Minutes of a meeting of the **Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee** held via video link on **Monday 5 October 2020** at **6pm**

A roll call was taken and the following were present:

Cllr J J Emsell – Chairman

Cllr P E Bulman	Cllr D King	Cllr G K Nurden
Cllr S J Catchpole	Cllr I J Mackie	Cllr S M Prutton
Cllr S I Holland	Cllr M L Murrell	Cllr J L Thomas

Also in attendance were the Director of Resources, the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer), the Chief of Staff, the Strategy and Programme Manager, the Corporate Programmes Lead and the Democratic Services Officers (JO & LA).

6 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr D Roper.

7 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the correction of the date in minute no. 3 to 2018.

8 MATTERS ARISING

A Member asked for clarification on the Committee system which was proposed to be discussed in the informal meeting and whether a new system was being proposed or a change in the way Committees were being run (minute no. 4 refers). The Assistant Director for Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) explained that the informal session discussed IT projects, including Members IT and the possible convening of a Members IT Working Group to assist in the process. She confirmed that and the minute was referring to a Committee Administration Management Software package which would assist in the production of Agendas, the booking of meetings, managing FOI's etc.

9   PROJECT UPDATE- INCLUDING IT AND WEBSITE

The Chief of Staff presented the report which provided Members of the Committee with an update on the major transformation SPARK projects. Officers advised Members that the impact of COVID-19 had changed the priority of some projects and took Members through each section stopping for questions along the way.

Members were informed of the progress regarding the joint email system, with the aspiration of rolling out Office 365 for all staff and members by January 2021. A Member raised concern over the joint domain name of *@SouthNorfolkandBroadland* being used, but it was noted by the Chairman that this issue had already been debated and approved by Council.

Officers clarified further points which included the plans for the rollout of Office 365 and how any delay would be managed. Members noted that the implementation of Office 365 was needed to move Members onto a more agile platform for accessing emails and utilising the wider office suite of applications.   A Member working group was to be arranged to gauge what IT equipment Members needed going forward.

During discussion the Chairman spoke of how Members had been keen for Office 365 to be implemented, but reminded Officers that potentially some Members would need help in understanding how to use it. The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) assured Members that there would be training for all users on the software.

The discussion turned to the One Network, where Officers explained that in January a budget across the two Councils, was agreed at 1.6 million for IT infrastructure investment. Members noted that there had been appointments to two interim roles within the Councils IT and Digital Team to work on the project and the scoping of the documentation for the procurement process had started.

Members raised concerns over the phone system and call waiting times. Officers explained that Broadland users had migrated over to the Mitel Phone System, which would enable staff to take phone calls wherever they are working from. One Member raised the concern that some phone calls were not being picked up and for a public facing authority, this was not acceptable. Offices explained that there was still a lot of learning to be done with the phone system and the Council priority was to make sure staff were using the software properly. Members noted that feedback from the Committee would be fed into the Assistant Directors and Managers to help address the problems in their areas. A Member queried the time taken to implement the new phone system from the initial lockdown announcement, with Officers assuring Members that from the early stages of lockdown temporary solutions had been put in place for key services, with the full project then being delivered at speed.. The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) advised Members that an update on the phone

system, would be brought before Committee at the next meeting, and that work would continue with services to ensure these issues were resolved.

The conversation turned to the Website Project where the Chief of Staff explained that following the agreement of the joint domain name in 2019 and the budget in 2020, the next steps involved workshops with Members looking at designs. A Member raised concern that he was unaware of the workshops taking place, officers referred to an email had been sent out to all Members of the committee but would circulate a further one to make sure everyone was aware. Officers also clarified further information regarding dates in the document for the project delivery and that the final delivery of the website could be impacted by the organisation's Covid-19 response.

A Member asked for clarification on the section within the report on Organisational Development, the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) explained that the focus was on the ways to invest in staff to be the best they could be. The Chairman thanked Officers for their report which Members noted.

10   NEW WAYS OF WORKING UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) presented her report, which included an update on the ways of working, the opportunities that have been realised in response to Covid-19 and the next steps that were needed. The Assistant Director drew Members' attention to the start of the country's lockdown in section two of the report, where it detailed the work which had been undertaken to make sure staff could work from home and have the equipment they required, with the addition of an improved remote access platform, video conferencing rollout and live streaming of public committee meetings.

Members were informed of the current position relating to the new ways of working including; the promotion of the wellbeing of staff, confirmation of Covid-19 secure workplaces, reorientation meetings for all staff and the clearing of unneeded documentation. A further update on the review of Member's IT, with a small Working Group potentially being set up to investigate options, was also noted.

A Member asked about the process if Councillors needed to arrange meetings with Officers, the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) advised Members that Officers could set virtual meetings up if required, all staff were available via email, and also through phone. It was advised that it would be good practice to liaise through email/phone first due to the various working locations for staff.

In response to a query regarding the current number of staff working in the offices, Members noted that on averages there are about 70 at Thorpe Lodge and about 40 at South Norfolk House a day. This was under continual review.

In response to a request the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that she would look into the practicality of providing a monthly update on staffing numbers across both offices.

As part of the return to the office project, all staff were contacted by either the Assistant Director or there Manager to ensure their personal preference for working from home, working in the office, or a mixture of both. This was then compared to the business need for those service areas, with a 90% match being achieved.

Some Members expressed concern over the continued use of virtual meetings, specifying the length and processes of the meetings. A Member raised a query on using voting options in the virtual meeting setting to enable some of the roll calls and votes to be achieved quicker. The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) explained that this was not an option currently as the platform had not developed a solution that met the openness and transparency requirement of the Legislation, but that she was confident that this would evolve. Further discussion followed where the Chairman explained that he would like to see all Members in face to face meetings, but the safety of Members and Officers needed to take priority in the current climate and the continuing of the virtual meetings was the safest option.

11   STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE REPORTING

Members considered the report which provided an update on the approach for the Strategic Performance, Risk and Finance reporting.

The Committee was advised that the quarterly reports, would be comprised of four sections, section one would consist of an overarching dashboard dealing with the health of the Council and highlight risks alongside achievements. Section two of the report would provide updates on the progress of each delivery measure which leads into section three: Risk, where an outline, would be given on the current Strategic Risks and their status. The final section of the report: Finance would provide updates on the financial funding gap, the overall budget and similar topics.

A Member raised concern over the writing style within reports and highlighted the need for the reports to be easy to understand. It was also requested that corporate jargon be avoided on documents posted on the Council website to avoid potentially confusing residents.

The Chairman expressed an interest in seeing how Broadland Council's actions were comparing against other similar Councils to gauge progress and gain assurances that the Council was operating in the right way. Members noted the report and the Chairman thanked officers for their report.

12   WORK PROGRAMME

Members suggested the inclusion of the Environmental Strategy on the Work Programme to focus on any improvements which might be needed. Officers explained that the Strategy would be picked up in the Environment Excellence Panel's own Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.