

Agenda Item: 4

COUNCIL

**Minutes of a remote meeting of South Norfolk District Council, held on
Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 7.00pm.**

Committee Members Present: Councillors: Minshull (Chairman), Amis (for part of the meeting), Bendle, Bernard, Bills (for part of the meeting), Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Clifford-Jackson, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Glover (for part of the meeting), Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby (for part of the meeting), Hudson, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, Rowe (for part of the meeting), J Savage, R Savage, Thomas, J Wilby, M Wilby and Worley.

Apologies Councillors: Curson, Easter, Edney, Spruce and Thomson

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), the Assistant Director of Finance (R Fincham) and the Assistant Director Chief of Staff (H Ralph)

3571 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs D Burrill and L Glover declared pecuniary interests relating to item 8 (a) on the agenda, the Greater Norwich Growth Board; Joint Five-Year Investment Plan. Cllrs Burrill and Glover explained that their employers would be benefitting from the proposed allocation of funding. Both councillors left the meeting for the duration of the discussion on this item.

Cllr A Thomas declared an 'other' interest under item 5, Chairman's Announcements, as a resident affected by the recent flooding in the District.

3572 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3573 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to his message detailed at page 21 of the agenda, and explained that civic events had all but ceased in the traditional sense.

The Chairman wished to record his thanks to all staff who had worked over the Christmas period, to assist residents affected by the recent flooding in the District. In response to a query, he explained that he had, in his role as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, attended a meeting chaired by General the Lord Dannatt, to investigate the causes of flooding and the subsequent response from agencies. The Managing Director explained that the meeting was attended by 36 different organisations, which had been responsible in some way for flood prevention or assisting those affected by the flooding. Members noted that the terms of reference of the Group were yet to be finalised. The Group was due to meet again in March and Lord Dannatt hoped to present his final report sometime in June 2021.

The Chairman also referred to the recent Covid-19 surge testing in Diss, and explained that 80% of residents had taken the test within the first five days. He felt this to be a remarkable achievement, which he felt would not have been possible without the excellent work of the Council's Help Hub.

3574 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Cllr V Clifford-Jackson moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr C Brown:

"Leisure Services fit for the future

This Council notes:

- The sterling work Leisure Services staff have done during the Covid crisis
- The investment which has been made over the years in the Leisure Services
- The pre-pandemic increases in use of this service by residents
- The work being done on the Leisure Services recovery plan

This Council believes:

- The Leisure Services provide a significant and essential support for the health and wellbeing of residents

- At this time, and as we look beyond the current lockdown, this support will be needed more than ever
- All the Leisure Centres should re-open as soon as is safely and practically possible after the lockdown
- The Leisure Services have also provided a useful source of revenue and post-pandemic, with the delivery of the recovery plan, they will provide beneficial revenue again
- Delivery of our Leisure Services is best done as a Council service, with the assets and delivery of the service remaining in the Council's control, and not delivered through a private provider

This Council resolves to:

- Re-open all Leisure Centres as soon as is safe and practical to do so after the current lockdown
- Encourage residents from across the District to make full use of the Leisure Centres and other leisure services available
- Maintain the current status of the Leisure Services, delivered as an in-house service of the Council with the assets owned by the Council, for the foreseeable future."

Cllr Clifford-Jackson referred to the work of the leisure services staff, many of whom had been redeployed in other areas and also stressed the importance of the service on the health and wellbeing of residents, in addition to it being a useful income stream for the Council. She was very grateful for the previous investments and growth in the service and hoped that the Council could commit to it remaining as an in-house function.

Cllr A Thomas felt it regrettable that Cllr Clifford-Jackson had failed to consult her, as Portfolio Holder, prior to the publication of the motion. There were many aspects of the motion that she agreed with, none more than the references to the sterling work of leisure staff, and she wished to place on record her appreciation and support for their dedication, hard work and flexibility. Cllr Thomas, however, did feel that the motion implied that the Council did not have a current commitment to its leisure centres and was concerned that this would cast some doubt for both staff and users. She explained that the motion also contained some inaccuracies, and she referred to the reference to the centres providing a useful source of revenue. Cllr Thomas explained that even prior to the pandemic, the service was in deficit budget, and was not providing an income stream. She therefore proposed the following amendments:

To delete bullet points 4 and 5 under "This Council believes..."

