

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Tuesday 16 January 2018** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr J J Emsell – Chairman

Mr A D Adams  
Mr G Everett  
Mr R F Grady

Mr K Leggett  
Mr G K Nurden

Mr V B Tapp  
Mr D C Ward

Also in attendance were the Head of Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Head of Economic Development, Economic Development Manager, Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer and the Committee Officer (JO).

Mr Woodbridge was also in attendance for the duration of the meeting.

The meeting observed a minute's silence in remembrance of Mr Jack Sadler, an independent Member of the Standards Committee, who had recently passed away.

### **126 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Bannock, Mr Buck, Mrs Copplestone, Mr D Harrison, Mrs Hemsall, Mr Ray-Mortlock, Mrs Vincent and Mr Peck.

### **127 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*Minute no: 120 – Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2018-2021*

Members were concerned that Cabinet had recommended Council Tax option 2 to Council, which would result in a £5.00 increase in the Special Expenses in 2019/20.

A Member advised the meeting that this would result in a Special Expense increase of £5 for 300 households in Freethorpe for just five footway lights, which was grossly unfair.

The Head of Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer informed Members that they would have the opportunity to debate the issue at Council on 22 February 2018 and if any parish councils wished to speak on the matter they would also be allowed to make representations at that meeting. In

addition they had the opportunity to lobby the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Reference was made to a previous decision to convene a meeting with the five parish councils affected, which had subsequently been cancelled due to the invitation being declined or not responded to.

A Member suggested that the consultation meeting on street lighting should have still gone ahead with the smaller parishes, despite the two largest parishes affected having refused to attend.

It was noted that there remained an opportunity to negotiate on the provision and maintenance of footway lighting in the district ahead of the decision being implemented.

### **RESOLVED**

to request the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Environmental Excellence to attend the meeting of the Committee on 30 January 2018 to discuss the matter further.

*Minute no: 121 - Council Owned Bridges on the Bure Valley and Marriott's Way Routes*

Members noted that Cabinet had decided to set aside funding for the high priority bridges and deferred a decision on further bridge repairs.

*Minute no: 122 - Broadland and South Norfolk - Collaborative Working Opportunities*

It was noted that it had been agreed to introduce an interim shared Planning Management Team with South Norfolk Council.

The Vice-Chairman advised the meeting that he and a number of other Members had visited Waveney District Council to discuss their experience of sharing services with Suffolk Coastal District Council. He confirmed that the process had worked very well for both Councils, which bode well for Broadland and South Norfolk, as they were starting from a better position.

Members were advised that the eventual merger of Waveney and Suffolk Coastal had come about as a result of a boundary review.

### **128 BROADLAND ECONOMY UPDATE**

The report provided an update on the local economy over the past three months. Areas highlighted were:

- The Job Seekers Allowance claimant's rate in Broadland at the end of November 2017 was 485 people down from 600 people in May 2017.
- Two Broadland Business Forum meetings had been held. One on 12 July at Sprowston Manor Hotel with the key theme of tourism and the other on 11 October 2017 at The Cottage in Thorpe St Andrew, with a keynote speaker from Archant. Both events had been well attended.
- In March 2017 the 'Buy in Broadland' voucher booklet was sent out to over 58,000 homes with Council Tax invoices. The scheme had been extremely well received with many more businesses now coming forward and wishing to take part.
- The Choices Group continued to meet at Carrowbreck to tackle long term unemployment and barriers to work, often relating to low level Maths and English skills, lack of confidence and poor self-esteem.
- In mid-October 2017, the Council attended MIPIM at Olympia in London to promote the district as a potential development and growth area to investors from the UK and abroad.

The Greater Norwich Manufacturing Group, which was supported and co-ordinated by the Economic Development Manager (Partnerships and Growth) continued to grow in membership and reputation. A recent event was held at KLM's facility at Norwich Airport in December 2017 and was attended by 30+ business and education representatives from across the area.

The Financial Industry Group (FIG) held its second annual conference in November 2017 at the UEA. Speakers were drawn from a range of industry experts and were extremely well received.

