

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Agenda

### Members of the Committee

Cllr S Riley (Chairman)

Cllr M Murrell (Vice Chairman)

Cllr N J Brennan

Cllr P E Bulman

Cllr S J Catchpole

Cllr J Davis

Cllr N J Harpley

Cllr S I Holland

Cllr C Karimi-Ghovanlou

Cllr K S Kelly

Cllr D King

Cllr K Leggett MBE

Cllr G K Nurden

Cllr S M Prutton

Cllr N C Shaw

### Date & Time:

Tuesday 18 January 2022 10.00am

### Place:

Council Chamber Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich

### Contact:

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### PUBLIC ATTENDANCE:

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZciRgwo84-iPyRImsTCIng>

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[comserv@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:comserv@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk)

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- Through a written representation (which will be read out at the meeting)
- In person at the Council offices

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All those attending the meeting in person must, sign in on the QR code for the building and promptly arrive at, and leave the venue. The hand sanitiser provided should be used and social distancing must be observed at all times. Further guidance on what to do on arrival will follow once your public speaking registration has been accepted.

# AGENDA

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1. To receive declarations of interest under Procedural Rule no 8</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>2. Apologies for absence</b>   |           |
| <b>3. Minutes of meeting held on 14 December 2021</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>4. Matters arising therefrom (if any)</b>  |           |
| <b>5. Chairman's Announcements</b>  |           |
| <b>6. Public Speaking</b>   |           |
| <p>To consider representation from the members of the public who have expressed the wish to convey their views on items on this agenda.</p> <p>In accordance with the Constitution a period of 3 minutes is allowed per member of the public.</p> |           |
| <b>7. Budget Questions for Cabinet</b>  | <b>20</b> |
| <b>8. Review of Public Consultation Processes</b>   | <b>25</b> |
| <b>9. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme</b>  | <b>37</b> |

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

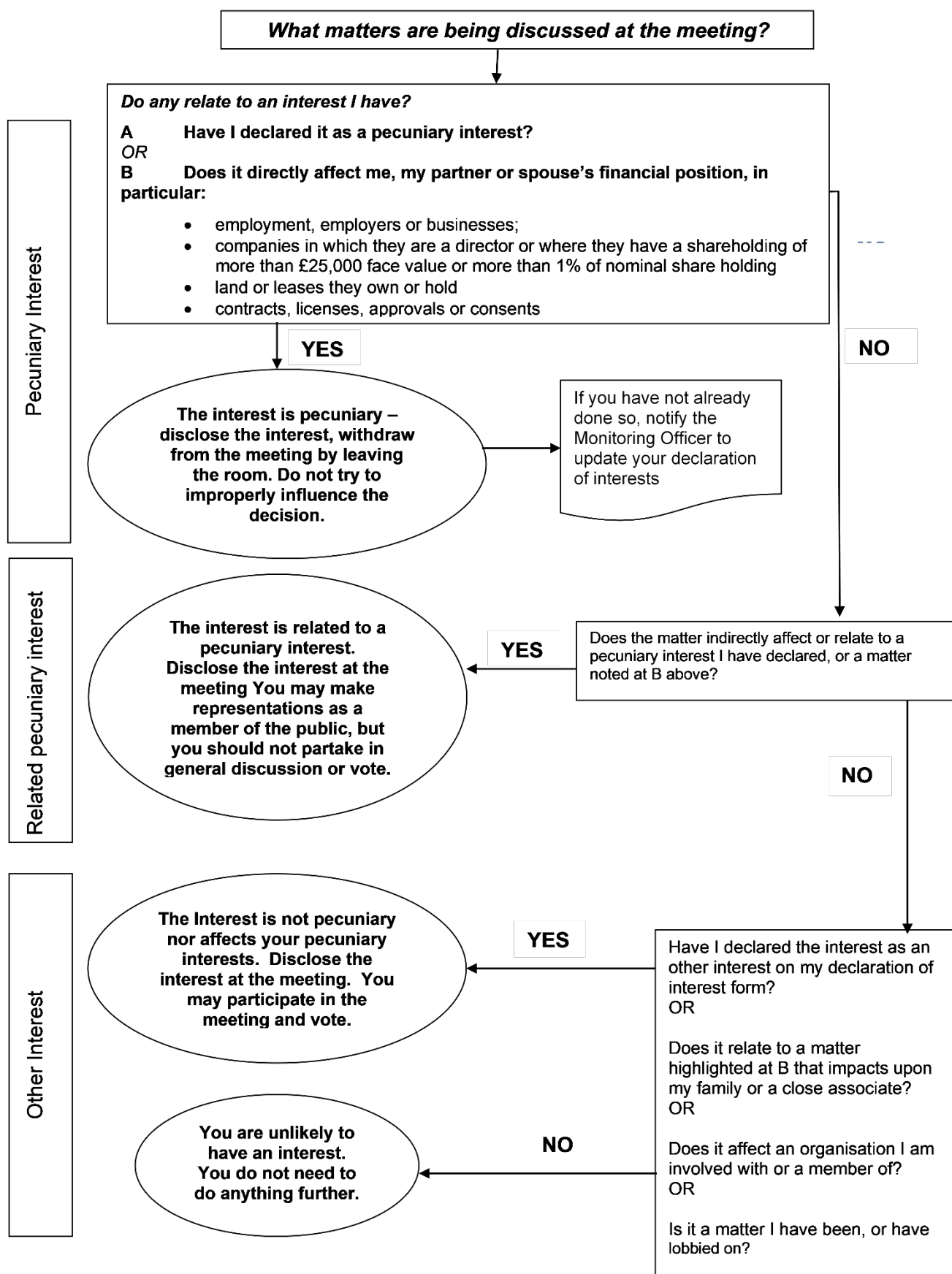
When declaring an interest at a meeting Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting. Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.

<p>Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.</p>
<p>Does the interest directly:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position?</li> <li>2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner?</li> <li>3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council</li> <li>4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own</li> <li>5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in</li> </ol> <p>If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.</p>
<p>Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?</p> <p>If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but you should not partake in general discussion or vote.</p>
<p>Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.</p>
<p>Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.</p>

**FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF.**

PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST INSTANCE

## DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Broadland District Council, held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on 14 December 2021 at 10.00 am when there were present:

**Committee Members Present:** Councillor: S Riley (Chairman), M L Murrell, (Vice-Chairman), N J Brennan, S J Catchpole, J Davis, S I Holland, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K G Leggett, G K Nurden, S M Prutton.

**Cabinet Member in Attendance:** Councillor: F Whymark.

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director of Place, Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer), Assistant, Director of Individuals and Families, Assistant Director Finance, Assistant Director Community Services, Assistant Director Regulatory, Business Improvement Team Manager, Strategic Growth Project Manager, Community Assets Manager, Housing and Wellbeing Manager and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

### 80 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Nurden declared a non-pecuniary interest. He was employed by a company that was interested in relocating to the Broadland Food Innovation Centre (Minute no: 95 - Broadland Food Innovation Centre - Dynamic Purchasing System).

### 81 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bulman, Cllr Harpley, Cllr Kelly and Cllr King.

### 82 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### 83 MATTERS ARISING

#### *Minute No: 75 - Staff Turnover at Broadland*

The Chairman advised members that the Time and Task Panel should be meeting in the latter half of January 2022 to consider why 83 percent of leavers did not give exit interviews.

He also confirmed that the letter that would be sent out to these staff should be agreed by the end of this week.

### 84 INTRODUCTION OF DISTRICT WIDE KERB SIDE FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS SERVICE

The Assistant Director Community Services introduced the report, which set out the option for introducing a forward funded expansion of the existing food waste collection service to the whole of the District in advance of an anticipated national roll out.

