

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Review of Cabinet Agenda** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Tuesday 5 February 2019** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr D G Harrison – Chairman

Mr A D Adams
Mrs C H Bannock
Mr D Buck
Ms S J Catchpole

Mr J J Emsell
Mr G Everett
Mr R F Grady
Mr G K Nurden

Mr V Ray-Mortlock
Mr S Riley
Mr M Snowling
Mrs K A Vincent

Miss Keeler also attended the meeting for its duration.

Also in attendance were the Managing Director, Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Finance Manager, Interim Revenues and Benefits Manager, Environmental Protection Manager (Special Projects), Senior Community Planning Officer, Housing, Health and Partnership Officer and the Committee Officer (JO).

105 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

Officer	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	108 – Senior Management Recruitment and Appointment Arrangements	Personal interest on behalf of senior officers present who were affected by the recruitment and appointment arrangements

106 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence Mr Tapp and Mr D Ward.

107 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, save for the following amendment:

The time for the closure of the meeting was changed from 11.27pm to 11.27am.

Minute no: 104 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The following additional item was added to the 2019/20 Work Programme:

- Collaboration: the views of the respective Leaders and Managing Director on how they envisaged shared services would develop over the next five years.

CABINET REPORTS

108 SENIOR MANAGEMENT RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The report provided greater detail on the proposed process for selection and appointment to the Senior Management staffing structure.

In response to a query the Managing Director advised Members that the initial ring fencing of posts would not apply to interim appointments.

In reply to a query about the diversity of the Appointment Panel, the Committee was advised that the membership of the Panel was a matter for Members to decide. The most important aspect about the Panel would be ensuring that its membership was consistent in order to be fair to all candidates.

Members were also informed that the proposal to delegate to the Managing Director authority to appoint on an interim basis in the event that any external appointments were required after all internal senior staff and wider internal staff groups were complete, was a contingency arrangement to address an operational matter.

The Managing Director emphasised that the new management structure had been signed-off by Council and the recommendation to be made by Members today was about the recruitment and appointment process. He considered that it was only fair to the affected staff that this be done as quickly as possible, as their posts had been effectively at risk since the Feasibility Study began. It was also important that the process be completed before the District Elections in May 2019.

In answer to a question from the Chairman about the most immediate collaboration challenge, the Managing Director confirmed that the 45/55 costs / savings split between the Councils and what that meant when it was applied was the first major issue that he would be seeking to address. Another major issue was merging staff, the colocation of teams and the resource, function and people in them. This would be developed once the Senior Management Team was in place. He added that he had held very open, transparent and constructive discussions with UNISON and staff representatives on this issue.

The Managing Director added that there were fewer differences between Broadland and South Norfolk than had previously been suggested. Staff at both Councils wanted to do the best job they could and were delivering a high quality service to their residents. Some staff might decide they did not wish to work in a merged officer team but Members were reminded that they had voted to collaborate and an inevitable result of that decision was that things would change at both Councils.

A Member suggested that he objected to the speed of the recruitment and appointment process. However, other Members considered that the process should be progressed as soon as possible and that a more long-term view should be taken about collaboration.

The Committee confirmed a preference for option 1 for the Deputy Chief Officer appointments. This was the same as for the Chief Officer (Director) roles ie a Member Panel with the Managing Director having a formal role and vote only if the Panel votes were tied. The Panel would be composed of four Members from each Council with the same political balance as used for the Joint Appointment Panel that recruited the Managing Director. The Panel would also have a representative from the external recruitment provider to advise on HR procedure and the results from the Strengths Based Assessment, but would not have a vote.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1, 2, 3 and 4)

- (1) note the recruitment process and associated timeline for appointment of Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer roles to the Senior Management structure; and
- (2) **recommend to Council** the proposed Panel format as set out in paragraph 4.11 of the report for the Member Appointments Panel of Chief Officer roles; and
- (3) to **recommend to Council** option 1 for the Appointments Panel of Deputy Chief Officer roles; and
- (4) to **recommend to Council** that the Managing Director be given delegated authority to appoint on an interim basis in the event that any external appointments are required after all internal senior staff and wider internal staff groups are complete.

109 CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM

The report explained that new legislation had been introduced to allow the Council to increase Council Tax premiums for long term empty properties with effect from April 2019.

