, Cllr Fuller explained that this equated to nearly £100m investment in the district, with aims to improve the environment, support communities and boost the economy. He made particular reference to the Costessy Country Park, Big Sky, and also signalled a new relationship with parishes with the CIL Co-Investment Fund, which would allow larger parishes to deliver infrastructure improvements ahead of the receipt of CIL funding.

Members noted that the budget confirmed the intention for the Council to borrow for the first time, and Cllr Fuller felt there was never a better or more important time to do this. He drew attention to the Treasury Management Strategy which outlined how this could be achieved.

Cllr Fuller then commended the budget to members, which he felt to be affordable, ambitious and right.

Cllr C Brown expressed disappointment that Cllr Fuller had again referred to the workings of the Council over 15 years ago, under a Liberal Democrat administration. Fifteen years was a long time, and he reminded Council that

the world had moved on since then, and that the financing and funding of local authorities was now very different.

He agreed that the Council had performed well over the last year, and he wished to thank staff, some of whom had been under a huge amount of pressure, for all their commitment and hard work. He referred to the excellent performance in some areas, and drew attention to the Leisure Service in particular. The past year had been one of recovery for the Council, residents and businesses, and there was still a long way to go.

He referred to the need to be able to plan ahead, and how the Government made this difficult for district councils with there being so much uncertainty around funding, for example the New Homes Bonus and business rates.

Referring to the proposed increase in Council Tax, Cllr Brown explained that he understood that the cost of living crisis was going to make life difficult for many residents. However, he believed that not increasing the council tax this year, would only lead to greater rises in future. He drew attention to the future risks ahead and the further financial pressures the Council might face.

Turning to the Delivery Plan, he was disappointed to see that under the “Protecting and Improving the Natural and Built Environment”, the action plan for decarbonising the Council and achieving net zero would not be produced until 2023. The Plan did contain some good initiatives, and he welcomed the Tree Planting scheme. However, because the Liberal Democrat Group would prioritise plans differently, it would be abstaining from the vote for that item.

Cllr Brown welcomed the announcements from Cllr Fuller regarding the trebling of the level of funding for the Community Action Fund, but he felt an additional fund was required to encourage green projects. This fund could support communities to take action to develop projects that would promote environmental sustainability and create positive behaviour in response to climate change. He advised Council that a similar scheme was already in place at Breckland District Council. He then moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Cllr T Laidlaw:

“That £100k be taken from the monies planned for the General Reserves, to be utilised to introduce a Green Community Grants Scheme”

Cllr J Hornby felt that Cllr Brown’s assertion that the Council was not doing enough for the environment was wrong, and he referred to a recent report in the Eastern Daily Press where South Norfolk had been ranked as the best in the county, for protecting the environment, by the campaign group, Climate Emergency UK. The budget had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and he had been impressed with the future work planned for the environment,

and he referred to the recruitment of a number of new officers in that area. He would not be supporting the proposed amendment.

Cllr Fuller applauded the sentiment of the amendment but explained that he could not support it because it was duplicating the proposals already laid out in the budget. He explained that the previous year's budget had already included an additional £50k to tackle flooding, and this had now been "baked in" to the core budget. Member Ward budgets were also in place which could support green projects. And in addition to this all members and officers could propose schemes to the relevant policy committee, as part of the £1.3m set aside to support a post carbon economy.

Members then voted on the amendment and a recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Amis, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Glover, Halls, Laidlaw and Nuri Nixon, voted in favour of the amendment.

Cllrs Bendle, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Spruce, Thomas, Thomson and M Wilby voted against the amendment.

Cllr Bernard abstained from the vote.

With 8 votes in favour, 29 against, and one abstention, the amendment was lost.

Cllr P Hardy commended the budget to members and made reference to ambitious capital programme. He was extremely grateful that £4m had been earmarked for a new doctors' surgery in Hethersett; a fantastic asset that would benefit residents in Hethersett, Little and Great Melton, and Bawburgh.

Cllr R Savage also expressed his support for the budget and welcomed the use of funds to enable a step 3 access platform at Wymondham Railway Station.

Cllr J Hornby agreed that the capital programme was ambitious and he felt this had only been possible because of the prudent approach of the Conservative administration. He felt it was the right time to borrow and to assist the economy in its recovery from Covid, and he referred to investment at Browick Road in Wymondham.

Cllr T Holden explained that he would be supporting the proposed budget and was pleased to see the investment in land and sites in Wymondham,

Cllr A Thomas, portfolio holder for Better Lives, was grateful that the level of CAF monies had been trebled, explaining that the fund was oversubscribed each year. She hoped members welcomed the opportunity to bring forward community projects for consideration.