To delete bullet point 3 under "This Council Resolves to.." and to replace it with "Demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the Leisure Service with a £2.492m investment spread over 3 years to enable its recovery to a balanced

budget position following a revised recovery plan which will be presented to the Commercial Trading and Customer Focus Committee and agreed by Cabinet in due course.”

Cllr Thomas explained that the Leisure Service had been tasked with producing a revised recovery plan within an agreed budget, which she hoped would leave staff and residents with no doubt of the Council’s commitment to the service.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr C Hudson.

Cllr Clifford-Jackson apologised and explained that she had been unable to contact Cllr Thomas prior to the publication of the motion. She expressed her support for the amendment and explained that she was very grateful for the ongoing commitment to leisure demonstrated by the Council.

A roll call vote was conducted, and the amendment was unanimously carried.

Cllr Fuller reminded Council that when the Conservatives inherited the Council back in 2007, Wymondham Leisure Centre alone was running at a net loss of £1.8m per annum. Since then, the Council had invested £4m in Wymondham Leisure Centre, £2m in Long Stratton Leisure Centre and pitch and had made other improvements in Diss. Footfall had risen considerably since 2007, and he felt that no one could doubt the Council’s commitment to the service.

Cllr Brown stressed that his Group acknowledged and supported the improvements that had been made to the leisure service over the years. The intention of the motion was to highlight the importance of the health and wellbeing of residents and how the Council’s leisure provision was a vital service, especially as the country came out of lockdown.

A vote was conducted by way of a roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

This Council notes:

- The sterling work Leisure Services staff have done during the Covid crisis
- The investment which has been made over the years in the Leisure Services
- The pre-pandemic increases in use of this service by residents
- The work being done on the Leisure Services recovery plan

This Council believes:

- The Leisure Services provide a significant and essential support for the health and wellbeing of residents

- At this time, and as we look beyond the current lockdown, this support will be needed more than ever
- All the Leisure Centres should re-open as soon as is safely and practically possible after the lockdown

This Council resolves to:

- Re-open all Leisure Centres as soon as is safe and practical to do so after the current lockdown
- Encourage residents from across the District to make full use of the Leisure Centres and other leisure services available
- Demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the Leisure Service with a £2.492m investment spread over 3 years to enable its recovery to a balanced budget position following a revised recovery plan which will be presented to the Commercial Trading and Customer Focus committee and agreed by Cabinet in due course.

3575 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD 8 FEBRUARY 2021

(a) Greater Norwich Growth Board: Joint Five-Year Investment Plan

(Cllrs D Burill and L Glover left the meeting for the duration of this item)

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which sought approval of the Greater Norwich Growth Board Joint Five-Year Investment Plan 2021-26, and the allocation of CIL to four specified projects.

He referred to the significant investment in education and gave mention to the plans at Wymondham railway station to make the platforms accessible to all.

Voting was carried out by roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. To agree the Greater Norwich Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021-2026, included at Appendix A of the report.
2. Approve the allocation of CIL to 4 specified projects, these projects will form the 2021/22 Annual Growth Programme (AGP); the allocation of £2M to support the Education Capital Programme within Greater Norwich; and, the allocation of an additional £341,000 to projects GP46 and GP53 that were initially allocated funding within the 2018/19 AGP.

(b) Update to Local Development Scheme

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme.

Cllr Fuller explained that the proposed amendments to the Local Development Scheme were necessary to reflect the changes to the timetable for the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document.

Members noted that approximately 400 sites had come forward for development, many more than anticipated. Cllr Fuller stressed the importance of ensuring sites were considered fully in a fair and consistent way, and advised that the document might not be ready to go out to consultation until June.

Voting was carried out by roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme (LDS)

(c) Council Tax Assistance Scheme 2021/22

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Y Bendle presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, regarding the removal of the discretionary payments from the Council Tax Assistance Scheme, into a separate stand-alone policy.

Cllr Bendle explained that there was a need to separate out the discretionary payments, to ensure that they could be amended without being tied into the timing restrictions of Council Tax Assistance regulations. She added that a further report would follow to reinstate the policy as part of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund, which would provide more flexibility.

