

## 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 Tuesday 29 June 2021 at 10.00 am when there were present:

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

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor: J Copplestone.

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director of Resources, Director of People and Communities, Chief of Staff, Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, Assistant Director Community Services, Assistant Director Planning, Assistant Director Regulatory, Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager, Transformation and Innovation Lead, Economic Growth Administrator, Senior Governance Officer (SW), and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

### 16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

### 17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record, save for the following amendment:  
Cllr K Leggett was added to the list of attendees.

### CABINET REPORTS

#### 18 CAPITAL BUDGET

The report recommended that the Capital Budget for Refuse Services be increased from £3m to £5.7m.

The Committee was advised that when the budget was agreed in February 2021 it was uncertain whether the Council would need to purchase refuse vehicles and / or update the Frettenham Depot. This was because, as part of the re-tender of its Strategic Environment contract, the Council wanted to see whether it would be more cost effective: to use an alternative depot, and / or for the contractor to purchase the refuse vehicles.

It had since become clear during the initial stages of the procurement process that local authority funding of the refuse vehicles was the most cost effective solution. Although the actual capital cost of the vehicles was not known it was evident that more than £3m would be required.

The proposed figure of £5.7m was at the top end of the likely cost range and the actual cost was likely to be lower, however, it was considered prudent to provide the full sum. The additional capital requirement could be funded from reserves.

Members were advised that a cost analysis had estimated a saving of between £0.5m and £0.75m over the life of the 10 year contract.

In answer to a query it was confirmed that this sum was not included in the Medium Term Financial Plan, but it would be updated when the outcome of the waste contract was known.

It was confirmed that electric powered waste collection vehicles were not viable at this moment due to cost (they were double the price of conventional diesel vehicles) and lack of battery range. Alternative fuels such as HVO, which eliminated up to 90 percent of CO2 and particulates, could be looked at however. There was also the possibility of converting diesel waste collection vehicles to electric in the future if they became viable and that the facility to borrow to do this remained available, if there were not sufficient capital reserves.

#### RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

(Option 1)

To recommend to Council that the 20/21 Capital Budget for Refuse Services is increased from £3m to £5.7m.

### **19 INSURANCE CONTRACT – REQUEST FOR DELEGATION TO AWARD**

The report requested delegated authority to award a new joint insurance contract.

Broadland and South Norfolk were currently in the process of tendering for a new joint insurance contract. The compressed timeline meant that current Cabinet dates did not correspond with the date that was required for sign off. It was, therefore, requested that Cabinet delegate the award of the contract to the Assistant Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

It was confirmed that the current cost of insurance cover for the Council was £100,000 per annum. South Norfolk's insurance cover was £400,000 per annum, due to the greater number of assets that it owned, such as its leisure centres.

It was confirmed that officer time on the tender had been split on a 45/55 basis between the Councils and the Portfolio Holder for Finance had been fully involved in the tender process.

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Option 1)

To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Finance, in consultation with the BDC Portfolio Holder for Finance and the SNC Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources to award a new insurance contract.

### **20 BROADLAND USE OF THE NORFOLK STRATEGIC FUND GRANT**

The report sought Cabinet's endorsement of a revised programme of work funded by the Norfolk Strategic Fund grant and requested that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development to determine the use of the balance of the grant monies in support of the economic recovery.

The Norfolk Strategic Fund was a one-off grant programme, funded primarily from Norfolk's pooled business rates, that was to be used to support economic recovery activities.

In October 2020 the Council was awarded £428,573 from the Norfolk Strategic Fund based on a proposed programme of works that had been informally agreed by Cabinet in late 2020, where it was provisionally agreed to allocate most of the funding to an entrepreneurship development programme known as Enterprise Facilitation®.

However, following a presentation and further internal discussions, it was decided by Members not to proceed with the Enterprise Facilitation® programme, as it was not seen to represent good value for money nor to add significantly to services currently being delivered locally by the Council and other organisations.