From April 2019 the Council could charge an additional 100 percent Council Tax bill on a dwelling empty between two and five years. From April 2020 this could be increased to 200 percent for homes empty between five and ten years and from 2021 it could charge an additional 300 percent on properties empty for more than ten years.

Currently there were 100 properties in the District that had been empty over two years. This had come down from 175 properties in 2013, when the initial 50 percent increase had been introduced. It was anticipated that the new increases would drive down the number of long term empty properties further.

A number of exemptions applied, for example where the owner had gone into residential care or was deceased. The Council could also offer assistance in accessing grants to improve dwellings, so they could be let or sold.

It was estimated that the increases could generate approximately £72,000 in 2019/20.

The proposed policy mirrored the one being proposed in South Norfolk, which would allow officers to take maximum advantage of administering a single policy approach across both authorities. The other Norfolk billing authorities were also likely to recommend that the premium charges should be increased in full.

Members were also requested to consider amending the Discretionary Relief Policy to allow consideration of a discretionary reduction for those cases where a property was generally for sale or to let.

In answer to a query, the Committee was advised that shops and offices paid 100 percent Business Rates after being empty for three months and industrial units paid full Business Rates after being empty for six months.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1, a i, ii, iii and 2)

- (1) In accordance with the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 Cabinet has the following options to **recommend to Council**:

- (a) that the Long Term Empty Property Premium (currently set at 50%) is:
 - (i) Increased to 100% from 1 April 2019 for those properties that are vacant for two years and over; and
 - (ii) Increased to 200% from 1 April 2020 for those properties which are vacant for 5 years and over; and
 - (iii) Increased to 300% from 1 April 2021 for those properties which are vacant for 10 years and over; and
- (2) to **recommend to Council** that the Discretionary Relief Policy be amended by inserting the wording at Appendix 2.

110 FINANCIAL MONITORING TO 31 DECEMBER 2018

The report summarised the financial position of the Council as at 31 December 2018.

At the end of 2018 the Council had a total Capital Budget of £2,575,142 and expenditure and commitments of £1,879,816. This equated to 73 percent of the total budget being spent or committed. 88.3 percent of the Revenue budget had been spent by the same date.

The draw on the General Fund Reserve at year end should be lower than the budgeted draw of £149,000. Discussions were held quarterly with budget holders and so far £220,000 of in year savings had been identified. A new IT module was to be introduced shortly that could allow monthly budget assessments to be made.

The Council's General Fund Reserves began the year at £14.26m. The level of unspent revenue budgets carried forward to be spent in the following year was £1,185,400 in April 2011; this was reduced to £331,000 in April 2018, due to a greater awareness of the need for financial efficiency.

The Vice-Chairman noted that the Council's General Fund Reserves had been maintained for a significant number of years, despite being drawn upon each year, due to efficiencies and savings that had been made.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1)

to note the report.

111 UPDATE TO STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The report proposed the addition of a Planning Support Document to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), setting out the support that the Council could offer to communities undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan, as required by the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.

Broadland currently offered a range of support to communities in the district that were developing Neighbourhood Plans, as set out on the Council's website under Neighbourhood Planning Guidance. The attachment of the Planning Support Document into the SCI would formalise the support offered to communities undertaking neighbourhood planning in the district, as well as clarifying the areas of Neighbourhood Plan activity that Council officers should not be leading on.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1)

to agree to the incorporation of the proposed 'Broadland District Council Neighbourhood Planning Support' Statement within the Council's current Statement of Community Involvement.

112 BROADLAND BUSINESS PLAN 2019-23

The report summarised the outcomes of a number of resident/stakeholder engagement activities, which had been used to inform the development of the Council's next Business Plan.

The three strands of activity had been:

- (1) A series of one to one meetings between the Chief Executive and Leader and 16 of the Council's major private and public sector stakeholders.
- (2) Two workshops with a further 23 stakeholders from across the business, voluntary and public sectors.
- (3) An online residents' questionnaire, publicised through the December 2018 edition of *Broadland News* and through the Council's social media.

From the feedback received a revised Council vision, together with updated Ambitions and Objectives was proposed in the Appendix to the report. If approved officers would draft additional narrative and measures in support of

the Business Plan which would be presented for final approval to the Council in March 2019.