Voting was carried out by way of roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the removal of the discretionary payments from the Council Tax Assistance Scheme, into a separate stand-alone policy

The Chairman then explained that the following items would be debated together; (d) the Delivery Plan 2021/22, (e) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22, (f) the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2025/26, and (g) the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2021. Members noted that each item would be voted on separately. The Chairman

proposed, seconded by Cllr Ellis 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 Fuller began by explaining that although no one could have predicted a pandemic, he was proud that the Council had been ready to respond. This had only been possible due to the astute management of the Council's finances, and the substantial reserves that had been built up over the years. Investments had previously been made in IT and equipment which allowed staff to work at home, and the Help Hub was well established and was ready to support those in need. Systems and processes were in place which allowed business grants to be paid out quickly and efficiently.

He was proud of the Council's leisure facilities which would play an important role in the recovery, helping residents get fit and healthy. He was so grateful to all the leisure staff who had been open to redeployment throughout the year, explaining that some had even been redeployed to work for the NHS, to support clinicians in ward-based work. He added his thanks to all staff across the Council who had gone above and beyond, working many additional hours over the previous year.

Referring to the capital programme, Cllr Fuller was pleased to announce that over 75% of the capital programme for approved schemes was forecast to be spent by year end, despite the impact of the pandemic.

Looking ahead, the revenue budget and capital programme were ambitious, but also affordable, as confirmed by the Council's Section 151 Officer. Cllr Fuller believed that the proposed budget would keep a promise to create better lives and a stronger economy, to benefit every resident and business in the District. This was a budget, not just about Covid-19, but about everything else that mattered too.

He drew attention to the balance of risk and reward in the Treasury Management Strategy and the apportionment of resources in the asset allocation strategy.

Cllr Fuller then turned to the environment and explained that priority would be placed on elements of the Environmental Strategy, that would focus on protecting the local environment, with tangible and visible results. He advised that some of the money available for allocation to reserves would be used to establish new positions to co-ordinate enforcement activity to protect the local environment. He acknowledged that this was about more than flooding, and that a holistic approach was needed to protect the whole of the District's environment. He made reference to illegal roadside encampments, unlicensed Houses of Multiple Occupation, fly tipping, dog fouling and air quality. The Council would demonstrate a shared commitment to "our" environment through both protection and enforcement.

Summing up, he suggested that the mark of a good Council could be demonstrated through its ability to "step up", when needed, and this had been

proven over the last 12 months, through the selfless devotion of both staff and members. He then commended the budget to members.

Cllr J Worley expressed his gratitude for the previous 14 years of careful, prudent and responsible Conservative led management, which had left the Council well prepared for the pandemic. He acknowledged that there would be future challenges, and he made reference to loss of income, and the reduced support from central government.

He referred to the loss of income in Leisure, but also the need to invest in the future health of residents, and he drew attention to the proposed budget allocation of £2.5 million over the next three years in the Leisure service.

Cllr Worley made reference to the end of furlough and what that might bring, for example more housing benefit claims, and an increase in homelessness. Members noted that the Council had set aside £380k to respond to homelessness and hardship as a consequence of the pandemic.

Attention was drawn to the potential loss of New Homes Bonus and a Business Rates reset, and also made reference to the uncertainties within the housing market, which could impact on the returns from Big Sky. He stressed that there was now a need more than ever to make savings and efficiencies and drive forward commercial activities to create income and invest in the local economy.

Despite the challenges, he believed that the budget still demonstrated an ambitious capital programme, that showed commitment to investing in the local economy, creating jobs and building homes in the District. He outlined numerous projects where the Council was placing significant investment, which in turn would benefit residents.

He referred to the Council's cautious but ambitious approach to investments, which were made up of one third cash, one third wholly owned trading companies, and one third in property assets, which ensured that not the Council's "eggs were in one basket"

Turning to the £5.00 increase in council tax for band D properties, he suggested this was an open, honest and transparent long term strategy, helping the Council prepare for the future and raising an extra £250k per year.

In referring to the Section 151 Officer's opinion that the revenue budget was robust and provided the Council with adequate reserves, and that the capital programme was both affordable and prudent, Cllr Worley had no hesitation in commending the budget to members.