A new programme of work had subsequently been drafted that remained consistent with the aims of the Norfolk Strategic Fund grant and the Council's emerging programme of business support activities. These funds were due to be expended by December 2022.

Included in the programme was £135,000 to fund a range of minor public realm improvements in market towns to ensure high streets and the public realm remain attractive and accessible destinations and to increase footfall following the pandemic.

In addition to the listed projects £99,000 was to be retained to be allocated to related additional activities as required.

In answer to a question members were reassured that the Economic Development Team was developing an extensive scheme of business support and assistance that would ensure that all of the funding was used by the due date. The delegation of the balance of the grant monies would allow for the flexibility to respond and meet need as it arose.

The portfolio Holder for Economic Development added that it was hoped that these grants would see an increase in start-up businesses, which the Council would be in a good position to support and assist.

It was confirmed that all of the Norfolk Strategic Fund monies would be used to support business in the District and that no expenses for officer time would be taken from the fund.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1 and 2)

1. Cabinet endorses the proposed revised programme of activity to be funded from the Norfolk Strategic Fund grant.
2. Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development to determine the use of the balance of the grant monies (~ £99,000) in support of the economic recovery.

### 21 MOVING TOWARDS A FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

The report presented the Customer Strategy and Customer Charter for approval and adoption, as well as asking Cabinet to note details of a Customer Experience and Insight lead role and a new Complaints Handling Policy.

Research into the Councils current approach to customer satisfaction and approach of other organisations both in the private and public sectors, had been undertaken in late 2020.

Staff workshops had been held to identify areas of strength and weakness in the current customer service provision and best practices and agreed ambitions were identified and used to formulate the proposed Customer Strategy, as well as a Customer Charter.

The Strategy aimed to put customers at the heart of the Councils activities, could provide benefits in customer satisfaction, efficiencies through service improvements and reduce waste by identifying and resolving causes of dissatisfaction and complaint.

The Strategy placed an emphasis on being able to understand and react to changing customer behaviours and expectations in order to shape and transform services to meet needs. To do this effectively the Council would seek to put the right resources and mechanisms in place to gather, collate and analyse customer feedback and insight and ensure that decisions were informed by data.

It was confirmed that following the collation of baseline data measures would be reported to members on a regular basis via the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee and Cabinet Performance Reports.

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the Committee receive an update on these measures nine months after the Customer Engagement and Insight Lead was in post. The item would be placed on the Committee's Work Programme.

In response to a concern about the lack of direct departmental phone numbers on the Council's website the Committee was advised that it was considered to be more efficient to be directed to the department required by the caller through reception to an individual rather to a number that might go through to voicemail. However, this was just the sort of question that officers would like to explore through customer feedback to find out what they really want from the Council. It was also noted that many transactional activities with the Council could now be done outside of office hours via the website.

A member suggested that 'customers' was an inappropriate term for residents, who could be seen as more like partners of the Council. In response, the Committee was reminded that the Council dealt with many businesses, agents and land developers, as well as residents and that and

that many of the services it offered were discretionary and used by people not resident in the District.

In answer to a query about the new Customer Engagement and Insight Lead role, it was confirmed that this was a 2-year fixed term appointment, funded through Covid-19 money from the Government and could be extended or made permanent, if it was seen to be delivering value for money.

It was confirmed that parish and town councils would be informed of changes to the Customer Services Team via the annual forum with parishes held by the Council.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1, 2, 3 and 1, 2)

That Cabinet consider and approve:

1. The adoption of the proposed Customer Strategy;
2. The adoption of the proposed Customer Charter; and
3. To note the appointment of a new Customer Experience & Insight Lead role.

That Cabinet approve and recommend to Council:

1. The adoption of the proposed Complaints Handling Policy.
2. The adoption of the proposed Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy.

## **22 SKILLS AND TRAINING PROJECT**

The report provided an overview of the changes in policy and the economic environment that had impacted upon skills and training and defined the target cohorts for the Council's skills and training offer. It also set out a summary of the Council's current skills and training provision and outlined a project plan to enable a positive impact for the identified cohorts.