Members commended the very positive report. It was suggested that Members should also be given the opportunity to contribute to the Business Plan following the District Elections in May 2019.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1 and 2)

- (1) to note the outcomes from the recent resident and stakeholder engagement activities; and
- (2) approve, without amendment, the proposed vision, ambitions and objectives of the Council for inclusion in the Broadland Business Plan 2019-23.

113 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY ANNUAL UPDATE

The report presented the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report as required under the Equality Act 2010.

The legislation required the Council to have due regard to the need to:

- (i) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- (ii) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (iii) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The duty covered nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership

The Corporate Equalities Group (CEG), made up of staff, union and elected Members, acted as a mechanism through which equalities issues and activities could be disseminated, discussed and devised. At the beginning of 2018/19 year the CEG agreed the following seven actions under three overarching themes:

(i) Health in all Policies

- Work in partnership to better understand mental health issues for children and young people.
- Continue work to become a Dementia Friendly Organisation including, in our role with the Dementia Action Alliance.

(ii) Equalities within the Community

- Support the Community Relations Equality Board and the Community Relations Equality Network with the introduction of the Multi-agency Hate Crime Reporting Protocol.
- Connect with religious and faith groups.
- Support Norwich Pride in July 2018 and Black History Month in October 2018.

(iii) Our Equalities

- Draft, agree and implement a refreshed and simplified Equalities Impact Assessment including *Health* as a characteristic for consideration as per a Health in all Policies approach in addition to *Rurality* and *Low Income* characteristics.
- Maintaining the workstreams initiated by the Head of Finance and Revenue Services as part of Women in Leadership course.

Activities highlighted in the report included:

- A Refreshed Equalities Impact Assessment that moved away from a structured procedure to a more narrative document, which centred around the potential equalities impacts and how any identified impacts were mitigated. Three additional protected characteristics (Rurality, Health and Low Income) had also been added to the document.
- Family Culture Day: an event, which attracted 500 visitors took place at Catton Park to give attendees the chance to try new activities and experiences from cultures around the world including: Egyptian dancing, Chinese calligraphy, bushcraft, painting, and henna painting.
- The Help Hub continued to grow: new partners in 2018 included services to reduce social isolation and Living Well officers, who worked within the Social Prescribing service for Norwich and Broadland. Weekly

collaboration meetings between Hub partners to discuss individual cases continued to be well attended and helped to ensure that a holistic approach to supporting individuals and families was taken.

- Collaborative Safeguarding work with South Norfolk Council was taking place, with Safeguarding Officers from the two districts meeting to share safeguarding activities and procedures. It had been agreed that a shared safeguarding reporting procedure would be created and adopted.

Further collaborative work with South Norfolk would take place over the coming year in areas such as: shared equality objectives and actions; including accessible services and actively engaging with service users.

Another ambition was to improve social mobility in Norfolk, which was low compared with other parts of the country.

A Member emphasised that Broadland and South Norfolk could not always be compared equally. For example, their Housing Registers differed in how they were calculated resulting in far fewer people on the South Norfolk Register. He suggested that it was very important that baseline information shared between the authorities be checked, to ensure that they were being compared like for like.

A Member also suggested that tourism should be mentioned in future reports under Ambition 1 (to deliver economic success in our area), as some very good work by the Tourism Officer had been done in support of the Repton 200 programme of events.

The Committee commended the excellent report.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Option (1)

to approve the Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report for publication.

114 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

to exclude the Press and public from the meeting for the remaining business because otherwise, information which was exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 would be disclosed to them.

115 FOOTWAY LIGHTING CONTRACT

The report provided an update on negotiations regarding responsibility for footway lighting in the district and sought approval to extend the current contract by 12 months in order to allow time for discussions with the five parishes affected to progress, regarding the transfer of lighting.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1 and 2)

to

- (1) extend the current contract for one year from 1 April 2019 following publication of the modification Notice, and continue discussions with the parishes regarding the transfer of lighting stock;

and

- (2) delegate to the Interim Head of Housing and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, to conclude the arrangements for the transfer of the lights to the parishes, if this stage is reached.

The meeting closed at 12.01pm