Referring to the additional monies allocated to the Supporting Communities theme for the one off spends, she explained that these funds would be used to improve the Council's temporary accommodation, with the remaining funds being set aside for a Hardship Support Fund, to assist those under pressure due to the increase in the costs of living, especially food and fuel prices.

Cllr S Ridley paid tribute to Cllr Fuller for his excellent leadership; he explained that only a few other local authorities would find itself in such a fortunate position as South Norfolk Council. He too would be voting to support the budget.

Cllr A Dearnley, the Portfolio Holder for Resources paid tribute to the staff that had assisted in the preparation of the budget. He stressed the need for caution with elements of future funding in doubt, and he hoped that residents understood the reasons for the small increase in Council Tax. He stressed that the Council could, with officer assistance, manage all the risks. The Council's aim was to deliver a balanced budget and this had been achieved. He commended the budget to members.

Cllr K Mason Billig advised that the Council had exercised its financial freedom in a prudent and sensible way, referring to the investment in Big Sky as an example, and the collaboration with Broadland, which had resulted in income and savings which otherwise the Council would not have received. As a result of that, along with the small rise in the Council Tax, the books could be balanced in the medium term. She commended the budget to members.

Cllr Y Bendle added her support and referred to the Council's preventative approach through the work of the Help Hub. She had been a councillor for many years and she had seen how services had progressed over the years.

Cllr T Laidlaw expressed his disappointment that some Councillors were still wanting to look back and criticise the Council's administration from 15 years' ago, and had insinuated that everything it did was wrong. He stressed that life and local government was very different now.

Cllr Laidlaw stressed that whilst the proposed increase in Council Tax was small, it would still be a real burden for some. Referring to the better than predicted recovery of the Leisure Centres, he wondered whether the £5.00 rise in Council Tax was unnecessary. Cllr Laidlaw also took issue with Cllr Fuller's assertion that a decision had been taken to increase the council tax

by only 50% of inflation; Cllr Laidlaw believed that the proposed increase had not been linked to inflation at all.

Referring to reserves, he noted that part of the capital budget was to be funded by a reduction in earmarked reserves. He wondered why this was the case now; there had been other opportunities over the years to use these funds to support projects.

Cllr Laidlaw explained that it wasn't that he did not support the projects in the capital programme, but he did not have confidence that it would be delivered, based on what had happened in the past with less ambitious programmes.

Turning to Big Sky, Cllr Laidlaw explained that he did not have an issue with it as a commercial proposition, but he was concerned about the associated risks. He did not feel that there was evidence to support that these risks had reduced.

Summing up, Cllr Fuller explained that he could not accept Cllr Laidlaw's suggestion that the capital programme had underperformed, on the contrary, the rate of delivery on those committed projects had been excellent, even through Covid.

Referring to Cllr Laidlaw's concerns regarding Big Sky, Cllr Fuller explained that it made up approximately one third of the Council's capital, and that this was a realistic, proportionate and appropriate risk.

He was grateful that Cllr Laidlaw had recognised the good progress made in the recovery of the leisure service, however, Cllr Fuller stressed that there was a need for caution, as he suspected that the continued recovery would become more difficult.

Cllr Fuller was disappointed that the Liberal Democrat Group had said that it could not support the Delivery Plan because it would do things differently, but had then failed to explain how. It was disappointing that a fully costed alternative budget had not been proposed.

The Council had an ambitious programme to look after the economy and the environment, but most importantly, it had a humane approach and was there for residents when needed to be.

Members then voted on each of the budget items.

(h) Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2022/23

A recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Amis, Bendle, Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Glover, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Spruce, Thomas, Thomson and M Wilby voted in favour of the recommendations.

No members voted against or abstained from the vote. It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree:

- a) The approval of the 2022/23 base budget; subject to conformation of the finalised Local Government Finance Settlement figures which may necessitate an adjustment through the General Revenue Reserve to maintain a balanced budget. Authority to make any such change to be delegated to the Assistant Director of Finance.
- b) That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2022/23 for General Expenditure shall be £8,485,950 and for Special Expenditure shall be £7,366.
- c) That the Band D level of Council Tax be £165.00 for General Expenditure and £0.14 for Special Expenditure.

(i) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27

A recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Bendle, Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Glover, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Spruce, Thomas, Thomson and M Wilby voted in favour of the recommendations.

No members voted against, and Cllr Amis abstained from the vote.

With 37 votes for, 0 against and 1 abstention, it was

RESOLVED

To approve the Capital Strategy (*Appendix A*) and the Capital Programme for 2022/23-2026/27 (*Appendix B*).