Expanding the collection of food waste would increase the Council's recycling rate and therefore contribute significantly to the priority of increasing the recycling rate to 60 percent.

The expansion would initially come at a cost to the base budget, but there was an expectation that beyond the initial phase the costs would be at least part funded by the Government through New Burdens funding. However there was no timeline for the rollout and therefore a risk that if the Council decided to expand the service in advance of the Government making the collection of food waste a mandatory requirement it might not be able to retrospectively recover the additional costs.

There is also a significant risk around the extended lead in time for the procurement of new vehicles, which could be as long as 15 months. Options to lease or utilise existing vehicles when they were replaced was being explored.

In response to the ongoing delays in the Government finalising and introducing the new policy the Leader of the Council had written to the Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs proposing that the Council act as a pilot for the expansion of food waste collections ahead of its formal implementation. No response to the letter had been received so far.

Members' attention was drawn to recommendation three, which explained that a request had been made to DEFRA to forward fund the extension of the scheme and that the expansion was undertaken on the basis that beyond this initial phase the costs would be met by New Burdens funding.

It was further explained that the funding for the additional costs of rolling out a District-wide scheme would need to come from the Refuse Vehicle Replacement / Waste Reserve and that this funding source was not sustainable, and the Council would be reliant on being able to reclaim the capital costs via the New Burdens funding.

The Chairman noted that without this funding the cost of maintaining the District-wide service would fall on the Council Tax payer.

In answer to a query it was confirmed that the planned rollout to a further 6,500 households on the urban fringe of the District in October 2022, had already been agreed and would take place. This would cover infill areas close to existing rounds in the urban fringe where capacity for collection existed. New developments in more rural areas might not currently meet this criteria.

The Committee was advised that it was not the intention to encourage food waste, but instead to prevent it entering the residual waste stream by recycling it and that the Council was currently running a campaign to advise on how to reduce food waste .

The Chairman noted that the Committee were supportive of the District-wide rollout of the Food Waste Collection Service and following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

That Cabinet

1. Delegate the authority to the Assistant Director Community Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence and the Portfolio Holder for Finance to agree a contract variation to the Strategic Environmental Services contract to roll out a forward funded food waste collection service to the whole district funded from the Refuse Vehicle Replacement / Waste Reserve, in advance of any confirmation of the Government's future strategy and potential new burdens funding.
2. Delegate the authority to the Assistant Director Finance and the Assistant Director Community Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence and Portfolio Holder for Finance to agree to forward fund the capital costs of the food waste expansion scheme from the Refuse Vehicle Replacement / Waste



Reserve, in advance of any confirmation of the Government's future strategy and potential new burdens funding.

3. Note that a request has been made to DEFRA for them to forward fund the extension of the scheme and that the expansion is undertaken on the basis that beyond this initial phase the costs will be met by new burdens funding.

### **85 ENVIRONMENTAL WASTE CONTRACT AND HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE OIL FUEL**

The Assistant Director Community Services introduced the report, which outlined the positive environmental impacts that using 100 percent Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) in place of mineral diesel would have upon the delivery of the new Strategic Environmental Services contract from April 2022, in terms of both the service emissions and costs.

The Committee was informed that the Council had undertaken a trial with an electric waste vehicle, but that the battery technology was not yet at a stage where a full collection round could be completed, which made this option unviable. Electric vehicle options would be looked at in the future, as the technology improved.

When it became clear that it would not be possible to introduce electric vehicles from the commencement of the contract, the Council, looked at other ways of reducing the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that would be produced. At the final tender stage of the contract, the Council introduced an annual match funding pot of up to £50,000 to encourage bidders to utilise 100 percent HVO fuel. This would result in a direct reduction of some 10,490 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> over the ten years of the contract.

In the first year of the contract moving to 100 percent HVO fuel the cost to the Council would be an additional £11,700. These costs were likely to increase in future years, as the price of HVO increased and when the food waste collection service was rolled out across the whole of the District.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the match funding would be provided over the financial year.

Members also noted that fuel prices had increased since the report was drafted. In response the Assistant Director Community Services confirmed that he would check and clarify this following the meeting but prices might not have risen as much as on the garage forecourt, as Veolia bought in bulk and their fuel tax was lower.

Members were advised that the match funding pot would be subject to annual negotiations with the contractor and could be increased if the price of HVO required it to be.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

That Cabinet note the positive environmental impacts that result from the Council providing match funding of up to £50,000 per annum to support the use of 100% Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil in the delivery of the Strategic Environmental Services Contract from April 2022.

## **86 HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW**

The Housing and Wellbeing Manager introduced the report, which presented a review of the Council's housing allocations policy and housing systems change and recommended updates reflecting learning since it was implemented in April 2021.

Members were informed that the Housing Team had been working with the new housing system and allocation policy since April 2021 with considerable success. This was despite it being implemented during a period of increasing demand as well as a shortage of properties both in the private and social sector.

However, it was felt that parts of the policy needed to be tightened up now that it had been exposed to real cases and to ensure understanding by residents and stakeholders and in the interests of fairness and transparency. Changes were, therefore, proposed in the following three specific categories:

- A small number of changes to the core policy, which were not working now that the policy had been put into practice.
- Updating and rewording to clarify the policy, as it has been found that residents were confused around what the policy means, or there was too much ambiguity in the policy, which affected interpretation.
- Splitting guidance from the core policy to enable a clearer understanding. The policy document previously amalgamated the guidance, procedural document, and policy. This had caused confusion as customers struggled to find the key information they needed.

An example of the changes was to tightening up on rules for non-qualification if the applicant had gifted, transferred, or spent assets and worsened their housing situation in order to access social housing. Checks were made on

bank accounts to assess if this type of activity had occurred, which was very rare in Broadland.

It was also proposed to change the Housing Priority Bands from 1, 2, 3 and 4 to Emergency Band, 1, 2 and 3. This would more accurately reflect that the Emergency band was for people with an urgent medical need, including hospital discharge.

Members were advised that banding was assessed by individual need and circumstances on a case by case basis. It was also confirmed that older people with no urgent medical needs would not be excluded for social care. The meeting was also informed that IN TRAN was available for non-English speakers and that the criteria for qualifying for Temporary Accommodation was set down in Government legislation and that over the last two years 100 people had been provided with this assistance.

In answer to a query from the Chairman, it was confirmed that the website would contain separate policies for both Broadland and South Norfolk together with separate guidance for both authorities, although this would not differ significantly and might result in a single guidance note for both authorities.

The Chairman noted that including the policy and the guidance in the same document had led to confusion in the past and the Committee would look at this with interest to see if separating them had helped resolve this issue when the Housing Policy was next reviewed.

In answer to a question about the rewording of the qualification rules the meeting was advised that it was proposed that contracts of employment be changed from permanent to six months to reflect the gig economy and to help low paid care workers qualify for housing in the District.

It was emphasised that access to accommodation could be dependent on how flexible an applicant was about the location and that if they were too specific they would be dependent upon housing supply and might wait some time.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing reminded the meeting that the Council also provided residents with assistance through a range of other schemes, such as the Independent Living Policy.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

To approve the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Policy

*The Committee adjourned at 11.34am and reconvened at 11.48am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.*

### **87 REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT PENALTIES**

The Assistant Director Regulatory introduced the report, which requested that Cabinet determine the amounts of fixed penalty notice charges for specified environmental and anti-social behaviour offences (both full charge levels and early payment reduced charge levels).

Members were advised that the Council, as a regulatory authority, had arrangements in place for enforcement by way of serving fixed penalty notices (FPN) to deal with specific offences stipulated in current legislation.

