

## 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 12 October 2021 at 10.00 am when there were present:

**Committee Members Present:** Councillor: S Riley (Chairman), M L Murrell, (Vice-Chairman), N J Brennan, P E Bulman, S J Catchpole, N J Harpley, D G Harrison, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K G Leggett MBE, G K Nurden and S M Prutton.

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor: E Laming.

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director of Resources, Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer), Assistant Director Community Services, Housing and Health Manager, Health and Wellbeing Programme Manager, Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

### 47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Holland and Cllr King.

### 48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of minute 49 - Independent Living Assistance Policy, Cllr Catchpole declared that she had a non-pecuniary interest as a volunteer with Citizens Advice. Cllr Riley declared a non-pecuniary interest as a County Councillor for the same item.

### 49 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### 50 INDEPENDENT LIVING ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Housing and Health Manager introduced the report, which set out how the Council proposed to enhance the existing service that it provided to enable vulnerable residents of all ages live independently in their homes.

The report presented an 'Independent Living Assistance Policy', which would replace the existing Locality Plan for Broadland that had been developed by the seven local authorities in Norfolk together with the County Council and Norfolk and Waveney Joint Commissioning Group to distribute the Better Care Fund.

The proposed discretionary grant and assistance schemes in the Policy had been informally discussed with colleagues at Norfolk County Council who had complimented the range and clarity of proposed assistance and encouraged its implementation and use as an example of good practice.

The Council's Care and Repair service was a chargeable service with a fee of 15 percent, with a £1,500 cap on the total cost of the adaptation. It was recommended the cap be removed, as it was an outdated approach and would provide an additional £15,000 - £18,000 per annum to reinvest in the service. The fee would typically be included within and paid for via grant funding.

It was also proposed to retain the existing land charge procedures for a land charge of up to £10,000 for grant values between £5,000 and £15,000, which would be redeemed if the property was sold or otherwise disposed of within ten years of completion of adaptation to further assist vulnerable residents.

In answer to a query the Housing and Health Manager informed the meeting that the policy included a Relocation Grant of up to £5,000 where adaptations could not be made to the current property or moving to a more suitable home. Another scheme in the Policy was the Void Adapted Property Procedure where the Council would pay the rent on an adapted property for up to a maximum of six weeks to enable the Housing Solutions Team to match the property to a suitable person on the housing waiting list. It was emphasised that the Council worked closely with housing associations to ensure that vulnerable residents were allocated the most appropriate housing.

In answer to a question the Committee were advised that the £30,000 DFG cap was set by legislation. There was, however, a DFG top up grant of £10,000 as well as an Architect Grant available, if necessary.

The Chairman expressed concern about the removal of the £1,500 cap from the fee for the Care and Repair service, which could mean a reduction in the money available through the Disabled Facilities Grant for adaptations.

In response, the Housing and Health Manager accepted that this was potentially the case, but it was emphasised that this had never happened and the Care and Repair Team had been consistently successful in achieving additional sources of funding for any shortfall. Moreover, the Care and Repair Fee could be adjusted if the need arose.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that referrals were made through a variety of routes, such as Occupational Therapists, GPs and Social Services and could be made by telephone, online or by email.

In respect of funding, members were informed that if the annual DFG allocation was not fully spent other ways to assist residents via the proposed new grant and assistance schemes would be used to ensure the most effective use of the full budget.

The Chairman reiterated his concerns that with the Care and Repair cap removed the total amount set aside for DFG adaptations might not be covered.

In answer to this issue the Housing and Health Manager reaffirmed that in her experience there had never been a case where alternative sources of funding had failed to make up any shortfall. If these sources were not available officers would consult the Assistant Director and Portfolio Holder to consider adjusting the Care and Repair fees to meet the costs.

The Chairman confirmed that he was still unhappy with the cap being removed, which he considered reduced the effectiveness of the Policy.

Some members also expressed disquiet with charities being asked to make up the shortfall when they might be under financial pressure themselves.

The Director for People and Communities advised the meeting that the limit for DFG's was actually £45,000 as the £10,000 Top Up grant was also available, as well as a £5,000 Contribution Grant as well as numerous other discretionary grants in the Policy. The Policy, therefore, offered a wider range of solutions for residents than had previously been available.

The Chairman, however, noted that there still remained the possibility that if the Care and Repair cap was removed there could still be a shortfall in funding available for the adaptation and he, therefore, proposed the following amendment to the policy:

*'That Cabinet amend the Policy to ensure that the removal of the £1,500 cap on the Care and Repair Service did not result in less funding being made available for adaptations, than before the cap was removed.'*

With a vote of five in favour and five against the Chairman exercised his casting vote and the amendment was carried.

Following a further vote it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

Options (1, 2 as amended and 3)

to approve:

1. The proposed 'Independent Living Assistance Policy';
2. A revised Care and Repair fees procedure *as amended*; and
3. A revised Land Charges procedure.

### **51 WARM HOMES FUND – ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

The Health and Wellbeing Programme Manager introduced the report, which explained how successful the Council had been in leading the delivery of the Warm Homes Programme on behalf of all seven local authorities and to expand and renew contracts for their delivery.

Since September 2020 the consortium had been awarded £1.24m and £1.78m in Government funding and had supported over 2,000 low-income Norfolk residents improve the insulation and heating in their homes, as well as providing energy saving and benefits advice. The Council had also applied for £3.75m to further expand the delivery of energy efficiency and renewable heating technologies.