(j) Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve:

- a) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23
- b) The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2022/23 (*Appendix 1*)
- c) The Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23 (*Appendix 2*)
- d) The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) (*Appendix 3*)
- e) The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation (*Appendix 4*)
- f) The Prudential Indicators (*Appendix 5*)
- g) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (*Appendix 6*).

(k) Delivery Plan 2022-2024

With 29 for, 0 against and 9 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED

To approve the adoption of the Delivery Plan for 2022/24.

3623 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2022/23

A recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Amis, Bendle, Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Easter, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Glover, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Spruce, Thomas, Thomson and M Wilby voted in favour of the recommendations.

No members voted against or abstained from the vote. It was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. To note that the following amounts for 2022/23 have been determined under delegated authority and in accordance with regulations made under the local Government Finance Act 1992:

- a) **51,430** being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax Base for the year.
 - b) The amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amount of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items (i.e. Parish precepts) relate, as shown in **Appendix A**.
2. That the Council calculates the following amounts for 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011):
- a) **£55,437,332** being the aggregate expenditure which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act (including the General Fund, Special Expenses and Parish Precepts).
 - b) **£42,486,925** being the aggregate income which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.
 - c) **£12,950,407** as its council tax requirement for the year including Special Expenses and Parish Precepts being the amount by which the aggregate expenditure at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate income at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act.
 - d) **£251.81** as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year, being the council tax requirement at 2(c), divided by the Council Tax Base for the year (51,430) at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act.
 - e) **£4,464,457** being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (i.e. Parish Precepts and street lighting special expenses).
 - f) **£165.00** as the basic amount of its Council Tax for dwellings in its area, excluding Special Expenses and Parish Precepts, being the amount at 2(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2(e) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act.
 - g) The amounts given by adding to the amount at 2(f) above the amounts of the special items for the relevant Parish divided in each case by the Council Tax Base for the Parish at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in each Parish is as set out in **Appendix B**.

- h) The amounts given by multiplying the basic amounts for each Parish 2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.
3. That it be noted that for the year 2022/23 the main precepting authorities have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with s40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Band	Norfolk County Council £	Police & Crime Commissioner £	Total Preceptors £
A	1,011.30	192.00	1,203.30
B	1,179.85	224.00	1,403.85
C	1,348.40	256.00	1,604.40
D	1,516.95	288.00	1,804.95
E	1,854.05	352.00	2,206.05
F	2,191.15	416.00	2,607.15
G	2,528.25	480.00	3,008.25
H	3,033.90	576.00	3,609.90

4. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts of the District's and preceptors requirements, in accordance with s30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, **hereby sets** amounts of the council tax for the year 2022/23 for each category of dwelling as follows.

Band	District & Parishes Council Tax £	Total Preceptors £	Total 2022/23 Council Tax £
A	167.87	1,203.30	1,371.17
B	195.85	1,403.85	1,599.70
C	223.83	1,604.40	1,828.23
D	251.81	1,804.95	2,056.76
E	307.77	2,206.05	2,513.82
F	363.73	2,607.15	2,970.88
G	419.68	3,008.25	3,427.93
H	503.62	3,609.90	4,113.52

The council tax for each category of dwelling by parish is as set out in **Appendix C**.

5. Determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax (including special expenses) for 2021/22 is not excessive, in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and thus there is no need to hold a Council Tax referendum.

3624 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE, RESOURCES, AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ARISING FROM ITS MEETING HELD 4 FEBRUARY 2022

OPTING INTO THE NATIONAL SCHEME FOR EXTERNAL AUDITOR APPOINTMENTS

The Chairman of the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee (FRAG), Cllr P Hardy, presented the recommendation from the Committee, which proposed that the Council accept the invitation to opt into the sector-led option for appointing the external auditor to the Council for the accounts, for a five-year period from 2023/24.

Cllr Hardy explained that the Council's contract with its current external auditor, Ernst & Young, would cease next year and a decision had to be made on whether the Council should opt into the national arrangement to procure a new auditor. He stressed that the Council would benefit from economies of scale if it was to procure jointly, and the Local Government Association had encouraged councils to take this approach.

Referring to the performance of the current provider, he explained that it had, along with other audit firms, experienced resource issues, and this had led to delays in audits. There were currently only nine accredited audit firms able to carry out local authority audits, and he felt it likely that timeliness would be a key criterion to be considered as part of the procurement exercise.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To accept the Public Sector Audit Appointments invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

3625 REVIEW OF SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Before consideration of the report, the Monitoring Officer advised Council that she had granted all members a dispensation, to allow them to discuss and vote on the matter.

Cllr J Fuller then presented the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, which proposed amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme. He made reference to a number of the proposed changes to the Special Responsibility Allowances, and explained that many of the changes were minor. He proposed that all the recommendations arising from the report be accepted with no amendments.

