

COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting of South Norfolk District Council, held on Monday 6 December 2021 at 7.30pm.

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

Apologies Councillors: Amis, Bendle, Blundell, Edney, Hardy, Rowe, Thomas, Worley

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Chief of Staff (E Hodds) and the Assistant Director of Finance (R Fincham)

3609 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3610 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members noted the civic engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the period 11 October – 6 December 2021. The Chairman advised that the event to celebrate the launch of 1 Gb community rural Broadband in Gissing and neighbouring parishes had been postponed from 26 November to 6 December. The Chairman had been delighted to attend the event that morning and had been pleased to see that residents of all ages were benefitting from the broadband installation.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Council, expressed her sincere sympathies to Cllr Y Bendle, whose husband, Roger, had recently passed away. She informed members of the details of his funeral to be held on 20 December.

3611 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Motion Relating to Holding Remote and Hybrid Meetings

Cllr C Brown moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr B Bernard.

“This Council notes:

- **The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government call for evidence on ‘Local Authority remote meetings’ was held in March to June this year.**
- **There has to date been no response to this call for evidence.**
- **Some councils are continuing to hold committee meetings remotely, as informal meetings.**

This Council Believes:

- 1. The use of remote meetings prior to May 2021 enabled the Council to continue to carry out its duties in a sustainable, productive, safe and inclusive manner.**
- 2. This Council would like to have the flexibility to hold remote, hybrid and physical meetings. We recognise that some meetings are better dealt with physically.**
- 3. For some councillors who have work commitments, mobility issues or are carers, remote meetings are easier for them to attend. This may well help to attract a wider age range of potential councillors in future elections.**

This Council resolves to:

- 1. Write to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) urging them to publish their response to the call for evidence and to advance legislation to permit remote and hybrid meetings.**
- 2. Write to Richard Bacon MP, George Freeman MP and Clive Lewis MP asking for support for this flexible approach to council meetings.**
- 3. To further explore the use of technology to develop hybrid and remote meetings even more, to enable greater participation and transparency of Council activity.”**

Cllr C Brown referred to the many benefits of holding meetings remotely, and felt that he was speaking on behalf of the majority of members, when he said that the remote meetings held prior to May 2021 had worked well.

Cllr J Fuller agreed that the proposed motion reflected the cross-party position, and that he too was disappointed that the ability to hold meetings remotely had ceased. He suggested that the motion should include a point

regarding the need to recognise that certain quasi-judicial decisions and matters affecting the lives of individual residents should be considered “in person”. Cllr Brown agreed that this should be added to his proposed motion.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED:

To note:

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government call for evidence on ‘Local Authority remote meetings’ was held in March to June this year.
- There has to date been no response to this call for evidence.
- Some councils are continuing to hold committee meetings remotely, as informal meetings.

That the Council Believes:

1. The use of remote meetings prior to May 2021 enabled the Council to continue to carry out its duties in a sustainable, productive, safe and inclusive manner.
2. This Council would like to have the flexibility to hold remote, hybrid and physical meetings. We recognise that some meetings are better dealt with physically.
3. For some councillors who have work commitments, mobility issues or are carers, remote meetings are easier for them to attend. This may well help to attract a wider age range of potential councillors in future elections.

To Resolve to:

1. Write to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) urging them to publish their response to the call for evidence and to advance legislation to permit remote and hybrid meetings.
2. Write to Richard Bacon MP, George Freeman MP and Clive Lewis MP asking for support for this flexible approach to council meetings.
3. To further explore the use of technology to develop hybrid and remote meetings even more, to enable greater participation and transparency of Council activity.
4. Recognise that certain quasi-judicial decisions and matters affecting the lives of individuals are best dealt with at “in person” meetings.

3612 COMMITTEE REVIEW OF MOTIONS

Cllr J Knight introduced the report, reminding members that the Council had referred two motions submitted by Cllr Brown at the last meeting of the Council, for consideration at the Economy and Environment Policy Committee.

Cllr Knight referred members to Appendix 2 of the report which detailed the proposed new motion, and replaced the previous two motions submitted by Cllr Brown. He advised that the motion focussed on three main areas:

- Building on the Council's Environmental Strategy already in place, to initiate a Decarbonisation Strategy, and to implement targets and required actions
- To help residents and business play their part
- To strengthen the Council's commitment to a clean and safe environment for residents and businesses to enjoy.