Research by the Centre for Progressive Policy predicted that Broadland and South Norfolk would be amongst the third of local authorities whose economies would fully recover in five years. Additionally, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published research suggesting that recovery in both Districts would feature in the best 20 percent of the country.

Crucially, this might mean that future targeted support would not go towards Broadland and South Norfolk (especially in light of the 'levelling up' agenda).

This presented a strong case for reviewing the current skills and training offer to ensure the Councils were providing a good level of support for those who need it most.

It was recognised that other organisations already made significant contribution to skills and training and, therefore, to avoid duplication of effort, it was intended to focus on specific cohorts of residents who had been adversely affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic and to target gaps to help those who would not otherwise benefit from skills and training.

The cohorts identified for these interventions were:

- School leavers
- Higher education leavers
- Recently unemployed including underemployed
- Start-ups (individuals and entrepreneurs looking to start their own business)

Consultations had been held with both internal and external stakeholders to understand the impact of their services and identify areas where additional support could be provided by the Council. These areas were:

- Direct delivery by both Councils
- Signposting / facilitating other skills and training provision
- Advocacy / influencing

Direct delivery included an Apprenticeship Scheme to ensure both Councils utilised their Apprenticeship Levy funding and met the Local Government Association's requirement of 2.3 percent of new entrants (this was anticipated to be in the region of 24 members of staff). The Committee was informed that this scheme would be funded through existing underspend and would not incur any additional cost.

The apprenticeships would be mostly vocational, in areas such as planning, environmental health and occupational therapy, but would also include some graduate apprenticeships. A Skills Training Board would be established to assess what skills were needed at the Council in order to target apprentices. It was intended that apprentices would come from a mix of age groups and that as this cohort increased details would be reported to Members.

A member suggested that it would be more appropriate for the scheme to support school leavers and the unemployed, rather than upskilling people who were already employed.

The Councils were also working with the Local Enterprise Partnership, schools and businesses to proactively promote better quality career advice for young people.

In answer to a query, the Committee was informed that a review of Carrowbreck was to be undertaken regarding its use as a training facility. However, it was emphasised that the Council was seeking to identify gaps in training, rather than duplicate training in areas such as construction that was already being provided by City College.

It was acknowledged that affordable transport to attend training, was a challenge, especially for those in rural areas, and that the Council was working with Norfolk County Council to address this issue.

The Chairman commended the report which contained much to be welcomed.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1 and 2)

1. To note the impacts on skills, training and the wider economy in South Norfolk and Broadland and to note the intended approach to tailor our support to specific cohorts of residents and start-up businesses.
2. To agree to the establishment of a centralised apprenticeship budget comprised of existing apprenticeship posts across all directorates, topped up through increasing the vacancy factor from 2% to 3.5% to generate an additional £245,000 from recurring underspend across both councils.

*The Committee adjourned at 11.48am and reconvened at 12.05pm, when all the Committee members listed above except for Cllr Nurden were present.*

## **23 EMERGENCY PLANNING STRUCTURES**

The Assistant Director Regulatory presented the report, which proposed establishing a 24/7/365 Emergency Incident Officer Scheme to provide a guaranteed response to defined serious emergency incidents.

The Committee was advised that the Council had a unique role in Emergency Planning, as a Category 1 responder, with formal responsibilities under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 and operational Emergency Plans were maintained to fulfil this duty

These plans were updated over time to reflect changes in organisational arrangements and learning from emergency incidents and it had been identified that it would be beneficial to augment the Council's emergency planning mechanisms with a 24/7/365 Emergency Incident Officer Scheme to guarantee a response to the scene of a serious incident. The depth of knowledge about local communities and their vulnerabilities and the resourceful problem-solving skills of officers would demonstrate emphatically and visibly the Council's commitment and support during emergency incidents.