Cllr C Brown then addressed the Council, explaining that he felt the previous year had demonstrated how well communities could come together and provide support to those in need. He praised the Council's response and referring to the Emergency Committee, he explained that he felt that all members had worked well across the political divide. He praised the

distribution of business grants which had been executed in a quick and efficient manner, and suggested that much further work would be needed in the coming months. He wished to place on record his thanks to all staff throughout the organisation, for their dedication and hard work over the last 12 months and gave mention to the work of the Help Hub, Community Connectors and Leisure staff.

Referring to the Delivery Plan, Cllr Brown explained that he felt it contained a lot of positive detail, however he would have liked to have seen it give more priority to the local and global environment. He acknowledged that the Council had agreed an Environment Strategy but felt that there was not enough ambition or urgency to deliver on it.

Turning to the capital programme, Cllr Brown expressed concerns with regard to its deliverability, and also explained that he felt the response to the budget public consultation to be far too low and should be examined further to see if it could be improved.

With regard to the Council Tax increase, he explained that after careful consideration, he had concluded that a £5.00 increase was necessary to ensure that the Council remained financially stable. He suggested however, that the Council had relied on the New Homes Bonus for day to day operations for far too long, and he hoped that it would be replaced with something as equally rewarding for the Council.

Cllr Brown then moved the following amendment:

“That £44k of funds currently earmarked to be added to General Reserves, be used instead to fund an additional resource to implement the actions set out in the Environment Strategy”

Cllr Brown stressed that this was a different resource to that referred to earlier in the debate by Cllr Fuller to provide enforcement for the prevention of flooding; this was to directly support the delivery of the Environment Strategy.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr D Burrill.

Cllr Fuller had no hesitation in rejecting the amendment, stating that he thought that he had clearly laid out earlier proposals to implement the vast majority of recommendations in the Environment Strategy, and also explained that many “global” environmental issues referred to by Cllr Brown, would be addressed in the new Local Plan. He explained that the Conservatives were pledging £50k in pursuance of environmental objectives, and he was perplexed as to why the Liberal Democrats were pledging £6k less. He urged members to vote against the amendment.

Cllr Burrill was disappointed that the Conservative group had failed to make clear its proposal to use £50k of reserves in support of the environment, and felt it was convenient that this was only announced after the Liberal Democrat amendment had been put forward.

In response, Cllr Fuller suggested that both he, and the supporting papers, had made this proposal clear.

Members then voted on the amendment by way of a recorded vote.

A recorded vote on the amendment was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Clifford-Jackson, Halls, Laidlaw and Nuri-Nixon voted in support of the amendment.

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

Cllr J Amis abstained from the vote.

With 8 votes for, 30 against, and 1 abstention, the amendment was lost.

Cllr T Laidlaw explained that he was pleased to see the capital programme had been separated in to approved and provisional categories in the budget papers, and he thanked the Assistant Director Finance. He advised that his greatest concern lay with achievement, referring to the previous three years' achievements of 21%, 51% and 25%, and he feared that 20/21 did not look much better. He stressed that it was the provisional projects that were causing the most slippage and he queried what impact non achievement would have on the revenue budget (for example when monies could have been invested elsewhere). Of particular concern was the significant sums being earmarked for the funding of the 5 Year Strategic Plan for Big Sky, and whether its non delivery was inhibiting the bringing forward of other more deliverable capital projects in other areas. He suggested that such matters required further member review, for example via a monthly analysis at the Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Policy Committee. Due to all these concerns he explained that he would be abstaining from the vote on the capital programme.

With reference to the Delivery Plan, Cllr J Halls raised concerns that some of the delivery measures were too aspirational, referring in particular to those concerning the delivery of Food Safety regulation.

Cllr P Hardy urged members to support the Delivery Plan and budget, referring to it as manageable, affordable, ambitious and audacious. He referred to the Council's excellent record of delivery, and the recent response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He believed it was imperative that the Council pushed ahead with commercial ventures, and accepted that this came with some risks, but stressed that these risks were qualified and well considered.

Cllr J Hornby also expressed his support for the budget and the need to press ahead with commercial ventures. He referred to the Council's investments

over the years in Leisure, Big Sky, and the Early Help Hub, which had been instrumental in helping the vulnerable during the pandemic. He considered the opposition to be unambitious, and he referred to the Liberal Democrat amendment which had proposed an investment in the environment of £6k less than the Conservative proposal.

