

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Review of Cabinet Agenda** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Tuesday 24 September 2019** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr S Riley – Chairman

Mr S C Beadle
Mr N J Brennan
Ms S J Catchpole
Mr A Crotch

Mr R Grattan
Ms N J Harpley
Ms S I Holland
Mr K S Kelly

Mr D King
Mr M L Murrell
Mr G K Nurden
Mrs S M Prutton

Also in attendance were the Managing Director, Director of Resources, Chief of Staff, Assistant Director Governance & Business Support (Monitoring Officer) and the Committee Officer (JO).

54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Adams, Mr Bulman and Mr Shaw.

55 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 August 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

56 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised Members that following the meeting on 8 October 2019 the Committee would hold an informal session to identify their budget questions for the joint meeting with Cabinet in December.

Members were also informed that a training session for Members was being held on 3 October 2019 for the budget drafting process, which might also help identify financial issues that they might like to raise with Cabinet. This would be discussed further with the Chairman following today's meeting.

57 COLLABORATION

The Managing Director provided the Committee with an update on progress with the delivery of the collaboration project and in particular the establishment of the single officer team.

The timetable for delivery of the single paid service was slightly behind the schedule set out in the Feasibility Study, which had envisaged that the senior

management team would be in place by the end of June. It would now be the end of November before the final Assistant Directors were in place, as they had been required to give three months' notice to their current employers.

Similarly, the Joint Staff Structure and Terms and Conditions consultation, which would conclude on 14 October 2019, was slightly behind schedule. However, it was still on target to have the whole restructure process in place before Christmas, with initial modelling showing that 92 percent of staff would be the same or better off as a result of the restructure in terms of salary, although this was indicative and could change following the consultation. The consultation period was being used to ensure that job descriptions best matched the new posts, and the new ways of working, and most staff were engaging with this process. Members were asked to note that staff at Broadland had a three year salary protection scheme.

The Managing Director acknowledged that such significant change could be unsettling for staff, but one to one meetings, team briefings and drop in sessions to go through concerns were being held to help reassure officers. Moreover, formal consultation with UNISON and non-union staff representatives over the structure and terms and conditions had been constructive to date.

One example of the innovative and flexible approach being taken to the restructure was demonstrated through a phase one team review, by employing a senior role, (the Strategic Communications and Marketing Manager) as a job share.

Officers were also being encouraged to apply for posts in the Internal Consultancy Team, which will lead programmes and projects to drive change across the two Councils. This Team offered excellent career development opportunities, as it would help both Councils grow, evolve and meet challenges and might even provide income through selling its expertise to other local authorities longer term.

More challenging and resource intensive work would commence in the New Year, with such projects as joint procurement, shared IT and waste collection. It would also be proposed to move to a two year delivery planning cycle. Performance reports would also separate transactional performance from strategic ambition to get a better view of how the Council was delivering services.

A single domain name for Broadland and South Norfolk had also been consulted upon and would be put to Members for a final decision shortly.

A review would also take place of policies and procedures, so they could be aligned to drive efficiencies, whilst respecting the autonomy of each local authority. Consideration would also be given to areas such as the environment to mitigate the impacts of a single service working from two

sites, and this was a reason that a flexible approach to home working was being considered. Relevant reports on proposals for key / policy changes as a result of the transformation work would be brought to member groups through the usual process committee process. Member Workshops to look at work streams could be a further way of engaging Members in this process.

In response to a query, the Managing Director confirmed that the collaboration project was proceeding in accordance with the decision agreed by both Councils last year to deliver on their ambitions. He emphasised that a key driver of this had been uncertainty over local government finances, as well as a duty to make efficiencies to protect the public purse whilst maintaining services.

He added that the collaboration project had a presumption against redundancy and there were enough posts for people within the new structures, with savings being made from deleting vacant funded posts that were no longer required through good housekeeping and working more effectively. The Council also had robust equalities policies in place to ensure that no vulnerable staff were disadvantaged.

Data from other authorities suggested that one in four of posts that became vacant through natural turnover each year could become a saving, as through collaborative working the Councils would not have to fill as many vacancies that arose. However, the longer-term aim was to grow the service to meet the challenges that would need to be faced in the future, rather than to shrink it.

It was confirmed that three senior managers at Broadland had received redundancy payments this year.

A Member suggested that data from exit interviews could be scrutinised to assess if a member of staff's departure was a 'regrettable loss' for either the individual or the organisation. She also said that the Managing Director should be allowed to manage the budget and that it was for Members to have an overview of the budget and how staff delivered outcomes, rather than getting involved in operational staff matters. She also asked how a balance was being struck between allocating posts for all staff and the need to get the right people in the right posts.

In response, the Managing Director confirmed that exit interviews took place and this data would be assessed to understand trends. He also advised the meeting that a financial tracker was being developed that would monitor the implications and options of what the Council was delivering via the single paid service, as well as the savings being made. In respect of appointing staff to the new structure he emphasised that as the organisations was on an ongoing transformation journey roles were likely to evolve and develop as needs arose.

In response to a query, the Managing Director confirmed that there was no plans to dispose of Thorpe Lodge or South Norfolk House, but it was intended to look into the value of the sites at some time in the future, so that an informed decision about them could be made.

The Chairman thanked the Managing Director for providing an update to the Committee.

Members requested that the Managing Director considered the support that the Committee needed, as had been provided in the past through a scrutiny research officer, as part of the team reviews.

58 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION RECORD UPDATE

The Committee was asked to note the content of the recommendation record and highlight any outstanding recommendations they wish to have followed up or reported back to a future Committee meeting.

The Committee was also asked to adopt a more frequent and regular approach to review of recommendations made through the inclusion of a tracker as a standing Agenda item for each meeting. This would ensure that the Committee was kept up to date with progress being made by officers with their recommendations and would remove the need for a regular six monthly report to be provided.

A Member requested that the Committee's recommendation that the NEWS Board of Directors review the accuracy of the Joint Venture Company's papers, specifically payments to Directors' fees, which were contrary to the Articles of Association and to identify who authorised those payments, be raised with the Board.

The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that she would follow up on this recommendation and report back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) note the contents of the Recommendation Record, and
- (2) place a standing item on future Committee Agendas, to provide a regular update on progress with recommendations through a tracker record.

The meeting closed at 11.37 am.