The proposed role of the Emergency Incident Officer would cover the following three main areas:

- a. To provide the initial call receipt and point of contact for other agencies regarding emergencies in the District. The Emergency Incident Officer would make an assessment on whether he/she needs to attend the scene and whether other Council resources were required.
- b. To attend emergency scenes under defined response commitments and/or when requested by other agencies or the officer's own determination. Once on-scene, to assess the incident and whether additional Council resources are required.
- c. To provide a visible and constructive physical presence working with local people and partner agencies to best respond to this incident without taking unacceptable risks. NB: We do not aim to replicate or disrupt any other agency's remit and responsibilities.

The Council would look for approximately eight officers to volunteer to be trained and rostered to provide the basic cover on a one week in eight basis. The cost would comprise of a weekly gross standby payment and an allowance for a payment for call-out to major incidents. A budget of £15,000 was proposed to cover these costs.

A senior officer would also always be 'on call' on a rota system to provide senior decision making in support of the Emergency Incident Officer. This would not require any additional payment.

In answer to a query, members were advised that a number of parishes had Community Emergency Plans in place and that the Council encouraged and assisted parishes in formulating these plans. These were routinely promoted to parishes and a briefing session on Community Emergency Plans for members would be held later in the year.

It was confirmed that Emergency Planning Officers across Greater Norwich had a very close relationship and that emergency planning for cross-border facilities such as Norwich Airport were considered on a regular basis.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Option 1)

Cabinet to agree to establish a 24/7/365 Emergency Incident Officer scheme offering a guaranteed response to defined serious emergency incidents, at an additional annual revenue cost of £13k revenue and £2k equipment, tools and clothing annually borne 45% BDC / 55% SNC.

### 24 **GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN (GNLP) – SUBMISSION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION**

The Assistant Director of Planning advised members that the report had been considered and endorsed by the Place Shaping Policy Development Panel at its meeting yesterday.

The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that the report set out the main issues raised through the Regulation 19 consultation stage of plan-making for the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). It concluded that the representations received regarding the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan had identified no significant issues, in principle, that could not be addressed or were such a risk to the GNLP that it should not be submitted to the Secretary of State for Public Examination in the near future.

However, some representations had raised issues which had to be addressed before submission, in particular, with Natural England on protecting key habitats from increased visitor pressure due to growth. This would be addressed through a Statement of Common Ground in relation to the mitigation necessary to protect sites under the Habitat Regulations.

Ongoing work was also required to proactively identify and bring forward sufficient Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet identified need.

The recommendation provided the caveat that submission of the Plan was subject to progress being made on key issues relating to protected habitats and Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Legal advice had confirmed that the above issues did not make the Plan unsound.

The other recommendations in the report were procedural and would allow the planning inspector to make any main modifications necessary to make the plan sound and legally compliant. The modifications would be reported back to each authority to ensure that they were satisfactory.

In response to a concern raised about the lack of reference to the numerous objections to the proposed development in Aylsham in the report, the Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager advised the Committee that the report was focused on the process issues for the submission of the Plan. The appended Greater Norwich Development Partnership report set out the main issues raised in relation to the additional site allocated at Norwich Road, Aylsham. He added that it was very common for sites to be added between the Regulation 18 and the Regulation 19 stages and that the Norwich Road site had already been consulted upon and identified as a reasonable alternative.

The Chairman drew members' attention to risks in the report and that the GNLP had been prepared under an accelerated timetable, which meant that

the sites added at the Regulation 19 stage had not been consulted upon in the same way as they had been at the Regulation 18 stage, in particular the Norwich Road site had not been considered in conjunction with the development of Burgh Road. He questioned the soundness of the Plan in the light of this issue and suggested that it would be safer to strike out the Norwich Road site at this stage.

In response, the Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager reiterated that the legal view was that the report remained sound and that the Norwich Road site had already been identified as a reasonable alternative. However, he added that the final decision would be made by the Planning Inspector, who could decide to strike out, approve or consult on the site.