He explained that the Committee wanted to present a motion that everyone could support. Referring to the proposals to declare a "climate emergency", he felt it was not the role of the Council to declare an emergency, and hoped that members would not concentrate on this element of the motion. He felt the motion provided a clear direction for the Council, recognised the urgency of the situation and focussed on the things that the Council could achieve. He then moved the following motion:

"Following the global agreement reached at COP26 to accelerate action on climate change, this Council re-affirms its commitment to taking urgent action to protect our local environment, by preparing positively for and delivering a net zero carbon future.

This Council further accepts the urgency of meeting the challenges that the Environment Act 2021 will place on every council, every business and every household, through the 25 year Environment Plan.

We commit ourselves to achieving the twin objectives of reducing carbon emissions in our area and raising awareness of all environmental issues to enable everyone to play their part in protecting both the global and our local environments.

We therefore propose to take an urgent, balanced and positive approach to all environmental issues, focussing on three main themes:

Building upon our Environmental Strategy and based upon the upcoming results of the Council's recently commissioned Carbon Audit, we will initiate a Decarbonisation Strategy for the Council to become

more efficient and cost-effective, and to implement targets and required actions to become carbon neutral.

Helping our residents and businesses play their part by actively promoting recycling, enabling adoption of electric vehicles and ensuring that their homes and business premises can adapt to changes in the economy and expectations for energy efficiency.

Strengthening our commitment to a Clean and Safe Environment for our residents to enjoy and where our businesses can thrive. This includes enhancing our local natural environment through improving biodiversity, maintaining clean streets, reducing contamination, and cracking-down on all types of environmental crime.

We endorse positive planning for a post-carbon economy which is sustainable, generates wealth and helps us all to achieve net zero emissions.

Everyone in South Norfolk can play an important part in limiting global temperature increases to less than 1.5 degrees and the Council is fully committed to this objective and recognises that the need for action is urgent.”

Seconding the motion Cllr G Minshull reminded members that the Council had an excellent record with regard to recycling. Concerning calls to declare a climate emergency, he stressed that the Council would be judged on deeds not words.

Cllr A Dearnley, respected all members' views on this topic, but his opinion was that to declare a climate emergency implied a short-term crisis. He felt there was no need for the Council to declare such an emergency as this had already been declared by the Government. He was supportive of the motion and felt it adequately acknowledged the urgency of the situation.

Cllr C Brown explained that he was in attendance at the Economy and Environment Policy Committee and he felt it had been a really constructive discussion with some positive changes and additions. However, he had not felt able to support the wording of the motion as it failed to declare a climate change emergency. He felt these words were important as they sent a clear message both externally to residents and internally to staff. The situation was beyond being urgent and he referred to the Prime Minister's words at COP26, that “the clock was at one minute to midnight”.

Cllr Brown then moved the following amendment:

Fourth paragraph, after the words “propose to”, to insert “declare a “Climate Emergency” and...”

To add the words “by 2032” at the end of paragraph six.

To add at the end of the motion “This Council Resolves to report back annually on:

- Progress on the Decarbonisation Strategy and towards becoming carbon-neutral
- Steps to be taken to support reduction in CO2 emissions in the district and the outcomes in the district and the outcomes of this.”

Cllr D Burrill seconded this amendment.

Cllr T Laidlaw expressed his support for the amendment and suggested that the Council should be sending out a positive message to residents by reducing its own carbon emissions. He could see that the Council was planning to take positive action and he supported this, but was disappointed that this had not been addressed earlier.

Cllr J Fuller explained that he would not be supporting the amendment; he felt the use of the word “emergency” would only serve to scare and hector residents. Referring to the Environment Act’s four principal objectives, cleaner air, less waste, lower carbon and purer water, he suggested the amendments would address only one of these objectives, and was dismissive of local issues. The proposed motion focussed on the Council’s responsibilities whilst encouraging residents and businesses to play their part, and he felt the declaration of an emergency to be unnecessary.

Cllr J Hornby referred to the amendment to commit to becoming carbon neutral by 2032, and suggested that it would be more sensible to wait until the outcomes of the carbon audit, before a target was set.

