

COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting of South Norfolk District Council, held on Monday 26 July 2021 at 7.30pm.

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

3595 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

With regard to minute number 3598(c), Greater Norwich Local Plan – Submission to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination, Cllrs F Ellis, J Fuller and L Neal declared other interests as members of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership.

Referring to minute number 3601, the Adoption of the Poringland Neighbourhood Plan, Cllr L Neal declared an other interest, as a member of Poringland Parish Council and a former member of the Parish Council's Poringland Neighbourhood Plan Committee. Cllr V Thomson also declared an other interest as County Councillor for Poringland.

3596 MINUTES

With reference to Appendix 2 of the minutes, which referred to the Appointments to Outside Bodies, the Democratic Services Manager explained that since the agenda had been published, the Leader of the Council had

appointed James Easter to the Norfolk Joint Museums Committee, and Trevor Spruce to the Norfolk Area Museums Committee.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2021 were then confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3597 CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

Members noted the civic engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the period 27 April – 26 July 2021.

The Chairman referred to the last engagement listed which referred to a reception she had hosted to present nominated residents and volunteers with a certificate of appreciation for their selflessness. The Chairman wished to clarify that the certificates had been awarded to those (including 17 Park Radio volunteers) who had gone over and beyond to improve the lives of residents at all times, not just during the pandemic. She had been proud to have been part of an event which saw residents and volunteers coming together to share ideas and celebrate their achievements.

3598 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON 1 JUNE AND 19 JULY 2021

(a) UPDATE TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, which sought Council approval for the proposed amendments to the Local Development Scheme.

Cllr Fuller explained that this it was a statutory requirement to update the Local Development Scheme. He drew attention to the planned adoption dates of September 2022 for the Greater Norwich Local Plan, and April 2023 for the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

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

(b) STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 2020/21

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet arising from the finance report for quarter 4 2020/21.

Cllr Fuller drew attention to paragraphs 3.30 and 3.32 of the report, regarding the slippage requests for both revenue and capital. He further explained the reasons for the creation of three new earmarked reserves relating to Covid Recovery, Leisure Services and Waste.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree

1. the slippage requests for both Revenue (as detailed in paragraph 3.30) & Capital (as detailed in paragraph 3.32).
2. the recreation of three new earmarked reserves; a) Covid Recovery Reserve (see 3.4) b) Leisure Services Recovery Reserve (see 3.11) c) Waste Reserve (see 3.15)

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

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which sought approval to submit the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

Cllr Fuller explained that it was the opinion of officers, that there was no reasons in terms of soundness, to prevent the Plan being submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. However, he drew attention to the need to proactively identify and bring forward sufficient Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet identified need, explaining that unfortunately no sites had come forward as part of the Local Plan process. The three planning authorities were working together to identify sites, and he referred to South Norfolk's enviable record in traveller site provision.

With reference to the recommendation to reach an agreement in principle with Natural England, in the form of a signed statement of common ground, in relation to the mitigation necessary to protect sites protected under the Habitat Regulations, Cllr Fuller advised that he believed that an agreement had been reached.

Members noted that there was also a need to agree that the Independent Inspector could make any main modifications necessary to make the Plan sound and legally compliant.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED to

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

and,

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

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

and,

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

(d) ADOPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS FOR BURSTON, FORNCETT, GISSING, THORPE ABBOTTS, WINFARTHING AND WRAMPLINGHAM

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which sought Council approval to agree and adopt the amended conservation area boundaries, and the conservation area appraisals and management guidelines, for Burston, Forncett, Gissing, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wrampingham conservation areas.

Cllr L Neal commended the report to members, explaining that minor modifications had been proposed, in consultation with local residents, parish councils and local members.

Cllr J Fuller praised officers for excellent work which celebrated the built and natural environment and distinctive parts of South Norfolk, ensuring that any future development was in keeping with the area.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. Approve and adopt the amended conservation area boundaries for Burston, Forncett, Gissing, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wrampingham Conservation Areas.
2. Approve and adopt the conservation area appraisals and management guidelines for Burston, Forncett, Gissing, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wrampingham Conservation Areas

(e) MOVING TOWARDS A FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

Cllr J Fuller presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which sought approval for the adoption of a Complaints Handling Policy and an Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy.