The purpose of FPN enforcement was to secure efficient, timely and decriminalised ways of addressing and dealing with offenders, whilst avoiding court action, which was more resource-intensive and costly.

The Council as a regulatory authority had arrangements in place for enforcement by serving fixed penalties and ensuring the penalties were set at a correct level was a key factor in this. For example, setting them too high could result in the fines being challenged in court, and setting them too low would reduce their impact. During 2021 there had been ten FPNs across Broadland and South Norfolk, so far.

It was also emphasised that FPNs were seen as deterrents, not reparations for the costs of dealing with the incident, however in line with DEFRA guidance, it was proposed that the proceeds of paid FPN charges be reinvested in the respective service area's revenue expenditure budgets to support further service delivery.

Members were asked to note that more serious environmental offences were taken directly to a magistrate's court for prosecution. The Council had one such case of a repeat offender currently before the court, which had been adjourned to January 2022.

The Committee was informed that the Community Protection Team was only small, but had been very successful and that it had recently benefited from the additional assistance of two newly recruited Anti-Social Behaviour Officers.

It was confirmed that FPN enforcement actions were mapped and publicised, particularly in areas where the incidents had occurred. There was no particular trend identified of people fly-tipping, rather than paying charges at Recycling Centres.

If the new charges were agreed a publicity campaign would be held to raise awareness of FPN enforcement action in the District.

The Committee were asked to note that the Council had discretion to move to the default penalty for offences within the statutory range set by Government.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Cabinet to agree the setting of fixed penalty notice charge levels for specified environmental and anti-social behaviour offences as proposed in Appendix 1.
2. Cabinet to agree that the proceeds of paid fixed penalty notice charges be reinvested in the respective service area's revenue expenditure budgets to support further service delivery.

## **88 REVIEW OF USABLE RESERVES**

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the report, which provided an update on the Council's Usable Reserves position.

The Committee was informed that the report was mainly for information and that the only actions proposed were to rename the 'Bridge Maintenance – Bure Valley Railway' reserve to 'Bure Valley Railway' reserve to reflect the Council's wider obligations and to delegate authority for additional environmental projects to be funded from the Environmental Projects Reserve.

The Assistant Director Finance suggested that, at this stage, it would be prudent to wait before making any other changes to the usable reserves.

In answer to a query it was confirmed that there was sufficient budget to cover more than just the bridge maintenance in the Bure Valley Railway reserve.

Following a show of hands it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

To

1. Note the Usable Reserves Position.
2. Rename the 'Bridge Maintenance – Bure Valley Railway' reserve to 'Bure Valley Railway' reserve.

3. Agree that the Assistant Director Regulatory, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, has the authority to agree additional Environmental projects to be funded from the Environmental Projects Reserve (each project to be no more than £100,000 in value).

### **89 STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY AND INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES**

The Business Improvement Team Manager introduced the report, which proposed updating the policy for the street naming and numbering functions and introducing charges for the service.

It was confirmed that the following amendments were proposed to be made to Appendix 3 - Street Naming and Numbering Policy:

- Reference would be made to parish and town councils throughout the policy.
- An additional paragraph at 1.5 to say 'It is recommended that parish and town councils consider proposals for street names in advance of developments commencing, i.e. where local plan allocations, neighbourhood plan allocations or planning applications are approved and discuss these with developers'.
- The first bullet point at paragraph 6.1 to read 'Main roads should be numbered so that when travelling away from the centre of the settlement, odd numbers are on the left and even numbers are on the right'.

The Committee was informed that over the last 12 months, the Council had received 170 applications for the naming and numbering of properties and new roads. These requests ranged from single properties to large housing developments. If the charges proposed in the report were implemented they could generate approximately £34,000 towards the recovery of administrative costs. The report also contained comparison charges from neighbouring authorities.

Members were advised that, as part of the introduction of charges, it was also proposed to update and amend the existing Street Name and Numbering Policy.

A member suggested that there should be exemptions from the charge for changing the names of existing properties. He also noted that the charges were the same as those at South Norfolk, but as the costs/savings agreed in the Collaboration Feasibility Study, were split 45/55, Broadland's charges should be 10 percent lower.

There was considerable discussion on this matter and the Chief of Staff pointed out that the difference in the cost savings split was based on the additional services (Leisure Services, CNC, the Waste Depot and the Audit Consortium) operated by South Norfolk.

The Chairman advised the meeting that this issue continued to cause confusion amongst members and it was suggested that one authority might be subsidising the other.

In response the Chief of Staff confirmed that she would report back to the Committee with a form of words that clarified the position regarding the 45/55 cost/savings split.

It was noted that the Street Naming and Numbering Policy incorrectly made reference to South Norfolk Council and it was suggested that as the same policy was to be used for both authorities the policy could simply refer to 'the Council'.

The Chairman rejected this suggestion and emphasised that Broadland should be referenced, as the Councils had not merged into one authority.

A member proposed that recommendation 1 should be amended to include an exemption from the charge in the policy for existing homes, where the owner wished to change the name of their property.

This proposal was duly seconded and following a show of hands with five in favour, three against and one abstention it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. That Cabinet **recommends to Council** the introduction of charges from 1 April 2022 as set out in Appendix 1, subject to an exemption from the charge in the policy for existing homes ,where the owner wished to change the name of their property; and
2. That Cabinet **recommends to Council** the adoption of the Street Naming and Numbering Policy as set out in Appendix 3 with effect from 1 April 2022.

## **90 S106 AGREEMENTS MONITORING FEES**

The Business Improvement Team Manager introduced the report which recommended the introduction of monitoring fees on developers to cover the Council's cost of overseeing compliance with legal obligations under section 106 agreements. This proposal reflected the changes enacted by the

Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No2) Regulations 2019, which came into force on 1 September 2019.

The Committee was informed that currently Broadland was actively monitoring 43 S106 agreements on commenced development sites. These involved monitoring of 137 obligations with approximately 667 triggers. Fees were not currently charged to cover the costs of ensuring compliance with these developer obligations.

Members' attention was drawn to section four of the report, where the proposed charges were set out. Based on the agreements currently monitored (excluding sites over 400 dwellings and multi-phased agreements), a total sum of £41,200 could have been received for the monitoring of the 37 agreements.

A member, advised the meeting that the Place Shaping Panel, which had considered the report at its meeting on 15 November 2021, had voted against the recommendation in the report, but had made no formal alternative recommendation to Cabinet.

In answer to a question about the reference in the Government's *Planning Practice Guidance* to using the fees to monitor any type of planning obligation, it was confirmed that the proposal in the report was only for the monitoring of S106 agreements.

Following a show of hands, with seven in favour, two against and one abstention it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

That Cabinet recommend to Council that the monitoring fees for section 106 agreements, as set out in Appendix 1, are adopted from 1 April 2022.

## **91 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan.

## **92 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

### **RESOLVED**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 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.

### **93 FINANCE CASH RECEIPTING SYSTEM BUSINESS CASE**

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the exempt report, which set out a business case for a joint cash receipting system.

Currently two different systems were used across both Council's, which required two licences, two log-in procedures and separate upgrades. A single system would simplify these processes significantly and deliver a five year saving of £59,370 compared to current costs.

Members were advised that the costs set out in the business case were based on current prices and that these might increase after 1 April 2022. However officers were confident that the system could be delivered by this date, as they remained in close contact with the provider.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

To award a contract for a single Cash Receipting IT system for both Councils.

### **94 PLANNING, REGULATORY, HOUSING STANDARDS AND WASTE TEAM SERVICES IT MIGRATION**

The Assistant Director for Planning introduced the exempt report, which proposed aligning the IT systems used by the Planning, Land Management, Regulatory, Housing Standards and Waste Teams.