Cllr L Neal referred to the Council's response to the pandemic and explained how proud she was of the Economic Development team, which had dealt with the huge task of supporting South Norfolk businesses and the delivery of over £11.5m of grants. She drew attention to the Council's confidence campaign and the need to ensure that residents had confidence in shopping locally, and she made reference to the planned improvements at Harleston to pedestrianize the High Street to make it more shopper and cycle friendly. She believed the Council was in a strong position going forward to support residents and businesses, and she commended the budget to Council.

Cllr K Mason Billig outlined some of the successes of Big Sky and explained that the return received on this investment equated to one tenth of the Council's annual budget. She made reference to a number of Big Sky developments and advised that it offered high quality housing on larger plots, and also catered for those in need of affordable housing. She was proud of the Council's entrepreneurial and commercial approach and believed the Council was well placed to continue moving forward and ensure that the District remained one of the most desirable places to live. She commended the budget to members.

Cllr A Thomas outlined the plans to reopen the Council's leisure facilities, when permitted to do so and drew attention to the proposed three-year financial package to assist the leisure recovery. Members noted that £1.56m would be made available for the service during 21/22, £814k in 22/23 and £114k in 23/24. She was hoping that officers would be presenting details of the recovery plan shortly and she welcomed the monitoring of the Plan through the Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Policy Committee. She hoped that the Plan would help to rebuild and improve the leisure provision to provide a platform for residents to get fit and healthy with confidence.

Cllr Y Bendle referred to the work of the Help Hub, which had proved invaluable over the last year. She also drew attention to other services where workloads had increased, referring to Housing Officers, Welfare Rights and those officers distributing hardship funds. She referred to the coordination of Mutual Aid Groups and the work officers had carried out in support of the Track and Trace scheme. Unfortunately, there had been an increase in domestic breakdowns and domestic abuse, and there was a threat of an increase in homelessness levels. She explained that officers were extremely dedicated and ready for the challenges that lay ahead.

Cllr V Clifford-Jackson queried whether the Community Connectors and the Help Hub were funded by partners and what percentage was financed by the Council. She also referred to the recent trend of people working from home

and wondered whether members were concerned that this might impact upon the Council's investments in office space. Referring to the Council's Delivery Plan, she suggested that members could spend more time together debating the issues and also proposed that each committee could consider its own element of the Plan.

Referring to the environment, Cllr Clifford-Jackson explained that she had been disappointed to learn that the Economy and Environment Policy Committee had only met twice in the last six months. She felt that the Council lacked ambition referring in particular to recycling and the delay in the installation of electric car charging points.

In response, Cllr Fuller explained that the electric car charging points had been installed two years ago. Every member of the Council had an opportunity to be involved in shaping the budget and business plan, and the budget was now set on a two year rolling programme.

He explained that everyone, not just the Liberal Democrats, was concerned about future losses of income, and it was more important than ever for the Council to continue to be ambitious in its investments and commercial activities. In response to concerns regarding the capital programme, he informed Council that 66% had been spent up to Quarter 3 of 20/21, and the Council was on target to achieve 75% by the end of the year.

Summing up, Cllr Fuller considered his administration to have the right policies, the right finances, the best ideas, and the right people to take the Council forward to benefit residents and businesses, and he commended the budget to members.

Members then voted on each of the budget items.

(d) Delivery Plan 2021/22

Voting was carried out by way of roll call and with 30 votes for, 8 against and 1 abstention, it was

RESOLVED

To approve the adoption of the one-year Delivery Plan for 2021/22

(e) Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22

Voting was carried out by way of roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22;
- (b) The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2021/22
(Appendix 1 of the report);
- (c) The Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 (Appendix 2 of the report);
- (d) The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) (Appendix 3 of the report);
- (e) The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 4 of the report);
- (f) The Prudential Indicators (Appendix 5 of the report);
- (g) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement
(Appendix 6 of the report) and
- (h) That Hong Kong be removed from the list of approved countries for investment in the Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) document
(Appendix 3)

(f) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2025/26

A recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Bendle, Bills, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hudson, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Thomas, J Wilby, M Wilby and J Worley voted in favour of the recommendations.