Cllr Knight felt that the discussions around a climate emergency had been a distraction, when the real focus needed to be on what positive actions the Council could take. He stressed the importance of driving behaviours and encouraging people to reduce waste. Whilst he was comfortable to accept Cllr Brown’s last amendment regarding progress being reported back to full Council, he could not accept the other amendments.

A vote was then conducted on the amendment as proposed by Cllr Brown, and with a vote of 7 in favour, and 25 against, the amendment was lost.

Discussion then followed regarding the final part of Cllr Brown’s amendment and with Cllr Knight’s and Cllr Minshull’s approval, the substantive motion was amended to add at the end:

“That the Economy and Environment Policy Committee keeps under review and reports back to Full Council annually on:

- The progress on the Decarbonisation Strategy and becoming carbon-neutral
- Steps taken to support the reduction in CO2 emissions in the district and the outcomes of this.”

Members then voted unanimously to approve the motion.

RESOLVED

“Following the global agreement reached at COP26 to accelerate action on climate change, this Council re-affirms its commitment to taking urgent action to protect our local environment, by preparing positively for and delivering a net zero carbon future.

This Council further accepts the urgency of meeting the challenges that the Environment Act 2021 will place on every council, every business and every household, through the 25 year Environment Plan.

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Helping our residents and businesses play their part by actively promoting recycling, enabling adoption of electric vehicles and ensuring that their homes and business premises can adapt to changes in the economy and expectations for energy efficiency.

Strengthening our commitment to a Clean and Safe Environment for our residents to enjoy and where our businesses can thrive. This includes enhancing our local natural environment through improving biodiversity, maintaining clean streets, reducing contamination, and cracking-down on all types of environmental crime.

We endorse positive planning for a post-carbon economy which is sustainable, generates wealth and helps us all to achieve net zero emissions.

Everyone in South Norfolk can play an important part in limiting global temperature increases to less than 1.5 degrees and the Council is fully committed to this objective and recognises that the need for action is urgent.

That the Economy and Environment Policy Committee will keep under review and report back to Full Council annually on:

- The progress on the Decarbonisation Strategy and becoming carbon-neutral
- Steps taken to support the reduction in CO2 emissions in the district and the outcomes of this.”

3613 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON 18 OCTOBER AND 22 NOVEMBER 2021

(a) PROPOSED ASSIGNMENT OF LEASE AND SUBLETTING OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, which proposed a change to the constitution, to allow lease assignments, subletting, alterations and other dealings to be dealt with under delegated powers.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree an amendment to the Constitution Part 4 Rules of Financial Governance at 13.4 for an additional clause:

Allow all lease assignments, subletting, alterations and other dealings within the terms of the lease, to be approved under delegation to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

(b) MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND RESERVES UPDATE

Cllr A Dearnley presented the recommendations from the Cabinet regarding changes to the Council's earmarked reserves.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED

To agree the following changes to the Council's Earmarked Reserves:

- a) Creation of a new Feasibility Study Reserve of £0.6m for initial feasibility studies / investigations to support development projects.
- b) Reduction in Business Rates Reserve from £5.169m to £2m.

(c) USE OF NORFOLK STRATEGIC FUND GRANT

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations to Council regarding the need to increase the capital budget for the Norfolk Strategic Fund to support Economic Growth and the planned works at Harleston.

Cllr L Neal explained that the preferred option of works for the public realm works at Harleston, although more expensive than originally envisaged, would provide an excellent scheme, providing a solution for the whole town, including traffic calming measures throughout.

Cllr C Brown welcomed the proposals but stressed the need to ensure that the works were communicated effectively to both residents and business owners, to ensure that local businesses did not suffer.

Cllr M Wilby expressed his support for the improvements to the town and had been pleased to see that footfall had been increasing steadily.

Cllr J Fuller cited this as an excellent example of team work and thanked Norfolk County Council for its contributions.

RESOLVED

To agree that the £428,572 2021/22 capital budget for 'Norfolk Strategic Fund to support Economic Growth' (aka Harleston works) be increased by £250,000 to £678,572.

(d) BROWICK INTERCHANGE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER

Cllr L Neal presented the recommendations from the Cabinet regarding the Browick Interchange Local Development Order.

Members welcomed the proposals, however one member did suggest that the Council did need to exercise some caution.