Members were advised that the existing IT contracts for the above systems were either due to expire in 2022 or were (or would become) unsupported. The business case put forward four options for aligning the IT systems. Option 2 was the most cost effective and was recommended for approval.

The Committee was informed that aligned IT systems would make significant non-cashable savings by reducing a substantial amount of manual entry of data. It was estimated that this would total 1,290 staff hours per year.

A member advised the meeting that the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee, which had considered the report at its meeting on 7 December 2021, had voted for option 4, as they did not want the Council to be constrained by a single version of Land Charges, as set out in option 2, and wanted to retain the option to set a discount for searches.

Option three had also been considered by the Committee, but it was thought that the additional cost associated with the individual branding of web pages was too high.

Option 4 was proposed and duly seconded and following a show of hands it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. To approve Option 4, as set out in the Appendix to the report; and
2. To award the contract, as set out in the Appendix to the report, for Option 4.

## **95 BROADLAND FOOD INNOVATION CENTRE- DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM**

The Strategic Growth Projects Manager introduced the exempt report, which sought approval for a contract award of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to serve the Broadland Food Innovation Centre project (BFIC).

A DPS was an electronic procurement tool that was used to purchase goods, works and services that are commonly used by organisations or bespoke services.

If awarded, this system would efficiently facilitate the provision of relevant support services and technical capability to eligible businesses participating in Broadland Food Innovation Centre project.

Following a show of hands it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Award the first set of suppliers (listed in Annex 2) which meet the specified procurement requirements a place on the BFIC DPS;
2. Agree the process of selecting additional suppliers and awarding subsequent contracts as set out in Annex 1;
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Place to make any required amendments to Annex 1 to ensure its continued appropriateness for the duration of the project;

4. Delegate authority to the Director of Place to award individual contracts in line with the process set out in Annex 1.

### **96 FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF STREETLIGHTS IN DRAYTON – DRAYTON PARISH COUNCIL**

The Community Assets Manager introduced the exempt report, which sought approval for the transfer of Drayton streetlights to Drayton Parish Council.

The Committee was informed that the proposal followed ongoing discussions with Drayton Parish Council, which wanted to take over responsibility for the streetlights.

Following a show of hands it was:

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

1. Cabinet to agree to transfer Drayton Streetlights to Drayton Parish Council; and
2. Cabinet to agree to transfer the special expenses balance collected from households in Drayton to Drayton Parish Council for the purpose of improving and maintaining streetlights in Drayton.

(The meeting concluded at 2.00pm)

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Chairman

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF BUDGET

### Questions for Cabinet

- 1) We are aware that the Planning team is under pressure and that there will be some significant planning applications over the coming year (e.g. Rackheath). How is Cabinet ensuring that the planning function is sufficiently resourced to deal with these demands?

It is envisaged that additional resources will be required in the planning team to help them deal with the unprecedented large scale strategic applications such as Rackheath and Beeston Park.

A separate Business Case is being prepared for members to consider the resources that are needed to deal with this workload

- 2) A key project will be to review the Planning IT System, and potentially implement a joint system with SNC.

What is the progress with this project?

And how will this be resourced to ensure it is successful?

The Planning IT Business Case is currently being prepared and will be considered by SEIC (7 Dec 2021) and Cabinet on the 21 Dec 2021.

The Business Case will be outlining the resources required to do this.

- 3) Cabinet on 15th June 21 agreed to create a new Environmental Projects Reserve of £750,000. What is the vision, intentions, and timeframe for using this reserve?

The Environmental Projects Reserve was created to enable and support delivery of the council's priorities contained in the Environmental Strategy and agenda for Waste services. It will be necessary to engage specialist consultancy advice, temporary additional project administrative support, and to be able to fund specific supplies and services, for example:

- Consultancy advice and support in preparing the presently commissioned Carbon Audit, on the findings of which members have been invited now to a briefing session.
- Temporary additional project administrative support (contractor) to enable a number of simultaneous tree planting project activities to progress simultaneously in the short term.
- Supplies in terms of funding for tree saplings under the small grants being offered to town and parish councils at present.

Items of Environmental Strategy-related expenditure will be included in the refreshed action plan, which will contain progress updates.

There is not a finite timetable or end point for drawing on the Environmental Projects Reserve.

- 4) The Council has significant funds in Reserves. What is the current reserve position and what plans are in place to utilise these reserves?

The 'Medium-Term Financial Plan and Reserves Update' report presented to Cabinet on 23 Nov 21 (O&S 16 Nov 21) provided details of the current Usable Reserves, along with the expected use of these reserves over the next few years.

- 5) The Council has put Council tax up in recent years whilst at the same time reserves have increased. Does this indicate that there is scope to not increase Council tax next year?

Reserves are one off in nature, and are therefore not a sustainable way to fund the Council long term.

In recent years, a number of favourable variances, many of which have been one off in nature, has allowed the Council to add monies to reserves, primarily to meet known future spending pressures.

The 'Medium-Term Financial Plan and Reserves Update' report presented to Cabinet on 23 November 21 (O&S 16 November 21) set out the Medium-Term Financial Position, which demonstrated the medium term funding gap.

The need to raise Council Tax or not will be addressed in the main Budget Setting Report for 22/23 in February 2022.

- 6) The aspiration should be to set a balanced budget, with no need to impact on service levels, draw on reserves or increase Council Tax. Does Cabinet believe this will be feasible for 22/23?

Broadland Council has historically set a low Council Tax charge, and this is still our aspiration.

However, until we get clarity on the long term funding position for local authorities (at individual council level) it is very difficult to predict whether Council Tax rises will be necessary.

The need to raise Council Tax or not will be addressed in the main Budget Setting Report for 22/23 in February 2022.

- 7) The Covid pandemic has put additional demands on services, particularly the help hub and the benefits team. We have been able to increase resources in these areas in the short term by utilising Covid grant monies. However what plans are in place to ensure we have sufficient resources once the Covid grant monies end?

We are assessing the impact of Covid and hardship on services with a view to understanding future demand. We have sufficient resources in place in 2022/3 and therefore will be using this opportunity to identify what resources we will need from 2023 onwards.

- 8) At present nationally it is reported that there are plenty of job opportunities but a lack of appropriately skilled candidates to fill key roles.

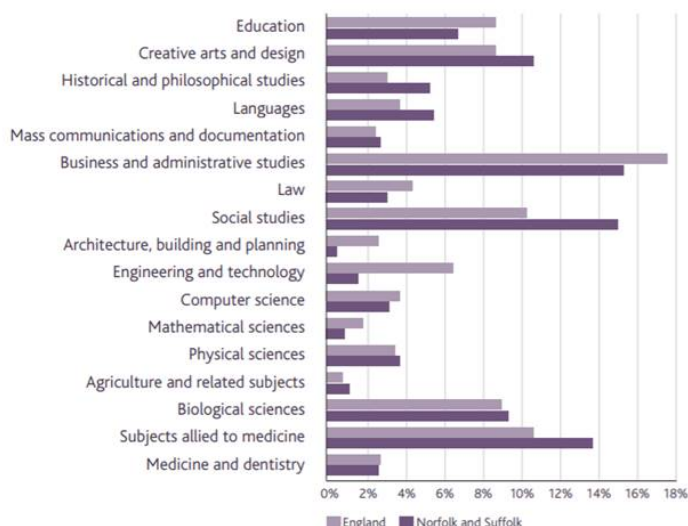
- a) Is this the situation in Norfolk and specifically is this an issue for our OneTeam recruitment?
- b) Will the delivery plan / budget include any specific measures to address the skills gap?