It was confirmed that all representations were considered by the Planning Inspector, who then decided what to discuss at the Examination. It was very likely that Aylsham would be one of those considered. Respondents could also attend and make representations in person at the Examination.

In respect of accessible housing in Policy 5 Homes of the GNLP, it was confirmed that developers had objected to their provision, as they involved additional expense, but a hard line was being taken on this issue as there was a clear need for these type of dwellings.

Members were advised that Planners worked closely with Housing Enabling Officers when considering planning applications to ensure that the right types of dwellings were delivered for the housing need in the area.

The Chairman advised the Committee that he would not be supporting the recommendations, as he did not consider the Plan to be sound, due to the lack of consultation on sites added at the Regulation 19 stage.

Following a vote with five in favour, two against and three abstentions it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1,2,3,4 a & b)

Cabinet to recommend that Council:

1. Agree that the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is sound and to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination subject to reaching an agreement in principle with Natural England, in the form of a signed statement of common ground, in relation to the mitigation necessary to protect sites protected under the Habitat Regulations.
2. Commit to proactively identify and bring forward sufficient Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet identified needs in accordance with the criteria based policies of the current and emerging Development Plans.

3. Agree to request that the appointed independent inspector make any Main Modifications necessary to make the plan sound and legally compliant;  
  
and,
4. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, and in conjunction with Norwich City and South Norfolk Councils, to:
  - a. agree minor modifications to the GNLP prior to its submission.  
  
and,
  - b. negotiate any main modifications necessary to make the GNLP Sound as part of the Independent Examination.

### **25 PENSIONS DISCRETIONS POLICY**

The Chief of Staff introduced the report, which confirmed that the Council was required by law to create a Pensions Policy in relation to the discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme. The policy was linked to the One Team terms and conditions and was appropriate for the same pensions' discretions to be awarded.

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Option 1)

Cabinet to approve:

The Councils Pension Discretion Policy.

### **26 EXCLUSION OF THE 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.

### **27 ICT AND DIGITAL STRATEGY REVIEW**

The exempt report summarised the objectives of the ICT & Digital Strategy, which would enable the Council to drive forward the alignment, development, and expansion of ICT & Digital Services in a coordinated and efficient manner.

In response to a query from the Chairman, it was confirmed that individual elements of the technical landscape in the Strategy would be brought to members for determination on a case by case basis.

Following discussion it was:

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1 and 2)

To approve

1. The ICT & Digital Strategy in terms of its direction and action plan; and
2. The proposals to deliver digital services for our customers.

### **28 SHARED PROCUREMENT SERVICE BUSINESS CASE**

The exempt report set out a business case for a shared procurement service.

The Vice Chairman noted the clear economic benefits of taking a shared approach to procurement.

Following discussion it was:

#### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1 and 2)

1. Cabinet to agree to the establishment of a shared procurement service, with Breckland Council being the host authority (subject to South Norfolk Council and Breckland Council also agreeing this.)
2. Cabinet to agree to delegate the detail of the agreement to the Director Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources.

### **29 FINANCE SYSTEM BUSINESS CASE**

The exempt report proposed a business case for a Joint Finance System, which it was suggested would bring significant operational benefits.

Following discussion it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Option 1)

To award a contract, as set out in the report.

## **30 FOOD WASTE AND GARDEN WASTE DISPOSAL CONTRACT**

The exempt report asked for approval to award a new contract for the disposal of food waste and to extend the current garden waste disposal contract.

Following discussion it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

(Options 1, 2 and 3)

Cabinet to agree to

1. Proceed with the award for the processing of food waste, as set out in the report;
2. Proceed with the award for the processing of garden waste, as set out in the report;
3. Proceed with a joint procurement of a garden waste disposal contract, as set out in the report and to delegate any decisions regarding the length/type of contract to the Director of People and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence.

(The meeting concluded at 1.40pm)

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Chairman