Members noted the proposals and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the adoption of:

- a) The Complaints Handling Policy;
- b) The Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy.

3599 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE, RESOURCES, AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE, ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD 25 JUNE 2021

Review of Contract Procedure Rules

Cllr S Ridley presented the recommendations arising from the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee (FRAG) meeting, held 25 June 2021, which sought approval for amended contract procedure rules, as outlined at appendix A of the FRAG report.

Cllr Ridley explained that the FRAG Committee had unanimously agreed to the proposed changes which had included modest changes to give senior officers more discretion in approving some contracts. The Committee had felt that this was a more efficient process, and it had been disappointed to learn that Broadland District Council had taken a different view. However, it was understood that Broadland Council would be considering contract award levels again in the near future.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To approve the amended contract procedure rules, as outlined at Appendix A of the report.

3600 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which sought Council approval for the proposed changes to the Staff Code of Conduct.

Cllr J Fuller briefly outlined the proposals, and it was

RESOLVED

To agree

1. The updated Staff Code of Conduct.
2. That the Monitoring Officer makes the consequential changes to the Constitution as a result of the report.

3601 ADOPTION OF PORINGLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which sought adoption of the Poringland Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr J Fuller presented the report, and gave mention to John Joyce, the Chairman of Poringland Parish Council, and congratulated him and his Council on the outcome of the referendum, which had resulted in 92% of the votes being in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr C Brown also congratulated Poringland Parish Council on the production of the Plan, acknowledging the amount of hard work and effort from those involved.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED to adopt the Poringland Neighbourhood Plan.

3602 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Cabinet

Cllr C Brown referred to the Council's new website, and the need to ensure transparency of the Council in its decision making and through its elected members. He was disappointed that the website's Councillor and Committee pages did not include information such as election history, membership of committees and training records, which some other councils, for example Norfolk County Council, did include.

Cllr Fuller explained that the new website had been a huge undertaking, and he had been extremely pleased with the results, referring to the new and more sophisticated search system. He accepted the points made with regard to the Committee and Councillor pages but explained that this was being addressed through the procurement of a Committee System. Once in place, this system would assist in the compiling of agendas and would be able to efficiently manage records of members, automatically updating the website when required.

Cllr S Ridley referred to the Conservative Group's manifesto pledge, to ensure the implementation of the Long Stratton bypass. He asked Cllr Fuller for his reaction to the recent announcement that the Government would be contributing in excess of £26 million towards its construction.

Cllr Fuller welcomed the news, explaining that it had been a team effort, with South Norfolk Council, local residents, land owners, the Town Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the County Council, all working hard

to ensure implementation of the bypass. He gave special mention to District Councillor Alison Thomas, and District and County Councillor and Cabinet member for Planning and Transportation, Martin Wilby, and explained that this news was important to Long Stratton residents and the wider economy of East Anglia.

Cllr M Wilby echoed the comments of Cllr Fuller, and congratulated all those involved. This was a key piece of infrastructure and transport link for the region and would improve air quality, congestion and road safety in Long Stratton.

Cllr C Brown had noted the announcement in the recent Link magazine of the launch of the Big Litter Pick, in September and October, and he congratulated Cllr Edney and all officers involved in its launch. He then referred to a recent announcement from Breckland District Council regarding its new Green Grants scheme as part of its commitment to drive environmentally friendly changes. The Council had invested over £100k in the scheme, which was looking for solutions to issues such as saving water and energy, protecting local habitats, reducing litter and waste, and promoting green travel options. He asked Cllr Edney if South Norfolk was aware of this scheme and whether it would consider adopting a similar scheme in future.

In response, Cllr Edney explained that he had not been aware of the Breckland scheme. He felt all those issues raised were commendable but were issues that South Norfolk Council was already addressing on a day to day basis, and therefore he felt that no further financial investment was required in such a scheme. He acknowledged that some initiatives had needed to take a back step during the height of the pandemic, but he hoped that workstreams were now getting back to normal, with litter picks in place, street cleaning recommencing and education recycling campaigns resuming.

Cllr Brown also asked Cllr Edney when the electric car charging points in the Council's office car park, would be connected. Cllr Edney explained that he hoped that they would be installed shortly, adding that it had not been seen as a priority with the majority of staff working from home over the last 18 months. Cllr J Fuller reminded members that there was an electric car charging point in the Long Stratton public car park and he informed members that further charging points were currently being considered in other areas of the district.