- a) The Norfolk workforce has comparatively lower levels of qualifications than the national average – certainly at NVQ level 4 and above. There is partner-wide recognition that while addressing the attainment issue is crucial, parallel efforts to attract and support businesses that offer higher-skilled and higher remuneration opportunities are crucial in closing the apparent wage and qualification gaps. >40% of residents of Norwich have an NVQ level 4 or above, >15% of residents around Thetford have an NVQ level 4 or above. See below graph for HE skill qualifications per subject Norfolk/Suffolk vs England average, paying extra attention to the architecture, building and planning area in which Norfolk falls 2% below the national average.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://newanglia.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/New-Anglia-LEP-Skills-Report-2021-v7.pdf>

## HE Qualifiers by subject 2018/19 - Norfolk & Suffolk with England



For some of our senior planning roles (requiring some experience and or professional qualifications - Degree level education in planning/relevant chartered membership) we see >50% less applicants than lower- level positions within the same team in which professional qualifications are not required.

Senior Planning Officer- 2 applicants

Surveyor Team Leader- 1 applicant

Planning Policy Assistant- 4 applicants

Planning Officer- 5 applicants

Planning Policy Post Graduate Apprentice- 11 applicants

Where training is provided as part of the job opportunity, e.g. planning post grad apprentice we can see that the vacancy had at least 200% more applicants than the Planning Officer post that once the apprenticeship was complete the individual would be eligible to apply.

- b) Some of the work we have been doing with Apprentices addresses the skills gap – i.e. EHO at undergraduate level and Planning as post graduate level to assist with these hard to recruit roles.

Apprenticeship strategy attached which includes our 3 strategic strands that we are working to and this includes future skills and skill gaps etc so we have taken steps to address our hard to recruit roles already.

Our delivery plan for next year includes talent, management, future skills and attraction and retention– so again we have identified ready for delivery. Pages 13/14/15

We are also working on the Future Focus project so linking with schools / HE on a couple of longer terms projects to attract students into the public sector – projects are future focus (work experience) and careers ambassadors (council ambassadors going into schools to promote careers) – these are projects we are working on with Eco Dev and Laura Smith.

Training Needs Assessment will look at internal skills & talent management.

- 9) The Covid pandemic has put pressure on our housing team. At present the Council mainly relies on leased properties to meet our urgent housing caseload. Will the Council be exploring alternative options? And if so when will this be done?

The team are preparing a business case to look at other funding options for housing including releasing capital to purchase properties for temporary accommodation. The initial findings are positive and we will be bringing a business case in the summer of 2022.

- 10) The draft budget papers for 22/23 do not include any income and expenditure relating to Covid. Is this correct as it is expected that Covid support will need to continue during 22/23?

At present we are not expecting any additional Government funding for Covid in 22/23, and many Covid support schemes will end by March 2022.

Where there is a need to continue with Covid support programmes in 22/23, it is expected that these will be funded by the earmarked Covid reserves or Covid budget underspends (that will need to be carried forward). As such these budgets will be added as and when these are known.

- 11) The delivery plan sets out the Council's aspirations and these are quite wide ranging as the Council provides numerous services. However has Cabinet got any key areas that it specifically aims to divert additional budgetary resources to in 22/23?

As 22/23 is likely to be a challenging budget year, as we are expecting significant reductions in Government funding, we have tried to minimise additional spending pressures.

The main Revenue Budget report to be presented to Cabinet (and O&S) in Feb 22) will include details of all significant cost pressures factored into the 22/23 budget.

However there are three key areas worth highlighting.

- The Council will be rolling out food waste collection to an additional 6,500 households from October 2022 as part of the new Strategic Environmental Contract, with the aspiration to roll collections out further.
- The Council will be moving to using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel in its refuse vehicles. This will make a significant contribution to cutting the Council's carbon footprint by more than 90%.
- As noted above, Cabinet on 15th June 21 agreed to create a new Environmental Projects Reserve of £750,000. A number of projects calling on this reserve will be delivered in 22/23.

- 12) Has the Cabinet considered further outsourcing of services as part of developing the forthcoming Delivery Plan? (for instance utilising the Anglia Revenues Partnership more).

Cabinet is open minded to all potential delivery mechanisms, for instance:

- It considered setting up a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) for waste services.
- It recently agreed to enter into a Procurement Consortium with Breckland
- It contracts with NPLaw for legal advice.
- It is currently in discussion with Anglia Revenues Partnership with regard to assisting with specific areas of specialist support.

There are currently no plans for further wide scale outsourcing, as the focus is currently on delivering additional value from the joint working with South Norfolk Council.

13) The Council's budget includes sponsorship income. Is there a sponsorship policy underpinning this?

With the Council facing funding gaps, proactive income generation streams are required. With this in mind a Sponsorship and Advertising Sales Manager post was temporarily recruited to see how successful this role could be. In three months just under £35,000 income was received and a Sponsorship Policy was drafted. This is now to be reviewed with the ambition of this gaining approval and the role recruited to again once more.

**Additional question asked at Overview & Scrutiny 30 Nov 21**

14) As part of setting the 22/23 budget, are Cabinet considering aligning the value of member ward grants with SNC (i.e. increasing the BDC grant to £1,000)?

No. BDC and SNC are separate sovereign councils, and there is no need to align the value of member ward grants.



## **REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESSES**

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01508 533791

**Portfolio:** All

**Wards Affected:** All

### **Purpose of the Report:**

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 January 2021, members resolved to review the way in which the Council engaged its residents in public consultations. Members wished to understand the current processes for engaging the public in consultations and to explore how these processes could be improved to maximise response rates. The Committee felt that by reaching and engaging with the widest possible audience, results would be more likely to demonstrate the wide-ranging views of the community rather than be skewed by limited responses from a small section of residents.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the current practices and processes for administering public consultations and review these to explore and offer suggestions on how improvements can be made to enable outcomes from consultations to demonstrate the wide-ranging views of the community.

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 26 January 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to review the public consultation process.
- 1.2 Members felt that response rates seemed to be low and that outcomes from consultations did not properly reflect the views of the wider community, due to the low number of participants.
- 1.3 Members were concerned that the way in which the Council engaged residents in public consultations might not be inclusive as these tended to be undertaken online.

## **2. Current position/findings**

- 2.1 On reviewing the current approach for administering public consultations, it is clear that each service areas addresses this using different methods based on the type of consultation.
- 2.2 Appendix A to this report details how public consultations are currently undertaken for different services; Planning (plan making and planning applications), Annual Budget Consultation and Council Tax Assistance.
- 2.3 For each area a response was provided to each of the following points:
  - What is the current process for undertaking consultations / surveys?
  - What are your response rates?
  - How does this compare to benchmarks / comparison data?
  - How easy is it for people to engage?
  - Thoughts on how can we reach the maximum number of residents and drive the process so more residents will respond?
- 2.4 Since the appointment of the Customer Insight and Experience Lead the One Team has made significant progress in starting to collect and embed processes that enable us to better understand our customers and ensure the continued delivery of services that meet the expectations of our customers. Our customer satisfaction survey has been live on our website for six months enabling us to get a better understanding of how well we serve our customers and identify areas for improvement. We have used the initial set of results to set a target for customer satisfaction, which will be reported as part of Broadland Council's strategic delivery measures commencing 2022/23.
- 2.5 Work has also begun on developing a mechanism to feed this insight to service areas to facilitate a continuous improvement approach. A 3-month trial on a new complaints process has been completed which includes a quality assurance review of stage 2 complaints to better understand where changes could be made to services and ensure the timely response to complaints.