November 2017 also saw the Norfolk launch of the Better Business for All (BBfA) initiative at the Abbey Conference Centre. Broadland's Economic Development Officers had played a key part in supporting and promoting this initiative which sought to bring 'regulators' from across Norfolk and Suffolk, together to offer businesses a cohesive, consistent and supportive service to enable them to prosper with the minimum of 'red tape'. Broadland's Chief Executive gave the keynote speech at the launch and would act as the local authority lead in respect of the implementation of the initiative in Norfolk.

In December 2017 the Vice Chairman, Leader and Cabinet Members joined members of the Economic Development Department to celebrate Small Business Saturday 2017. The group visited a number of small Broadland businesses over the course of the day and listened to their experiences of operating in Broadland.

Economic Development continued to run the very popular Tots2Teens service, which allowed parents to work during school holidays. It also ran the Broadly Active referral service, the Marriott's Way running event, three Parkruns and the Why Weight programme, which all assisted residents in becoming fitter and better able to work. A Member suggested that other activities such as cycling could be promoted on the Marriott's Way

In respect of the car parking questions raised by Members, the Head of Economic Development advised the meeting that this issue was subject to discussion with South Norfolk Council as part of the Feasibility Study and was also being discussed at the Economic Success Panel.

On-street parking enforcement in Broadland was delegated to King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council via the Norfolk Parking Partnership. The surplus from parking charges was used to offset the cost of delivery of the service, which resulted in no cost to Broadland for this service. The majority of the income was derived from Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.

Norfolk Parking Partnership's expenditure had been approximately £45,000 for 2016/17 and income for Broadland was around £10,000 leading to a loss of approximately £34,000 for the delivery of Broadland's on street parking service; how long this arrangement would stay in place was uncertain and it was probable that Broadland would be asked to contribute to the Partnership in the future.

The Council's off-street car parks were free as the Council wanted to encourage trade and visitors in market towns and villages. Due to the cost of parking enforcement it could not be implemented unless charges were in place to offset the cost and there remained the risk that this would still result in a cost for the Council. The car parks provided 300 spaces and cost approximately £17,000 per annum to maintain. Arrangements had also been made with two businesses in Aylsham and one in Reepham to provide free parking.

In response to a query, the Head of Economic Development confirmed that the Broadland Business Forums were very well attended and it had even been necessary to put a cap on the number of business attending according to the size of the venue. A list of attendees could be forwarded to Members if they wished, as could a list of those businesses that attended the Greater Norwich Manufacturing Group meeting at the KLM facility at Norwich Airport.

The meeting was informed that the 'Buy in Broadland' booklet contained 96 vouchers from businesses across the district. These businesses were subsequently contacted to confirm how many vouchers were redeemed. The vast majority of the responses were very positive and had shown an increase in footfall and sales. So far, 88 businesses had signed up for the next voucher booklet which would be published in March 2018.

Members were informed that the Choices Group tackled long term unemployment, which often related to low level Maths and English skills, lack of confidence and poor self-esteem. A case study would be published in *Broadland News* about how the Group had helped a lady back into work with a company that the Council had helped to start up. Clarion Housing Association was supporting the course to get its tenants back in the workplace and one of their officers might be available to speak to the Committee about their experience at a future meeting.

In response to a query, the Head of Economic Development made the point that the report was an update on activity in the Economic Development department; for more statistical information they should refer to the Broadland Business Plan, which had been presented to Cabinet in December 2017.

### 129 JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENTS

The briefing paper provided Members with an overview of Joint Venture Arrangements, which were increasingly being used by local authorities as a means of generating income, as well as meeting social and environmental needs. A joint venture allowed a council to draw on the expertise and resources of partners, whilst mitigating risk.

The Council currently had two Joint Venture Company (JVC) arrangements – NEWS delivering the Council's waste collection service and Broadland Growth delivering housing development. Each JVC arrangement had been negotiated on a case by case basis.

The process adopted thus far had been for negotiations to be led by the head of service in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and a contract drafted with legal advice.