Approval from Cabinet was therefore sought to expand and renew current contracts through Efficiency East Midlands and Eastern Procurement Frameworks as well as accessing additional contracts within the Fusion 21 Procurement Framework. All three organisations provided Office Journal of the European Union compliant national procurement frameworks facilitating the public sector to deliver energy efficiency and renewable heating measures.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

Options (1 and 2)

1. To agree to the development of contracts to complete the £1.78m allocated through LAD1b for energy efficiency and heating measures to support residents in Norfolk to live in warm homes;
2. To agree to the delegation of procuring future successful funding bids to procurement frameworks, to the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families in consultation with the Portfolio Holder until July 2023.

### 52 MOBILE HOMES FEES AND CHARGES POLICY

The Housing and Health Manager introduced the report, which had been drafted in response to new legislation, which introduce an offence for a protected mobile home site to operate unless the Council was satisfied that the occupier or the appointed site manager was a fit and proper person to manage the site.

The Housing Standards Team currently administered a Mobile Homes Procedure including the application processes of site licences and site inspections. A fee was charged for this service to recover costs.

The new Regulations only affected relevant protected sites where residents had rights regarding occupancy and rents as detailed in the 1983 Mobile Homes Act. Private family residential sites and holiday sites were not included in the requirement.

Registering as a fit and proper person required a comprehensive application procedure involving a Criminal Records Bureau check, land ownership details, financial capability and a test to determine whether the relevant person could secure the proper management of the site, including compliance with the site licence and the long-term maintenance of the site.

If a site operator or their appointed site manager failed to meet the Fit and Proper Person test, there would be a limited grace period in which to submit another application for an alternative site manager to be assessed for inclusion on the register. A successful applicant would be included on a public online register for five years.

The Council currently had four sites that were used for business purposes, where homes were freely brought and sold by the residents.

It was proposed to implement a new fee structure as part of the application and registration process, as detailed in the legislation, although it was not considered necessary to introduce an annual fee as this was already incorporated in the existing policy.

It was also proposed to delegate the decision process for determination of a Fit and Proper Person application to the Housing Standards Senior Manager.

In response to a query it was confirmed that there would be the opportunity for residents and the parish council to put forward their views on the Fit and Proper Person application and that a licence could be revoked if deemed necessary. It was also confirmed that each licence was for a specific site.

Following a vote, with ten in favour and one abstention it was:

### RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (a, b and c)

Cabinet to agree:

- a. The inclusion of the enforcement of new regulations as part of the Housing Standards responsibility;
- b. Approval of the fee's structure detailed in the revised Mobile Homes Fees Policy; and
- c. Delegate authority to the Senior Housing Standards Manager to approve Fit and Proper Person applications.

*The Committee adjourned at 11.15am and reconvened at 11.28am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.*

### SOCIAL PRESCRIBING: CONTRACTING WITH THE NHS

The Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager introduced the report, which provided an update on the development of social prescribing in Broadland and recommended expanding the service by entering into a contract with North Norfolk Primary Care.

The Committee was reminded that Social Prescribing was a means of providing support in a medical setting and referring residents to a range of local non-clinical services.

The officers undertaking social prescribing (community connectors) were effectively an outreach arm of the Help Hub sited in GPs surgeries. Currently there were two Community Connectors operating in the District, but if the new contractual arrangement with the NHS was agreed this would increase to four in areas covered by Primary Care Networks NN3 and NN4. The service would be externally funded through the NHS, by £344,000 over the next two years. Moreover, the NHS had discussed expanding the service in the future to meet increased demand in growth areas.

The Committee was informed that the proposed expansion of the service would place the Council in a very good position to move to the next phase, which would look at expanding the service across the urban fringe.

In answer to a query, members were advised that service data and customer feedback would be the main means of measuring the success of the service.

In response to a request from the Chairman the Help Hub and Communities

Senior Manager confirmed that she would forward the contact details for Community Connectors to Members following the meeting.

Members were also advised that the Help Hub and Communities Team worked closely with the voluntary sector to ensure that they maximised opportunities for funding.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

Options (1 and 2)

1. Cabinet to agree to contract with North Norfolk Primary Care to deliver social prescribing, effective from December 2021. Once the contract is signed, Cabinet agree to recruit community connectors to bring the complement to four full time equivalents;
2. Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Assistant Director Individuals and Families to enter into this contractual arrangement.

### **53 FORWARD PLAN**

Members noted the current Forward Plan of decisions to be made over the coming months.

### **54 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.

### **55 REVIEW OF THE MATERIAL RECYCLING FACILITY CONTRACT**

The exempt report summarised the negotiations that had recently been carried out in respect of the Material Recycling Facility contract to 2027.

A member brought to the Committee's attention the Time and Task Panel that had investigated Norse Environmental Waste Services (NEWS) and the recommendations that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had approved,

which included receiving updates in relation to the financial position of the company.

It was confirmed that this item would be placed on the Committee's Work Programme for a date to be confirmed.

Following further discussion and a vote of ten in favour and one abstention it was:

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

Option (1)

To approve the recommendations as outlined at paragraph 9 of the report.

## **56 EXEMPT MINUTES**

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

(The meeting concluded at 12.05pm)

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Chairman