No members voted against and Cllrs Bernard, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Clifford-Jackson, Halls, Laidlaw and Nuri-Nixon abstained from the vote.

With 30 votes for, 0 against and 8 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED

To approve

- (a) the Capital Strategy (at Appendix A of the report)
- (b) the Capital Programme for 2021/22-2025/26 (at Appendix B of the report).

(g) Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2021/22

A recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Bendle, Bernard, Bills, Brown, Burrill, Clifford-Jackson, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hudson, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Thomas, J Wilby, M Wilby and J Worley voted in favour of the recommendations.

No members voted against and Cllrs Blundell and Nuri-Nixon abstained from the vote.

With 36 members voting for, 0 against, and 2 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED

To agree

- (a) The approval of the base budget; subject to confirmation 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) The use of the revenue reserves as set out in Appendix E of the report;
- (c) That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2021/22 for General Expenditure shall be £8,037,280 and for Special Expenditure shall be £7,192;
- (d) That the Band D level of Council Tax be £160.00 for General Expenditure and £0.14 for Special Expenditure

3576 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 21/22

Cllr J Worley presented the Council Tax Resolution 2021/22, drawing members' attention to the proposed increase in Band D Council Tax by £5.00, up to £160 for the year, the Special Expenses that amounted to £7,192, and the table at paragraph 1.7 of the report, which outlined the other elements of Council Tax, added by Norfolk County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Cllr J Fuller drew attention to the some of the parish council charges, explaining that some were now higher than the South Norfolk Council element of council tax.

A recorded vote was conducted as follows:

Cllrs Bendle, Bernard, Bills, Blundell, Brown, Burrill, Clifford-Jackson, Dearnley, Dewsbury, Duffin, Elliott, Ellis, Elmer, Francis, Fuller, Halls, Hardy, Holden, Hornby, Hudson, Hurn, Kemp, Kiddie, Knight, Laidlaw, Legg, Mason Billig, Minshull, Neal, Nuri-Nixon, Overton, Ridley, J Savage, R Savage, Thomas, J Wilby, M Wilby and J Worley 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 2021/22 have been determined under delegated authority and in accordance with regulations made under the local Government Finance Act 1992:

a) **50,233** 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 2021/22 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) **£61,161,953** 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) **£48,928,506** being the aggregate income which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.

c) **£12,233,447** 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) **£243.53** 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 (50,233) at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act.

e) **£4,196,167** 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) **£160.00** 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 To note that for the year 2021/22 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	981.96	185.34	1,167.30
B	1,145.62	216.23	1,361.85
C	1,309.28	247.12	1,556.40
D	1,472.94	278.01	1,750.95
E	1,800.26	339.79	2,140.05
F	2,127.58	401.57	2,529.15
G	2,454.90	463.35	2,918.25
H	2,945.88	556.02	3,501.90

- 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 2021/22 for each category of dwelling as follows.

Band	District & Parishes Council Tax £	Total Preceptors £	Total 2021/22 Council Tax £
A	162.35	1,167.30	1,329.65
B	189.41	1,361.85	1,551.26
C	216.47	1,556.40	1,772.87
D	243.53	1,750.95	1,994.48
E	297.65	2,140.05	2,437.70
F	351.77	2,529.15	2,880.92
G	405.88	2,918.25	3,324.13
H	487.06	3,501.90	3,988.96

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

5. 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.

3577 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which sought member agreement to disband the Joint Lead Members Group.

Cllr Fuller presented the report, explaining that as Broadland District Council had agreed to disband the Joint Lead Members Group, it could therefore no longer meet.

Cllr Brown felt this to be a substantive loss, as the JLMG had allowed the opposition groups at both councils to contribute to the debate as the collaboration had progressed. He queried whether all members would be welcome to attend the Joint Informal Cabinet meetings.

In response, Cllr Fuller explained that the next meeting of the Joint Informal Cabinet was on Monday 8 March. He stressed that this was not a decision-making body, and he queried whether it was time for the Joint Scrutiny Committee arrangements to become mobilised. In response to a query regarding the Chairman of Scrutiny, and whether this role could be designated to a member of the opposition, he stressed that this debate was for the Council's AGM in May. He reminded members that there was an arrangement in place where the Vice-Chairman (an opposition member) received 20% of the Chairman's Special Responsibility Allowance.