A Member questioned why the Council did not form a company on its own and buy in the relevant expertise, so that it could benefit from a greater share of the profits, as many other councils did. However, the Chairman noted that a JVC would mitigate any risk to the Council.

A Member suggested that if the Council was considering forming a JVC in the future Members should have scrutiny of the contract at an earlier stage. However, it was confirmed that once terms were provisionally agreed they were clearly outlined in a Cabinet report, which was subjected to scrutiny and ultimately approved by Council, so a degree of Member input already existed.

The Head of Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer reminded Members that the Carrowbreck project had resulted in a profit of £250,000 for the Council as well as considerable non-financial benefits, which had previously been reported. Any future projects would be reported to Cabinet and be subject to scrutiny by the Committee. It was also confirmed that the Council

charged for services that it provided for Broadland Growth Ltd.

A Member advised the meeting that historically Broadland had a very lean staffing structure, which made JVCs the most logical choice for commercial undertakings. Other councils had higher levels of staffing, so could put more resources into commercial activities and use different models.

Another Member also noted that setting up a company alone would be a big undertaking for Broadland and it would be better to mitigate the risk by working with a partner.

### **AGREED**

- (1) to note the briefing paper; and
- (2) that a set of priorities be drafted that would clearly identify the Committee's financial, legal and qualitative expectations for any future JVC, so that it could be fully assessed against these criteria and allow Members to give a steer to Cabinet.

## **130 REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE**

The report presented an appraisal of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which assessed how the Committee had moved forward and grown over the years, particularly in terms of its achievements and scrutiny of Council services.

The report also took into consideration the national changes to overview and scrutiny practices communicated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Communities and Local Government, who recently conducted a review of scrutiny practices.

It was also suggested that Actions and Outcome summaries from Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board, Corporate Equalities Group and Police and Crime Panel be circulated as papers for information outside of the standard committee cycle. Any areas of concern could then be raised under a standing item on the agenda for any Review Proposals

Members were advised that they were already doing a lot of the good practice recommended in the Communities and Local Government Review and it was proposed to augment this by utilising the Forward Plan and Work Programmes from Cabinet-led panels to develop a streamlined Committee Work Programme to provide a strong basis for Cabinet and the Committee to work together. This could shift the focus of the Committee to take a greater overview role with scrutiny reviews being held on a rolling basis.

A Member also suggested that the Committee should look at the wider perspective and request that outside agencies attend its meetings (for example Highways England and the Environment Agency to respond to questions about the A47 and the Western Link to the Norwich Northern Distributor Road).

The Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer confirmed that subjects for discussion with outside bodies could be identified for the Work Programme. She also confirmed that the Committee underused the 'Appreciative Enquiry' and 'Mini Scrutiny' methods of scrutiny. An additional meeting could be scheduled for an 'Appreciative Enquiry', if necessary.

The Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer confirmed that she would recirculate the paper that set out the four approaches to scrutiny for Members' information.

A Member also suggested that the Committee could look at acute social problems, such as drug addiction in the district, during the coming year.

### **AGREED**

to confirm the approach, as outlined above, for the Committee's next Work Programme.

### **131 NORFOLK HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The Committee noted the Outcomes and Actions from the meetings of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2017 and 11 January 2018.

### **132 CORPORATE EQUALITIES GROUP**

The meeting of the Corporate Equalities Group held on 11 January 2018 had been advised that the Youth Advisory Board was seeking to develop a mentoring system in youth clubs around bullying, cyber bullying and peer pressure.

The Community Project Officer was developing a number of Council actions on dementia, following the winding up of the Dementia Action Alliance.

A new simplified version of the Equalities Impact Assessment was agreed and would be introduced shortly. Report authors would be given training and the Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer suggested that it would be helpful to provide it as a refresher for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **133 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee Annual Report would be presented to the 20 March 2018 meeting. Scrutiny training would be included in the future Work Programmes.

### **134 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.

### **135 EXEMPT MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 JANUARY 2018**

The exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*The meeting closed at 12.45 pm*