Cllr C Brown concurred with this view and explained that the Liberal Democrat Group was happy to accept all the recommendations of the Panel.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. To agree the recommendations as outlined in the Independent Remuneration Panel's report
2. That the subsequent changes come into effect from 1 April 2022

3626 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which outlined required constitutional changes, relating to key decisions and member led grants. The report also outlined the current position with regard to member appointments on the Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board.

Cllr Fuller briefly outlined the salient points of the report, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To:

1. Approve the changes to the Council's definition of a key Decision;
2. Approve the update to the Constitution in relation to the extension to spending of Member Led Grants.
3. Note the current position regarding appointments to the Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board

3627 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

Cllr A Dearnley presented the report of the Senior HR and OD Lead, which sought Council's approval of the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, in advance of its publication on the Council's website.

Members noted that it was a statutory requirement to produce an annual statement, to include details of remuneration, specifically those relating to its highest and lowest paid members of staff.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the content of South Norfolk Council's 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement.

3628 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Cabinet

Cllr D Burrill referred to a recent study, which suggested that 1 in 20 people were currently infected with Covid, and the announcement by the Government that it was ending free Covid testing, and the requirement to self-isolate. He suggested that this would place additional burdens on residents who were still expected to exercise personal responsibility, at a time when the country was facing substantial increases in fuel and food. He asked Cllr Fuller what additional steps he felt the Council could take to support and protect the health and safety of residents.

In response, Cllr Fuller made reference to the budget agreed earlier in the meeting, which had directed substantial capital and revenue resources into ensuring that those in need had the support they required. He referred to the Council Tax Support Scheme, the Discretionary Support Fund, the Council's temporary accommodation, and also the work of the Help Hub, which involved over 50 different agencies. The Hub provided numerous avenues of support and he commended officers in their holistic approach, which not only helped to provide immediate support but also looked to solve any wider issues.

Cllr C Brown asked Cllr Fuller whether he was able to provide an update on the total cost of the toilets in Harleston which were installed in November 2014, and then later closed. He also sought details on when they would be removed and the expected cost of this. He reminded Cllr Fuller that he had asked this question at the December meeting of the Council, however Cllr Fuller had been unable to provide a response.

Cllr Fuller explained that officers were actively looking at the options for repurposing the toilets, and were in contact with voluntary groups. He could not provide the net cost of the project until an alternative use for the toilets was found. He reminded members that the toilets had been originally

installed to replace ones that were unfit for purpose and not DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant, and it had been real shame that the new toilets and been repeatedly vandalised.

Cllr Brown asked Cllr G Minshull whether the Council had any plans for the potential introduction of a food waste collection service, noting that Broadland District Council was planning to extend its food collections to the whole of its district.

Cllr G Minshull explained that discussions were being held with regard to food waste collection, but stressed that being such a rural district, did present certain issues. Cllr Fuller added that the Government was currently consulting on whether to make food waste collections mandatory, and it therefore might be prudent to wait until a decision had been made, because the Government would contribute to costs of introducing a mandatory service. Referring to the rural nature of the district, he said that it was an complicated decision, and that some considerable thought should be put in to its introduction. He suggested that this might be a matter for the Economy and Environment Policy Committee to consider.

Cllr Minshull advised Council of two other projects currently under consideration; a move over to HVO fuel, which although not a permanent solution, would cut CO2 levels, and also a trial to test the air quality in the district, in conjunction with a local business and the UEA.

Cllr S Blundell explained that many of her residents were disgruntled at problems with inconsiderate parking in residential areas, which was causing problems and destroying verges. She asked whether the two parking enforcement posts recently advertised had been filled.

Cllr L Neal responded explaining that a Parking Scheme had been set up in collaboration with Norfolk County Council, currently involving Cringleford, Trowse and Diss, to tackle issues with parking. She was aware of the current problems and was hoping that a report would be considered at the next Board meeting, to consider other proposals from the Economic Development team on how to tackle the issue. Cllr Fuller added that the two vacancies to which Cllr Blundell referred were in the advanced stages of the recruitment process.

(b) Scrutiny Committee

There were no questions put to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

(c) Licensing Appeals and Complaints Committee / Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee

There were no questions put to the Chairman of the Licensing Committee. The Chairman, Cllr Y Bendle, advised members that the new Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Policy was now available on the website, and that the introduction of metres had been postponed until April 2023. She thanked all officers and members who had contributed to the changes.

(d) Development Management Committee

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

3629 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

Members noted that no feedback from members on outside bodies had been received.

The meeting concluded at 10.23 pm

Chairman