- 2.6 The development of a Customer Panel has begun outlining its purpose and terms of reference with recruitment to the customer panel to begin early in the new year. Work continues to embed our customer satisfaction measurement across other communication channels such as, email and post allowing us to gather more insight. A more detailed update on the progress made since the appointment of the Customer Insight and Experience Lead is due for Overview and Scrutiny and Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee in May 2022.

### **3. Issues and risks**

- 3.1 **Resource Implications** – Publicity and advertising can be very costly, and the Council therefore needs to ensure that any processes adopted are proportionate and offer best value for our residents.
- 3.2 **Legal Implications** – When mailing residents and customers, the Council needs to strictly adhere to GDPR legislation when using its data, ensuring customer data is only processed for the purpose in which it is given.
- 3.3 **Equality Implications** – When mailing customers, the Council needs to give due regard to ensuring it is being inclusive and not permitting discrimination to all. It needs to ensure that consideration is given to any procedures which might impact on individuals or groups on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- 3.4 **Environmental Impact** – The Council needs to consider the environmental impact of mass-producing mailings to residents.
- 3.5 **Crime and Disorder** – Not applicable

### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the current practices and processes for administering public consultations and review these to explore and offer suggestions on how improvements can be made to enable outcomes from consultations to demonstrate the wide-ranging views of the community.

## Appendix A

### Review of Public Consultation Process / BDC O&S Committee

#### Service Area: – Planning

##### **What is the current process for undertaking consultations / surveys?**

Within the Planning Department, consultations generally fall within one of two categories:

1. Consultations relating to plan-making
2. Consultations relating to planning applications

The details of how the Council undertakes these consultations, with whom, and what stages, are set out within the Broadland District Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which is a requirement under planning legislation. The Council must comply with the SCI in preparing any Local Plan document or when determining a planning application. The SCI also details how the Council expects developers with significant development proposals to engage with communities prior to an application being made.

The SCI was adopted in July 2016 and was updated in February 2019 to reflect updates to national legislation. The SCI is currently undergoing further, minor updates and this latest version will be published shortly. The current [Statement of Community Involvement](#) is available to download from the Council's website.

Following the issuing of Government guidance on local authority plan-making and related consultations during the Covid-19 pandemic, a [temporary update was produced to be read alongside the SCI, in July 2020](#). This sets out temporary, alternative measures for consulting on planning issues and making documents available to the public. Please look for the notes below, in relation to particular, temporary Covid-19 measures.

The following presents a broad summary of the consultation process for each of the two categories presented above:

#### **1. Consultations relating to plan-making**

Consultations on **Local Plan** documents occur at several stages, depending on the type of plan being produced. The SCI suggests a range of options for consultation methods and publicity measures at each of these different stages. Broadly speaking, the different stages and the methods suggested for Local Plan production include:

##### **(a) Evidence Gathering**

Parish/Town Council workshops\* / Stakeholder focus groups\* / Stakeholder meetings\* / Resident & stakeholder workshops\* / Survey documents.

(b) Consultation(s) on initial document

Consultation document & response form (online and available as hard copy) / Public exhibitions\* / Stakeholder meetings\*.

(c) Pre-submission publication

Published document & response form (online and hard copy)

(d) Submission, Examination and Adoption

These are more formal stages that occur once the Local Plan document is submitted to the Secretary of State. Council correspondence with parties is co-ordinated by the Planning Inspector.

Publicity methods for various stages: emails/letters to consultation database / info on BDC website / social media / info at Council offices & libraries\* / Broadland News / press release / posters in parish notice boards & libraries / article for parish magazines / site notices (where applicable).

**\*Covid-19 temporary measures:** The July 2020 temporary SCI update, referred to earlier, sets out which sections of the SCI are subject to a temporary amendment, due to Covid-19 guidance and restrictions, and what those amendments are. Any consultation methods listed above with an asterisk are not likely to be current options as regards plan-making consultations. Alternative options are discussed within the Temporary Update.

Stages (a) and (b), above, fulfil the Council's requirement to meet Regulation 18 ('Preparation of a local plan') of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012. Stage (c), above, relates to Regulation 19 of this legislation ('Publication of a local plan'). Local Plan consultations are expected to take place over a minimum six week period.

The Council also has a duty to consult on **Neighbourhood Plans** that are submitted by Qualifying Bodies, under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. This is followed by an independent examination and, if approved by the local planning authority, a referendum.

For the Regulation 16 consultation on a Neighbourhood Plan, the Council publishes the document in hard copy and online (along with a response form) and sends notifications to previously consulted stakeholders and individuals. Information is put on the BDC website, in the local library(ies), and in the Council offices. Posters are put in the parish noticeboards. This is in accordance with the legislation referred to above. The consultation lasts for a period of 6 weeks.

## 2. Consultations relating to planning applications

The SCI also describes the process for consultations relating to planning applications. This is summarised below.

### Publicising applications

Applications are publicised in the following ways:

- Application posted on the BDC website
- Applications requiring advertisement will be publicised locally
- Where appropriate, site notices either displayed on site or at a nearby, convenient location
- Applications requiring individual neighbour notification will usually be addressed to the owner/occupier immediately adjacent to the site

### Consultation on an application

BDC consults appropriate bodies on particular planning applications. This includes parish/town councils, but other organisations might include other local planning authorities, utility providers, NCC Highways, public health bodies. The relevant ward members are also notified of applications.

Any individual or organisation may make representations regarding a planning application. These can be via letter, email or an online response form via the BDC website. A period of at least 21 days is given, during which interested parties may respond.

If a representation relates to an application that will be determined by Planning Committee, then the individual will be notified of the committee date and provided with an opportunity to address the committee.

**Covid-19 temporary measures:** the following measures are in place, as regards consultations on planning applications -

- Planning application documents and representations can be viewed at the Council offices, on an appointment basis.
- Planning Committees are being streamed live and anyone wishing to view the meetings are encouraged to do so via this means.

### **What are our response rates?**

Since the current version of the SCI was developed, the only Broadland-related Local Plan consultations that have been carried out are those relating to the Greater Norwich Local Plan, which covers Broadland, Norwich and parts of South Norfolk. The process for consultations on this document has had to incorporate the requirements of all three local authorities' SCIs. Response to the GNLP has been good with (during part 1 of the first stage [Reg 18]) over 600 sites promoted during the initial 'call for sites', c.1,400 people attending 29 roadshow events across the Greater Norwich area, over 8,000 representations being made, and a further 180 sites being promoted. During part 2 of the Reg. 18 consultation, a further 2,500 representations were made and a further 58 sites were submitted. During part 3 of

the Reg. 18 consultation (consultation on the draft Plan), over 3,300 representations were made and more than 1,150 people attended 14 consultation events.

Reg. 16 consultations on submitted Neighbourhood Plan proposals have been run more frequently by Broadland District Council. The three most recent Neighbourhood Plans to have undergone a Regulation 16 consultation by the District Council are Spixworth, Taverham and Wroxham. A total of 22 representations were made in relation to Spixworth, 34 in relation to Taverham, and 61 in relation to Wroxham. It is worth noting that Reg. 16 consultations undertaken by the District Council follow the more informal consultations undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and are intended for any members of the public or stakeholder bodies to raise any outstanding concerns that they feel should be brought to the attention of the examiner.

Consultations relating to planning applications bring their own perplexities, when considered against other Council consultations. Planning consultations are governed by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and there are minimum standards that are set within this legislation. It would be impulsive to suggest that the higher the response rate to a planning consultation, the more successful that consultation. Rates will largely be dependent on the nature of the proposal in question, and how controversial it might be within that specific community. Nevertheless, records show that the first 50 applications of 2021 received a total of 662 consultation responses, giving an average of c.13 responses per application. The fewest number of responses was 1, and the highest was 181.