Voting was carried out by way of roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To disband the Joint Lead Members Group

3578 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

Members considered the report of the Senior HR Lead, which sought approval for the South Norfolk Council Pay Policy Statement 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Worley, presented the report, explaining that it was a statutory requirement to produce a policy on an annual basis.

Drawing attention to paragraph 11 of the Statement, which referred to the Council's Honoraria Policy, Cllr C Brown hoped that this could be used to reward staff whose service had gone above and beyond during the last year.

Voting was carried out by way of roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the content of South Norfolk Council's 2021/22 Pay Policy Statement.

3579 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Cabinet

Referring back to the Liberal Democrat proposed amendment in the budget, discussed earlier in the meeting, Cllr C Brown asked Cllr J Fuller, why it was felt that the proposed amendment would result in £6k less being earmarked for the environment. The amendment, which was subsequently lost, had proposed taking £44k out of the earmarked reserves to support the environment, which, as far as he could see, was £44k more than that proposed by the Conservatives.

Cllr Fuller stated that the papers clearly indicated that £50k of the £386k available in the general reserves, had been earmarked for the environment, thus £6k more than the amendment put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group.

Cllr V Clifford-Jackson raised a question relating to a forthcoming planning application. The Managing Director ruled that it was not appropriate to discuss any planning applications at a Council meeting, and that there should be no further discussion on the matter.

Cllr Fuller reminded Council, that as legislation currently stood, the ability for committees to meet remotely, would cease on 6 May 2021. He was aware that the Monitoring Officer and the Chief of Staff were currently contemplating ways in which members and officers could meet safely in person at meetings, and he anticipated further discussion on this in the coming weeks.

Cllr B Bernard asked Cllr L Neal if the Council supported the recent call by Railfuture for the building of a new railway station on the Great Eastern mainline, in Long Stratton.

Cllr Fuller responded by explaining that the proposals were desirable, however would require much further thought and detailed planning with Network Rail. Members also needed to recognise that the current rail budget was already under pressure, and that the Ely junction was a current priority, which would allow commuters to travel from Norwich to Cambridge within an hour.

In response to a further query from Cllr Bernard regarding issues experienced by local businesses in the sending of and receiving agricultural or manufactured goods to and from Europe, Cllr Fuller advised that on a personal level, he had not experienced any issues on shipments of agricultural goods since Brexit. He referred back to his earlier point regarding Ely railway junction, and further stressed its importance in goods being speedily transported to the east of England, from Felixstowe port.

Cllr F Ellis asked Cllr Thomas if those staff who had been redeployed to work at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, were receiving any kind of support for their mental wellbeing.

Cllr Thomas explained that Daniel Infanti, the Leisure Operations Manager, was based at the hospital for at least two days each week to deal with any queries and concerns from South Norfolk staff. The nursing teams were also providing support when needed, and a counselling support system was in place for all employees of the Council. She stressed that South Norfolk employees were only based at the hospital if they had volunteered to do so. These volunteers were mainly younger and newer members of staff, and she stressed that these volunteers deserved the Council's support and thanks.

(b) Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman referred to the recent flooding over the Christmas period and wished to thank Jamie Sutterby, the Director of People and Communities, and Mike Pursehouse, the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, for their outstanding contribution in supporting those residents affected.

(c) Licensing Committee

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Licensing Committee. The Chairman advised that some member training on licensing would be arranged in the near future.

(d) Development Management Committee

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

(e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

The Chairman, Cllr K Kiddie, advised members that the last formal meeting of the Committee had taken place the previous November, and had addressed some issues regarding polling stations.

He referred to the upcoming elections in May, which were still going ahead, despite Covid-19. He explained that this would be a real challenge to deliver and would require detailed planning. He urged members to encourage residents to obtain postal votes.

The Managing Director referred to two key dates; 19 April to register to vote and 20 April to register for a postal vote. He assured members that the elections would be delivered in a Covid compliant and safe environment, and

explained that the Council was awaiting further guidance from the Government. In response to a query, he confirmed that the count would be conducted at the Royal Norfolk Showground. Due to Covid-19, the number of observers and counting staff would be restricted.

3580 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies to consider.

The meeting concluded at 10.08 pm

Chairman