With 31 votes in favour, and 2 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED

To approve the recommendations as outlined at paragraph 9 of the report

3614 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LICENSING APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE AND THE LICENSING AND GAMBLING ACTS COMMITTEE ARISING FROM THE MEETINGS HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021

(a) REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE POLICY AND CONDITIONS

Members considered the report of the Licensing Team Leader, which presented members with a proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy and Conditions, for approval.

The Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the report, explaining that the document had been subject to public consultation, and had been reviewed by the Licensing Committee. He explained that officers had worked hard to ensure that the policies were consistent across both South Norfolk and Broadland areas.

Cllr J Halls expressed his support for the new policy and conditions.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED to adopt the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy and Conditions document

(b) GAMBLING ACT 2005: REVIEW OF GAMBLING STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (POLICY STATEMENT)

The Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the report, explaining that the document had been subject to public consultation, and had been reviewed by the Licensing Committee.

It was

RESOLVED to adopt the Gambling Statement of Principles (Policy Statement), to include the table of delegations at Appendix A, and that the relevant amendments be made to the constitution.

3615 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Cllr Fuller presented the report of the Monitoring Officer, which outlined a number of changes to appointments, sought approval to provide a dispensation to the six-month rule for a member, and proposed an update to the Constitution in relation to Motions on Notice.

Cllr Fuller presented the report and confirmed his appointments to Cabinet as detailed below:

- Cllr A Dearnley as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, replacing Cllr J Worley
- Cllr G Minshull as Portfolio Holder for Clean and Safe Environment, replacing Cllr M Edney

Cllr Fuller thanked Cllrs Edney and Worley for their valuable and diligent service on Cabinet.

He went on to propose a number of other appointments as detailed below:

- Cllr J Hornby as Chairman of Scrutiny Committee
- Cllr J Knight as Chairman of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee
- Cllr G Francis as Vice Chairman of the Economy and Environment Policy Committee
- Cllr J Overton to replace Cllr A Dearnley on the Economy and Environment Policy Committee
- Cllrs K Kiddie and M Edney to replace Cllrs Dearnley and Minshull on the Finance Resources Audit and Governance Committee
- Cllr G Minshull to replace Cllr M Edney on the Emergency Committee

Cllr C Brown announced the following changes to the Liberal Democrat appointments.

- Cllr T Laidlaw to be appointed to the Development Management Committee
- Cllr J Halls to replace Cllr V Clifford-Jackson on the Scrutiny Committee, and also to take on the position of Vice-Chairman.

Turning to the recommendations, Cllr Brown stressed that he felt that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee should fall to a member of the opposition, as it did with most other councils, including Norfolk County Council and Broadland District Council. The role of the Scrutiny Committee was to act as a “critical friend” to the Executive and he felt having a member of the opposition in the Chair was good practice. As a matter of principle, he would therefore be voting against this recommendation. In response to a query from another member, he confirmed that this had always been his view on the matter.

Cllr Brown informed Council that he could also not support the proposals

regarding Motions on Notice. He felt it to be completely undemocratic that an officer would decide whether a motion submitted by a member was clear and concise enough. Referring to his motions submitted at the October meeting of the Council, he stressed that the subject matter had been so significant that it had warranted lengthy motions, and he wondered if the rules were being changed to avoid having to deal with similar difficult situations in future. He felt so strongly that he suggested that the recommendation should be withdrawn, and not voted upon at all. If a vote was to be taken, he requested a recorded vote, and this was supported by at least five other members at the meeting.

In response, Cllr Fuller totally rejected Cllr Brown's assertions on the matter, suggesting that he had misinterpreted the intent of the proposal. He explained that the purpose of the policy was to facilitate an open debate, which was not unnecessarily constrained through the wording of the motion, and would also bring the Council in line with other authorities. He stressed that simplicity and clarity were the hall marks of a good motion and provided a canvass for healthy debate. There needed to be some basic rules of engagement, and he was aware that a similar approach was in place at Norfolk County Council. He therefore was not prepared to withdraw the recommendation.

The Chairman referred to the proposal to grant Cllr V Clifford-Jackson a dispensation from attending meetings. She sent her best wishes on behalf of the Council and hoped that Cllr Clifford-Jackson would be feeling better soon.

