

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Tuesday 29 January 2019** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr D G Harrison – Chairman

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

Mr J J Emsell  
Mr G Everett  
Mr R F Grady  
Mr F O'Neill

Mr V Ray-Mortlock  
Mr S Riley  
Mr D C Ward

Mrs T Mancini-Boyle also attended the meeting for its duration.

Also in attendance were the Managing Director, Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance and Revenue Services, Interim Head of Housing and Environmental Services, Health, Housing and Partnership Officer, Interim Revenues and Benefits Manager and the Committee Officer (JO).

### 96 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Ms Catchpole	103 – Call in of Action Authorised by a Portfolio Holder	Local Choice Non-Pecuniary – volunteer at Citizens Advice

### 97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Tapp and Mrs Vincent.

### 98 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*Minute No. 87 – Minutes – NEWS Joint Venture Company – Update Report*

Members were advised that the NEWS accounts had been published in December 2018. The accounts showed a shortfall for the year of £500,000, which took the overall deficit of the company to £800,000.

### 99 HEALTHWATCH NORFOLK

The officer from Healthwatch Norfolk who was scheduled to give the Committee a presentation on its activities in the district was unavailable due to sickness. This item was, therefore, deferred until a later meeting.

### 100 HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

The report provided an update on activity between June and December 2018 relating to increasing the levels of health and wellbeing of residents in the District.

Key areas included:

- Work between South Norfolk and Broadland on local initiatives to improve opportunities for social mobility for residents across both districts.
- The Norfolk Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been agreed and signed by partners, including Broadland District Council.
- The Warm and Healthy Homes initiative was being led by Broadland District Council. The scheme included installing central heating systems to fuel poor households, promoting how to stay well in winter as well as providing energy and money saving advice.
- The Norwich and Broadland Social Prescribing service began in July 2018. 196 referrals had been received from across Norwich and Broadland. The three main referral reasons were benefits advice, debts and budgeting and isolation and inclusion.
- Broadland made a financial contribution to the Mental Health Advice Team based at the Police Call Centre in Wymondham. The Team consisted of a Mental Health Team Leader and five Mental Health Nurses, with experience in working with Autism, Asperger's, self-neglect and hoarding, drugs and alcohol.
- Norwich Emergency Avoidance Team aimed to treat Norwich CCG residents suffering health problems in their own home, avoiding admission to unplanned respite care or to hospital. In December 84.2 percent of all referrals made to NEAT were still at home seven days later.
- Officers from Broadland and South Norfolk were working on a joint Safeguarding Procedure and Reporting Process for both Councils.
- The Council undertook a number of measures to improve local air quality

and monitoring was carried out at 21 sites in the District. There would also be a Clean Air Day on 20 June across Norfolk and focused actively on Broadland and South Norfolk. The Government's Clean Air Strategy 2019 also aimed to work with farmers to reduce ammonia emissions caused by the storage and spreading of manures and slurries and from the application of inorganic fertilisers.

Members were advised that the Pollution Control Officer could attend a future meeting of the Committee to advise further on measures being undertaken in the district.

In response to a request it was confirmed that more information about diabetes would be featured in future updates. Although Members were asked to note that the Council already carried out activities such as the Sugarsmart initiative, Broadly Active and Why Weight, which sought to reduce some of the causes of the disease. A Member suggested that dentistry should also be featured in the update.

In answer to a question, the meeting was informed that the Council was working with housing and NHS to establish a single and sustainable discharge model and to extend the District Direct offer to include discharge from mental health. The Handyperson + scheme also helped residents live independently in their own homes.

Members noted that the County Council were closing the majority of their Children's Centres, but that Broadland continue to provide a valuable service with Tots2Teens and through the Help Hub.

### **RESOLVED**

to note the content of the report.

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

The Committee's Member representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised the meeting that he would be submitting a report on his visit to the Priscilla Bacon End of Life Care Centre in due course.

The Chairman advised Members that at its meeting on 17 January 2019, the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had received reports on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust, both of which had delivered disappointing levels of service.