Cllr G Francis asked Cllr M Edney if he could provide an update on the Council's waste collection service and the difficulties it was experiencing, due to the pandemic.

Cllr Edney was extremely proud that waste collection services had continued with little disruption to the residents over the last 18 months. It had been difficult at times, and he explained that over the last 18 months, a van had

been following each refuse collection vehicle to ensure social distancing between the crew. This arrangement was now being phased out, as social distancing rules were relaxed, and members noted that normal collection arrangements would resume within a fortnight. Cllr Edney also referred to the rules on self isolating and explained that the depot had been affected with many staff being “pinged” and agency staff being in short supply. He was hopeful that this situation would improve, now that waste collection services had been placed on the Government’s list which allowed workers to continue to go in to work if daily coronavirus tests were negative.

Cllr J Easter asked Cllr M Edney what the procedure was, should a member of the public want to report fly tipping, and also asked whether the Council ever exercised its powers to prosecute offenders.

Cllr Edney advised that the Council rigorously prosecuted fly tippers and explained that cases would be investigated even if there were no names or addresses to be found. Members noted that one offender had recently been traced through a till receipt and had been issued with a £250 penalty notice.

Cllr C Brown queried the Scrutiny function at South Norfolk, noting that it had received no call ins over the last two years and was a very different function to that at Broadland. He suggested that member training on the Scrutiny process might be appropriate.

Cllr K Mason Billig reminded Cllr Brown that members were free to call in Cabinet decisions if they felt it necessary. She suggested that this seldom happened due to the open, transparent and inclusive decision making at South Norfolk, reminding Cllr Brown that the Conservative Group actively sought to consult the opposition group in its decision making. She added that training could be provided if members felt it to be necessary.

Cllr Fuller referred to the Scrutiny function at Broadland Council and acknowledged that this was very different, but made for a much more long winded decision making process. He considered no call-ins to be a sign of strength and he referred to South Norfolk Cabinet meetings and its inclusive nature which allowed opposition members to participate meaningfully. Cllr Brown thanked members for their response, adding that he was very appreciative of the way in which Cabinet was run and that opposition members were permitted to voice their views.

Cllr S Nuri Nixon referred to the Council’s recent facebook campaign featuring a number of market towns and villages, and wondered if Wymondham and other towns and villages would have the opportunity to be included. She also asked what the Council was doing to try to attract people from other parts of the Country, to South Norfolk.

In response, Cllr L Neal assured Cllr Nuri-Nixon that Wymondam and other villages had not been forgotten. The campaign was continuing, and other towns and villages would soon be featured. With regard to attracting residents from further afield, she referred to the use of social media and the Link magazine.

Cllr J Fuller explained that the Council and its partners were working really hard to ensure the district was commercially and environmentally attractive to both residents and visitors. He explained that Netflix had recently shown an interest in filming in South Norfolk which would draw attention to the area, and he was also delighted to announce that the new Assistant Director for Economic Growth had recently been appointed and would bring with him knowledge and experience of customer focus.

(b) Scrutiny Committee

There were no questions relating to the work of the Scrutiny Committee.

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

In the absence of the Licensing Chairman, Cllr Y Bendle, Cllr J Fuller informed Council that the Licensing Committee was currently reviewing the Council's Taxi Policy, and he suggested that any members who wished to contribute to the debate, should contact Cllr Bendle.

(d) Development Management Committee

The Chairman of the Development Management Committee, Cllr V Thomson, expressed his thanks to officers and members of the Committee for their work in ensuring a smooth transition back to "in person" meetings.

(e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

The Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Committee, Cllr K Kiddie explained that there had been no meetings of the Committee since the election in May.

3601 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

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

Cllr C Brown expressed his disappointment that members rarely fed back on outside bodies, and the Chairman agreed that members should be reminded of the need to provide feedback if appropriate.

Cllr Fuller explained that the Scrutiny Committee was a more appropriate place to review the value of the Council's representations, suggesting that the Committee had a rolling programme for review.

Cllr N Legg reminded Council that any information on outside bodies could be shared with other members in the Members' Area on SharePoint, and he informed Council that he regularly updated the Members' Area with short reports relating to the Norfolk, Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting concluded at 8.45 pm

Chairman