#### **How does this compare to benchmarks/comparison data?**

Within Planning, it is difficult to compare response data, as different proposals and issues will be subject to different levels of controversy, dependent on scale, location etc. Whilst the volume of consultation responses received can be encouraging, it is the quality and detail of responses received that is most crucial in terms of making planning decisions.

A quick comparison can be made between the Reg. 18 consultations on GNLP, referred to above, and the responses made at a similar stage in relation to the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy (the current overarching Local Plan for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk, and broadly comparable). Whereas the JCS received a total of 3,207 representations at the equivalent Reg. 18 stage, the total number of Reg. 18 representations in relation to the GNLP was approx. 13,800. However, this large discrepancy can no doubt be explained by the fact that the GNLP allocates sites within the Greater Norwich area (adding a greater layer of controversy), whereas the JCS did not.

As noted earlier, the responses to Neighbourhood Plan consultations at the Regulation 16 stage are not intended to be extensive consultation exercise. This is a more formal stage of publication, where stakeholders have the opportunity to raise any outstanding issues for the consideration of the Neighbourhood Plan

examiner. The level of responses that the Council receives at this stage is thought to be broadly in accord with those received by other local authorities. As an example, a quick internet search on other local authority Reg. 16 consultations in relation to Neighbourhood Plans reveals 7 responses (Rode Neighbourhood Plan, Mendip); 3 responses (Whorlton, Durham); 9 responses (Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes).

Again, it is very difficult to make meaningful comparisons between consultation data on planning applications, due to the variety of types, scale, location etc. However, in terms of a very quick comparison, the equivalent data in terms of responses to South Norfolk Council on planning applications shows that the first 50 applications of 2021 received a total of 166 responses (an average of 3.3 responses per application). The highest number of responses was 8 and the lowest was 1. It may be of further interest to compare the 2021 figure to the number of responses to the first 50 applications within Broadland District in 2022 (the data for which should be available early in the year).

### **How easy is it for people to engage?**

The requirement for local planning authorities to produce a Statement of Community Involvement is partly to ensure that consideration is given to making planning consultations as accessible as possible. For example, in plan-making consultations, hard copies of documents are always made available for people to view if they will struggle to view documents and respond to documents online. Equally, if public exhibitions or other interactive events are being held, consideration is given to accessible venues and the time of day at which the event occurs.

The Broadland SCI sets out the following standards for effective community engagement which it expects the Council to attain for each of its community and stakeholder involvement exercises that relate to the development of local planning documents:

1. Clearly set out the aim and objectives of each community involvement exercise that is undertaken;
2. Adopt an inclusive approach, ensuring that those who have an interest in the topic have the opportunity to contribute from an early stage and throughout the process;
3. Ensure that any information relating to the community involvement exercise is accessible and is written in a clear and precise manner;
4. Provide a sufficient length of time for communities and stakeholders to contribute their views on proposals (reflecting statutory time limits where relevant);
5. Ensure that community involvement exercises and events are held at appropriate times, ensuring that they are accessible to a wide range of communities and stakeholders;
6. Ensure that any community involvement events are held in accessible locations and venues that do not restrict individuals that are interested from taking part;



7. Demonstrate, by reporting on the results of community involvement exercises, that all views have been considered in the development of the planning document in question.

**Thoughts on how can we reach the maximum number of residents and drive the process so more residents will respond? (if applicable)**

The Place Shaping team, within Planning, undertook a public consultation in summer 2021, in relation to the emerging Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan in South Norfolk district. As a result of the pandemic, the team put in place alternative measures to the usual face-to-face events that might normally occur during such a consultation (e.g. public exhibitions, parish council events etc.). These measures, whilst leaning towards the area of digital engagement, met with a great deal of success. A virtual exhibition was set up for people to browse the consultation material (you can view the exhibition [here](#)) in a similar way to how they would at an actual exhibition. In addition, visitors were able to engage in real-time conversation with a Planning Officer during set times (and leave a message if outside of those times). Statistics at the end of the consultation indicate that there were 3,447 visitors to the virtual exhibition and that, whilst the majority of those visiting the site were in the 65+ age range (approx. 23%), nearly 20% of site users were in the 25-34 range. In addition, approx. 8% of visitors were in the 18-24 category, with remaining age groups (35-44; 45-54; 55-64) making up approx. 49% of visits. This is a marked difference in attendance demographics when compared to those which are normally observed at physical exhibitions, which tend to skew heavily towards the 65+ age group with very little representation from younger adults.

In terms of consultations relating to planning applications, the recent changes to the Council website have increased the usability of the planning application search features. The 'my area' function allows people to register and to save particular search parameters and receive notifications of applications within 3km from their house.

Whilst new methods of digital engagement with residents should not be relied on to the exclusion of non-digital methods, it is felt that the use of these new facilities and features has allowed and will continue to allow the Councils to reach audiences which it may not have found easy to reach previously with different types of Planning consultations.

**Any other comments (if applicable)**

## **Review of Public Consultation Process / BDC O&S Committee**

### **Service Area: – Annual Budget Consultation (Finance)**

#### **What consultations do we currently carry out, and why do we do these?**

The Council carries out an annual budget consultation.

This is because there is a statutory requirement to annually consult with businesses on the Council's Budget.

There is no statutory requirement to consult with residents. However, it is generally considered good practice to do this.

#### **What is the current process for undertaking consultations / surveys?**

The budget consultation is carried out via the Council's website using Survey Monkey, and it is promoted using social media.

The consultation is also normally mentioned at a business breakfast event – although due to Covid this was not possible this year.

The 21/22 Budget Consultation survey was live on the Council's Website from 9 December 2021 until 4 January 2022.

The result of the survey are included in the annual budget report that goes to Cabinet in early February. The 21/22 results were reported to Cabinet on 9 February 21. This allow members the opportunity to consider the survey results, as part of the annual budget setting process.

#### **What are our response rates?**

Our response rates are disappointing. There were only 22 responses for 21/22. 20 responses were from local residents and 2 were from residents that were also a business.

#### **How does this compare to benchmarks/comparison data?**

We do not collect benchmark / comparison data.

However, some authorities do carry out more extensive consultation surveys and use facilities such as citizen panels. These can however require significant resource. Consultation also tends to work better if the council is either asking about which service areas should be cut and / or is asking residents how to spend pots of money. Response rates are also higher if there are locally contentious issues.

**How easy is it for people to engage?**

The 21/22 survey consisted of just 9 questions, and takes under 10 minutes to complete.

In addition, once Council Tax / Business Rate bills are issued, we also receive a number of emails / letters from residents that we respond to.

**Thoughts on how can we reach the maximum number of residents and drive the process so more residents will respond? (if applicable)**

In the longer term the Council is looking at whether we can develop a central store of business and residents' emails addresses, which could be used to promote these types of consultation. However, at present the email addresses we hold tend to be service specific, and thus under data protection rules should only be used for the specific purpose these were provided to us for.

**Any other comments (if applicable)**

Businesses pay National Non Domestic Rates and their charge is set nationally (as opposed to BDC being able to set this). Therefore, even if businesses responded with comments about their bills, the Council has limited powers to act.