It was then unanimously **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the changes to the Executive as outlined in paragraph 2.1 of this report
2. Appoint Cllr J Knight to the position of Chairman of the Economy & Environment Policy Committee.
3. Appoint Cllr G Francis to the position of Vice-Chairman of the Economy and Environment
4. Appoint Cllr J Halls to the position of Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee
5. Agree the changes to the membership of the Scrutiny Committee, the Economy and Environment Policy Committee, the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee, the Emergency Committee and the Development Management Committee, as outlined above.
6. Agree to a dispensation for Cllr Clifford-Jackson from attending meetings of the Council, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, for six months, and that the situation be reviewed at regular intervals by the Leader of the Liberal Democrats and the Monitoring Officer

With 23 votes for and 9 abstentions, it was then **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr J Hornby to the position of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

A recorded vote regarding the proposals on Motions with Notice was conducted as follows:

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

Cllrs Bernard, Brown, Burrill, Glover, Halls, Laidlaw and Nuri Nixon voted against.

There were no abstentions.

RESOLVED to approve the update to the Constitution in relation to Motions on Notice

3616 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT – CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which outlined the Local Government Association's (LGA) report and work programme on Civility in Public Life and proposed the adoption of some measures identified in the programme.

Cllr K Mason Billig presented the report and explained that following the sad death of Sir David Amess MP, the Monitoring Officer had been asked to provide a report to Council, providing advice and guidance to members with regard to their safety in public life. She referred to the LGA's report and work programme on Civility in Public Life, and outlined the proposed measures to be adopted by the Council. She hoped that these actions would allow members to stay safe in their roles as community representatives.

Cllr C Brown supported the recommendations, explaining that he had been very shocked and saddened at the tragic death of Sir David Amess. He stressed the importance of members being able to work and feel safe within their communities.

Concerning the proposal regarding a nominated officer and a nominated member from each political group, to act as a contact, Cllr Brown requested that they be adequately training so that they could provide appropriate support and guidance if needed. Cllr Mason Billig agreed that the Monitoring Officer would arrange training, should individuals feel it to be necessary.

One member pointed out that the one Labour member serving on the Council would not have a nominated representative and Council agreed that he would be welcome to seek advice from either of the nominated members from the Conservative and Liberal Democratic Groups, if required.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. Note the report and the current work of the LGA, promoting civility in public life and supporting the well-being of elected members
2. Adopt the following measures identified in the report:
 - a) Appoint an officer to act as a point of contact for any councillor who has received intimidatory contact or communication from an external or internal source
 - b) Each political group within the Council to appoint either the Leader of the group and/or one of their number to perform a similar role as above for their elected member
 - c) A protocol be established with the police as to how councillors should report intimidation and threats, and establish a named officer for handling serious threats to councillors.
 - d) Members be encouraged to follow the LGA's councillors' guide to handling intimidation and to use the model rules of engagement developed by the LGA on their personal websites and social media. The guidance and resource should also form part of the members' induction.
 - e) Officers to ensure that members can check the information on the potentially violent persons register, prior to a home visit.

3617 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Cabinet

Cllr S Nuri Nixon asked Cllr J Fuller (in Cllr A Thomas' absence), what steps South Norfolk Council could take to coordinate support in Norfolk for the "Toothless in Norfolk" campaign, which was trying to address the anxiety some residents were facing in not being able to sign up to an NHS dentist. She advised that East Suffolk Council had recently considered the issue at a meeting of its Scrutiny Committee.

In response, Cllr Fuller suggested that the new Vice Chairman of the Committee should seek to include it on South Norfolk Council's Scrutiny Committee work programme.

Cllr Nuri Nixon also asked Cllr Fuller (in Cllr Thomas' absence) why the Council had moved away from working with local communities to deliver food hampers to those in need, as this model had previously been very successful. She knew of organisations that were willing to provide and deliver these hampers, but the Help Hub had not provided them with the necessary list of those in need.

In response, Cllr Fuller explained that he was not aware of the details, but he knew that the Council continued to work with food banks and other charitable

organisations. The Council had an enviable track record in helping others and he believed South Norfolk to be a compassionate Council.

