

Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Monday 22 January 2018** at **10.00am** when there were present:

Mr G Peck – Chairman

Mr G Everett
Mr C Harrison

Mrs M L Hempsall
Mrs J Leggett

Mr G K Nurden
Mrs K A Vincent

Also in attendance were the Head of Corporate Resources, Service Improvement Officer and the Committee Officer (JO).

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Copplestone, Mr Landamore and Mr Whymark.

27 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28 COLLABORATIVE WORKING

The Chairman advised the meeting that on 11 January 2018 Members from Broadland and South Norfolk Councils had visited Waveney District Council, who had shared services with Suffolk Coastal District Council for the past 10 years. The meeting had been very productive and Members had been struck by how positive both Members and staff there were about collaborative working.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed that the Feasibility Study Project Plan was progressing well and a series of workshops and briefings had been arranged to develop it further.

Two all-staff 'launch' briefings had been held by both Chief Executives on 10 January 2018. These had been videoed and were available on each council's respective intranet. The text of the questions asked by officers would also be made available shortly.

On 11 January 2018, a meeting to define their role and plan for the briefing with service leads had been held by the Joint Strategic Group. These briefings had been subsequently held on 18 January 2018 as two workshops with the Transformation Enablers (e.g. IT, HR and Business Improvement)

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and with Strategic Intent Enablers (e.g. Economic Development, Planning and Strategic Housing).

It was emphasised that the Feasibility Study was not aiming to review all Council services, just those that helped achieve transformation and those that were drivers for growth and prosperity.

The next task would be for baseline data to be collected, so that the similarities and differences between both councils could be identified, as well as establishing a greater understanding of how both councils worked. Service leaders would also be tasked with identifying any opportunities for collaboration that could be presented to Members for consideration.

On 7 and 8 February 2018 further workshops would be held to develop a joint approach with service leads, as well as frontline staff who would be able to bring their perspective to the project.

Further workshops would be held on 13 and 14 March 2018 where learning from the previous six weeks would be considered and proposals could be challenged and refined. The outputs from these meetings would be collated and drafted into an interim report to be made to the respective Cabinet and Council meetings in March/April.

A Member suggested that the whole of the Planning Department should have been consulted about the proposal to share their Management Team, not just the senior planning officers concerned, as inevitably the new arrangements would have an effect on the department as a whole.

It was also emphasised that the arrangements in the Planning Department were interim and would be reviewed at three, six, nine and 12 months. If available, progress would also be reported in the March interim report.

The Head of Corporate Resources advised Members that recent communications on the broader Feasibility Study had been discussed with the Senior Management Team and it had been decided to supplement existing methods in a less formal way. Therefore, it had been decided to have a number of meetings with smaller groups that would include all Council staff.

Members were also advised that governance was included in the services that would assist transformation, as if the councils were to share services in the longer term they would need to consider how to harmonise how the formal governance structures worked. This element of the project would, therefore, seek to identify how both decision making processes worked and the extent to which they could be aligned.

The Chairman informed the meeting that although sharing services might be an opportunity to access increased funding, the main drivers were economic

and housing growth across both districts and not the generation of income or making savings. He added that collaboration might also be a better proposition than having something imposed by central Government, without any Council input.

The Head of Corporate Resources advised Members that overall the Feasibility Study would place Members in a position to make an informed choice about future possible collaboration. The Study would draw together two elements: one would be to collate data about both authorities and identify similarities and differences and to ascertain what could be done to close any gaps in support of closer collaborative working. The second element would be to identify specific opportunities for collaboration that would drive forward economic and housing growth and broader transformation.

In response to a suggestion that the Feasibility Study appeared to be too inward looking and did not take account of the external environment, it was confirmed that the Strategic Group had a key role in taking an external perspective and would be looking at funding opportunities for the authorities as well as issues such as how the councils could be placed in a stronger position through collaboration in the event of a local government review in the future.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed that he would convey a request that an external opinion be sought on the Feasibility Study by the Strategic Group.

The meeting was also advised that the timescales for collaboration could be significant. For example, it had taken 10 years for Waveney and Suffolk Coastal to move from a shared Chief Executive to a shared workforce. This had been an organic process, rather than a rapid transformation and this was to be explained more clearly to staff at the staff briefings that were to be arranged.

The Chairman noted that the measure of success for sharing services would be a seamless transition that would not be noticed by residents.

Members were informed that the Leader would be giving a brief update on Collaborative Working to the Annual Parish and Town Council meeting on 24 January 2018.

29 WORK PROGRAMME

Income Generation had been suggested as an item at the last meeting and was to be included as an item for a future meeting. This had been proposed as it was clear that the Council would become increasingly reliant on Business Rates for its income and, therefore it should ensure that it supported businesses as much as possible.

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In respect of the Performance Related Pay Review it was confirmed that this item had been deferred until the outcome of the Feasibility Study was known, as if collaboration was pursued aligning the terms and conditions of staff across both councils would be a likely aim.

The Chairman noted that work was being undertaken to draft a protocol on how the benefits of collaboration would be shared between the councils and that this might be available for the 5 February 2018 meeting of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 11.08 am