

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 **29 May 2018** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr D G Harrison – Chairman

Mr A D Adams  
Mrs C H Bannock

Mr D Buck  
Mrs J K Copplestone

Mr J J Emsell  
Mr R F Grady  
Mrs L H Hemsall  
Mr G K Nurden

Mrs K A Vincent  
Mr D C Ward

Also in attendance were the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Head of Corporate Resources, Head of Finance and Revenue Services, Head of Economic Development, Local Taxation Manager, Economic Development (Partnerships & Growth) Manager and the Committee Officer (JO).

### 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Mrs J Copplestone	8 Non-Domestic Rate Business Growth Discount Scheme	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Business Rate payer in Broadland.

### 6 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*Minute No: 2 – Minutes*

The Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that following the resignation of the Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer, it was proposed that interim support for the Committee be provided by the Committee Officer and the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer for a period of three to four months. This would allow time for a decision to be made about collaboration with South Norfolk Council, as well as providing an opportunity to reassess the vacant post.

A Member advised the meeting that he considered this proposal to be unacceptable, as the Committee had a significant Work Programme that required officer support. However, the Vice-Chairman noted that all departments reviewed posts when they became vacant and it was not unreasonable for the Committee to be without dedicated officer support for a short period.

It was **AGREED** that the arrangement proposed for the support of the

Committee continue for the next three to four months.

Members confirmed that they would monitor the level of support the Committee received over this period.

### *Minute no: 4 – Performance Management Sub-Committee*

The Chairman noted that it had been proposed to hold Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings with a single item agenda, rather than assigning topics to the Performance Management Sub-Committee.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the recent Portfolio-Holder decision to pay Catton Park Trust £21,000 to support the restoration of the park would consolidate the annual reduction in payments by £1,000 each year that the Council was making into one final payment that would help to remove uncertainty from the Council's future budgets. The exact dates of when this assistance was agreed would be provided to the Member in question following the meeting.

## **CABINET REPORTS**

### **7 BROADLAND BUSINESS PLAN 2019**

The report proposed a number of potential stakeholder and resident engagement activities for consideration to inform the revision of the Council's Business Plan for the period 2019 to 2023.

The Council's current Business Plan ran from 2015 to 2019 and was in need of review and revision for the four municipal years commencing May 2019

Suggestions for engagement to develop the new Business Plan included:

- Repeating the face-to-face meetings held in 2014 between the Chief Executive / Leader and 15 major stakeholders across the district that had worked well and generated constructive feedback on the Council's performance and future plans.
- Holding workshops with external facilitation. These had been held in 2014 and had generated a number of useful suggestions that had been incorporated into the Business Plan. This support had cost £2,600.
- Holding a residents survey. In 2014, a response rate of 29 percent had been achieved at a cost of £10,300 for an Ipsos Mori postal survey. Alternatively an online questionnaire could be created at a much lower cost.

The indicative costs of the above activities would range between £3,000 and £18,000.

Members were advised that whilst an online survey would be cheaper, it might not be possible to generate a similar level of response. Nor would it be a truly randomised sample, as had been provided by the 2014 Ipsos Mori survey, which had provided useful qualitative data for the Business Plan.

The Vice-Chairman noted that a good response rate might be achieved by sending a simple survey via social media to all parish and town councils and community groups in the district. It was also suggested that hard copies of the surveys be made available, as some parts of Broadland still had poor internet speeds.

The Committee confirmed their support for holding face to face meetings between the Chief Executive / Leader and major stakeholders across the district, as well as holding workshops, although they could not agree on whether this should with internal or external facilitation.

Similarly, whilst it was agreed in principle, that residents should be surveyed, views were mixed on whether this should be carried out internally or externally. One Member also suggested that a temporary post be created for the survey work.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

the following options:

to

- (1) hold face to face meetings between the Chief Executive / Leader and major stakeholders across the district;
- (2) hold workshops with either internal or external facilitation;
- (3) hold a residents survey. This could be conducted using a market research company, an in-house online questionnaire or even a specially recruited temporary member of staff.

## **8 NON-DOMESTIC RATE BUSINESS GROWTH DISCOUNT SCHEME**

The report asked Cabinet to consider adopting a discretionary Business Rate Discount Policy to help attract new businesses into the district and assist existing businesses to expand.

The proposed Policy would allow Business Rates to be reduced in full or in part for a period of up to 12 months. The discount would complement the Council's existing training and Business Support initiatives and increase the appeal of the district to businesses, as well as stimulating inward investment.

Members were advised that both South Norfolk and Waveney District Councils offered similar discount schemes and the County Council remained in support of relief for Business Rates. Norwich City Council was not intending to set up a similar scheme, however.

It was proposed that the final decision on allowing a discount would be delegated to the Head of Finance and Revenue Services, in consultation with the Head of Economic Development on a case by case basis.

As Broadland was part of the Business Rates Pool, the cost to the Council of allowing the discounts proposed would currently be 20 percent of the total amount awarded and with a wide element of discretion, the Council would be able to limit its exposure to cost.

It was noted that after a period of three months the owner of an empty business premises would be required to pay full Business Rates on their property.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that there would be no clause in the Policy to require businesses that had been given rate relief to remain in the district (although the significant capital costs associated with starting a new business were likely to be incentive enough to remain in the same location).

The Committee was advised that the Business Rates retention system was due to change in 2021, with 75 percent being retained by local government. Discussions were ongoing about how this would be allocated.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

Option (1)

to **RECOMMEND** to Council adopting the Policy to implement a Non-Domestic Rate Business Growth Discount Scheme. The scheme would delegate authority to make decisions in individual cases to the Head of Finance and Revenue Services in consultation with the Head of Economic Development.

## **9 NORWICH WESTERN LINK – PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The report proposed a response from Broadland to the Norfolk County Council consultation on transport issues to the west of Norwich. The consultation would run from Tuesday 8 May to Tuesday 3 July 2018.

The development of a Norwich Western Link, to connect the new Broadland Northway from the A1067 to the A47 west of Norwich, was one of Norfolk County Council's top infrastructure priorities.

Broadland District Council had previously gone on record to strongly support the Western Link project and recognise the important benefits to residents, businesses, visitors and people travelling through the area. These key benefits included better access to employment areas, such as Broadland Business Park, the Food Enterprise Park and Norwich Airport. Encouraging investment, by increasing the accessibility of development sites, boosting the local economy, increasing tourism and shortening journey times and reducing congestion.

A Member suggested that the consultation was a waste of money, as it was already evident that there was strong support for the Western Link. However, the Committee was advised that the Western Link would require a Development Control Order, which would need an evidence base showing that consultation on the scheme had been undertaken.

A Member also informed the Committee that she had been very disappointed by a recent consultation event at Western Longville, especially the maps on display, which did not include recently suggested routes for the Western Link.

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

Option (1)

to agree to the proposed response in the report.

## **10 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS FOR 2018-19**

The Committee noted the proposed Cabinet appointments to outside organisations for the new municipal year.

*The meeting closed at 11.23 am*