A Member requested that the Committee receive an update on the level of increase in demand on the Eating Disorder Service and the preventative measures being put in place to address it.

### 102 THE ROLE OF SCRUTINY

The Managing Director confirmed his absolute support for scrutiny, which was essential for good policy and practice at the Council. He noted that scrutiny was about driving improvement, holding external organisations to account, as well as taking on a place shaping role. He also emphasised that Members must be very clear in the questions they were asking and what they sought to achieve by their investigations, if they were to deliver realistic and robust outcomes.

Members endorsed the Managing Director's views, but emphasised that the Committee must have officer support to achieve these aims. They advised him that the Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer, who had left her post in May 2018, had not been replaced due to uncertainty about collaboration. Now that he was in place they requested that this be addressed. In response, the Managing Director confirmed that he would ensure that the Committee received the appropriate level of support it needed from within the resources of the Council. He emphasised that Members also had a role in doing scrutiny research, if they were to be able to make solid recommendations from an informed point of view. He added that the Committee could expect his full support under his tenure at the Council.

The Managing Director confirmed that he would come back to Members in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer after the senior management arrangements were in place.

### 103 CALL IN OF ACTION AUTHORISED BY A PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Head of Finance and Revenue Services advised Members that the Committee had called in the Portfolio Holder decision to extend the current Enforcement Agent contract for a further two years. The call in had also requested that the Council sign up to the Citizens Advice Council Tax Protocol. However, this was outside of the scope of the decision, which covered the work of the Enforcement Agent on cases which had been to court. The Protocol was wide ranging and covered how the Council dealt with recovery action for non-payment generally. To sign up to the Protocol would require a significant amount of work, which could not be achieved in the timescale for agreeing the extension to the contract.

Members were advised that since new regulations were introduced in 2013, complaints about Enforcement Agents had reduced significantly and there had been no complaints to the Council in the current financial year. A Member did note, however, that some vulnerable residents might not feel enabled to complain formally and some less formal means of complaining might be more appropriate. She added that she was concerned about those who could not find a way to pay, not those who would not pay and that the introduction of Universal Credit had led increasingly to hardship.

Around 40 percent of debtors paid their debt following office based contact from the Enforcement Agent last year.

The Enforcement Agent contract stipulated that it must adhere to the Council's Code of Practice for dealing with vulnerable persons and the Enforcement Agent could contact officers directly if they visited a case of serious concern. The Enforcement Agent also had meetings with officers to explain their processes, particularly around vulnerable cases.

Council Debt Advisors liaised with the Enforcement Agent on individual cases and it was not unusual for arrangements on individual accounts to be set up to assist debtors.

In 2017/18, 893 cases were referred to the Enforcement Agents totalling £534,000. £245,000 has been paid so far with 169 cases in active payment arrangements.

A Member informed the meeting that she was a volunteer with Citizens Advice and was well aware of the hardship residents could suffer and suggested that the Protocol could be a means of mitigating this.

In response to a query it was confirmed that the Council determined each individual case before it was referred to the Enforcement Agent, to assess if the debtor was vulnerable.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance informed the Committee that she was confident in the procedures of the Council and its Enforcement Agent and had no hesitation in signing the extension to the contract. She also reminded Members of the responsibility that Broadland had to Council Tax payers to collect it from all residents that were liable to do so.

The Head of Finance and Revenue Services confirmed that she would forward a copy of the Council's Code of Practice to the Committee and that a report on adopting the Citizens Advice Protocol could be brought to the Committee later in the year.

### **RESOLVED**

to uphold the Finance Portfolio Holder's decision to extend the current contract for a further two years.

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

It was agreed that the following items would be considered at the 2 April 2019 meeting:

- Citizens Advice Council Tax Protocol
- Healthwatch Norfolk

The items below would go forward for the 2019/20 Work Programme item in April, where they would be worked up in more detail:

- Water: Supply, Management and Climate Change
- GP Provision in the district
- Traffic flow in adjoining areas following the opening of Broadland Northway
- Future Infrastructure Provision in Broadland
- Broadband and mobile phone coverage in the District

*The meeting closed at 11.27 am*