## Review of Public Consultation Process / BDC O&S Committee

### Service Area: – Council Tax Assistance

<b>What is the current process for undertaking consultations / surveys?</b>  Council Tax Assistance (CTA) – legal requirement to consult before every budget setting round to consult on our proposals. This is fed into the budget setting every Feb and is an annual event.
<b>What are our response rates?</b>  Very low for CTA, with population of 250k we usually receive 15/20 responses.
<b>How does this compare to benchmarks/comparison data?</b>  Nationally, 5-30% return is a good outcome for surveys. Our return rate is very low as we are below 1%. However, this is a specialist area of consultation which affects relatively few residents and can be complex to understand.  Surveys in general work best when there is a clear understanding of how input will affect the participant. However, care also needs to be taken as participants may financially benefit from changes they propose.
<b>How easy is it for people to engage?</b> The consultation is published online, and we make reference to this in Council Tax letters. Residents can also ring in with their views.
<b>Thoughts on how can we reach the maximum number of residents and drive the process so more residents will respond? (if applicable)</b>  It is difficult consultation to target, if we targeted the survey at the recipients for assistance, this is a cohort that we know that are less likely to complete the survey and will have a natural bias to increase the amount of Council Tax Assistance as they will directly benefit financially.  Conversely, targeting those people who do not benefit from Council Tax Assistance is challenging as most will not have heard of the scheme, it would not be relevant to them and so significant work would be required to ensure enough understanding to make a balanced view.
<b>Any other comments (if applicable)</b>          

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020–2021

In setting future Overview and Scrutiny **TOPICS**, Members are asked to consider the following: **T**imely – **O**bjective – **P**erformance – **I**nterest – **C**orporate Priority

**T** Is this the right **time** to review this issue and is there sufficient **officer time** and resource to conduct the review? What is the **timescale**?

**O** What is the reason for review; do officers have a clear **objective**?

**P** Can **performance** in this area be improved by input from scrutiny?

**I** Is there sufficient **interest** (particularly from the public)? The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny.

**C** Will the review assist the Council to achieve its **Corporate Priorities**?

Date	Topic	Lead Officer / Portfolio	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Comments
24/8/2021 (Item added 26/1/2021) Req'st by Sprowston Parish Council	Guidance for town and parish councils in respect of public open space discussions	Assistant Director of Planning / Planning	Request – “Production of a guidance document on the process for when town and parish councils should get involved with developers and the planning authority to ensure they have an opportunity to participate in discussions about the allocation of public open space”.	
24/8/2021	Provision of leisure principles / Community Wellbeing	Communities Manager / Housing & Wellbeing	To receive an overview and to review progress with initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in Broadland, including costs of projects.	A review of community leisure provision is scheduled for presentation to Cabinet in September 2021. O&S Committee to provide input to inform this report.
30/11/2021 (added June 2021)	Review of the Environmental Strategy	Director Place and Environmental Coordinator	To review the Environmental Strategy to ensure it is delivering desired outcomes, to obtain an overview of the plans for the Environmental Projects Reserve, and to identify and make any recommendations.	
30/11/2021 (added March 2021)	Review of Member Grants	Assistant Director Individuals & Families / Economic Development	To review the Member Grants Scheme to ensure it meets desired outcomes and to identify and make any recommendations for improvement.	

Date	Topic	Lead Officer / Portfolio	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Comments
30/11/2021	Staff turnover at Broadland	Chief of Staff / Transformation & Organisational Development	To receive a report setting out the levels of staff turnover from 2015 to present and identify any trends.	Time and Task Panel set up to investigate further (see below) and feed its conclusions back to a future meeting of the Committee.  Further work requested by the Committee and later report back.
18/1/2022	Joint Budget Meeting	Assistant Director Finance and all Portfolio Holders	To receive responses to the Committee's budget questions and to raise any further questions with Portfolio Holders.	Annual item.
18/1/2022 (added April 2021)	Housing Allocations Policy	Assistant Director Individuals & Families / Housing & Wellbeing	To review the Housing Allocation Policy to ensure it meets desired outcomes and to identify and make any recommendations for improvement.	Review of policy following its implementation in April 2021.  Review received by the Committee at its December meeting, due to be reviewed again in 9-12 months' time.
18/1/2022 (Item put forward by Cllr N Shaw 26/1/2021)	Engagement in Public Consultations	ADs: Planning, Finance, Ind & Families' Chief of Staff / All	To review how the Council engages residents in public consultations and to explore how this process could be improved to maximise response rates. To help to ensure that responses to consultations are not limited and demonstrate the wide-ranging views of the community.	Moved from 24 August due to full agenda as a result of pre-scrutiny of additional Cabinet meeting.  Moved from 30 Nov as further work required.
29/3/2022 (added Oct 2021)	Norse Environmental Waste Services (NEWS)	Assistant Director Community Services	To receive an update on the financial position of Norse Environmental Waste Services (NEWS)	Agreed by the Committee at the meeting on 14 November 2017.  To be received at the March meeting when the financials are available.

Date	Topic	Lead Officer / Portfolio	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Comments
29/3/2022	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report	Senior Governance Officer / Policy	Committee to approve the draft Annual Report for presentation to the Council's AGM in May.	29/3/2022
June 2022 (added 29 June 2021)	Customer Strategy Update	Customer Engagement and Insight Lead	To receive an update on the measures being used to deliver the Customer Strategy	To be received nine months after the Customer Engagement and Insight Lead took up her post.
June 2022 (added 15/6/2021)	Review of Empty Homes Policy	Assistant Director Individuals & Families	To review the Empty Homes Policy to ensure it meets desired outcomes and to identify and make any recommendations for improvement.	Review of policy following its implementation in June 2021.
Update	Apprenticeships and new schemes	Asst Director Ec Growth Ec Development Manager Asst Director Governance Skills Development Officer HR Business Partner / Economic Development	Agreed at meeting on 30/3/2021: That the Council should make representation to the Secretary of State in light of the detrimental effect that the Apprenticeships Levy was having on 16 to 19-year-olds and that officers should draft a report to support this recommendation to Government	Chairman sent letter to Secretary of State (as appended to this Work Programme)
Update	Future topics for scrutiny To invite town/parish councils to submit topics for future consideration	Senior Governance Officer	'Good work' article to be placed in Broadland News.	Broadland News article to be written from Chairman and submitted to comms team.
Update	Broadband and mobile phone coverage in the district	Assistant Director Economic Growth / Economic Development	To be decided – see comments	Project delayed due to Covid-19. Jo Copplestone will be arranging for Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) to provide an all-member briefing later in the year.
As and when appropriate	Water – supply, management and climate change	Water Management Officer / Environmental Excellence	To investigate how water was being managed in the district and what measures were being put in place to address climate change.	To receive updates from Jo Copplestone as BDC's rep on Water Resources East or Ken Kelly as representative on Broads & Rivers IDB as and when appropriate.

Date	Topic	Lead Officer / Portfolio	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Comments
	Council partnership register review	Policy & Partnerships Officer / All Portfolios	Committee to receive an update against the Council's partnership register and to identify any partnership concerns that may require further investigation by a nominated time and task limited panel.	On hold due to Covid19

Meeting dates: **30 March 2021, 15 June 2021, 24 August 2021, 2 November 2021, 18 January 2022 and 29 March 2022**

### Time and Task Panel reviews

Topic	Objectives	Lead Officers	Comments
<u>Staff turnover</u>  Mr Adams; Mr Brennan; Ms Harpley; Ms Holland, Mr Nurden and Mr Riley	To scrutinise the staff turnover figures further, incl: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Break-down of figures by department and by grade</li> <li>Analysis of what stage in their career employees were leaving</li> </ul>	Assistant Director Governance & Business Support	T&TP met on 16/7/2021. Next meeting scheduled for September 2021 to consider further information.  Further work requested by the Committee.

### Workshops

Topic	Objectives	Lead Officers	Date
Preparing to meet with Cabinet to discuss budget performance	A facilitated workshop attended by the Assistant Director of Finance for committee members to identify, agree, and allocate questions for Cabinet to answer at the joint budget meeting.	Assistant Director of Finance Finance Team staff Senior Governance Officer	26 October 2021.



## Process for adding items to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