Cllr C Brown had noted the recent addition of a new Community Transport service for the rural villages around Bungay to enable residents to visit the town on market days and hence support the local businesses as they tried to recover and help village residents to return to the town. This had been largely funded by East Suffolk Council. Cllr Brown asked whether South Norfolk had any plans to support additional Community Transport services to support rural villages and market towns, especially for those villages around Harleston. He asked what improvements the Council planned for Community Transport services, such as Borderhoppa around Harleston.

Cllr L Neal responded (on behalf of Cllr Thomas who was not present), and explained that rural transport came under the remit of Norfolk County Council, and whilst South Norfolk did hold a small budget to support Community Transport Services, it would not be in a position to fund this huge issue going forward.

She explained that the Council's budget did provide funding for a number of schemes, including BACT (a car scheme) and Borderhoppa, which provided services in the East of the District and near Harleston. The Communities Team was happy to assist any groups wishing to start up a community transport scheme where a need had been identified. Cllr Neal went on to suggest that the Economic Growth Team at the Council, should work alongside the Communities Team, to ensure that such schemes not only assisted individuals with wellbeing, but also in accessing local businesses and shops.

Cllr B Bernard asked how many holiday lets were registered as businesses in South Norfolk and how did the Council check that these second homes were not being used as a business but as a way of avoiding both council tax and rates, when not actually let at all.

Cllr Dearnley advised that the number of properties currently on the valuation list that were subject to business rates as holiday accommodation was 218. Owners did receive a small amount of business rates relief and officers carried out regular checks to verify their continued eligibility and these checks included where the accommodation had been advertised and details of lets taken place. The Council was not responsible for making the final decision on eligibility; all information was passed on to the Valuation Office for decision.

Cllr C Brown referred to the modern state-of-the-art toilets that were installed in Harleston in November 2014 and later closed. He explained that it had been agreed that they would be removed in November 2016, five years ago, and he asked for an update on when they were expected to be removed and what was the planned future for them. He also asked what was the total cost of these toilets to date and the expected further cost of removal and recycling or disposal of them.

Cllr Fuller explained that the Council had invested in new toilets for the town back in 2014 as a need had been identified, and he had been disappointed that they had been subject to serial vandalism. He acknowledged that the toilets had been closed for some considerable time and explained that unfortunately a plan to replace the toilets to a community group in Bawburgh had fallen through. Officers were currently in discussions with a voluntary group from Mid Norfolk Railway, and it was hoped that the toilets would be transferred into its ownership shortly. In response to Cllr Brown's queries regarding the total cost of the toilets to date and the cost of removal, Cllr Fuller said that he did not know, and would advise Cllr Brown once the toilets had been removed.

Cllr D Bills asked Cllr Neal what assistance was available to help the hospitality industry, which had only just managed to start its recovery from Covid, and was now suffering from the impact of the Omicron variant. He added that many pubs and restaurants had been inundated with cancellations for bookings.

Cllr Neal advised that a decision had been made to create a Hospitality Grant, which would be paid at three levels, and would be based on a business' ratable value, and an anticipated loss of more than 20% of revenue. Projections indicated that this would support approximately 180 businesses in South Norfolk and the grant would open for applications the following week.

Cllr B Bernard asked Cllr Dearnley, whether it was the intention of the Council to apply for new powers from the Department of Transport to impose fines on motorists in South Norfolk for a range of offences. Cllr Dearnley explained that [Norfolk County Council had recorded its intention to apply for moving traffic enforcement powers as the Highway Authority, and that the District Council was not permitted to apply for these powers.](#)

(b) Scrutiny Committee

Cllr J Hornby, the newly appointed Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, thanked members for the trust they had placed in him in appointing him as Chairman. He explained that he had already met with the Scrutiny Officer, and the Monitoring Officer and had been fully briefed on his new position. He advised that officers were currently arranging member training on Scrutiny and details of this would follow shortly.

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

There were no updates or questions put to the Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee

(d) Development Management Committee

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

(e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

Cllr K Kiddie explained that the Electoral Arrangements Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Council. He explained that that the Elections Team had been busy updating the electoral role, which had been published in the first week of December.

3618 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr J Fuller reminded members that the Monitoring Officer had recently sent out a survey for them to complete, the results of which would inform the Independent Remuneration Panel's review of the level of allowances paid to South Norfolk members.

The meeting concluded at 9.30 pm

Chairman