

CABINET

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council, held on Monday 28 September 2020 at 9.00 am.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, M Edney, L Neal, K Mason Billig, A Thomas and J Worley

Non-Appointed Councillors: C Brown, A Dearnley and T Laidlaw

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of Communities (J Sutterby), The Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Assistant Director Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (E Hodds), the Assistant Director Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director Planning (H Mellors), the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager (R Dunsire) and the Policy and Partnership's Officer (V Parsons).

2825 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24 August 2020, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2826 UPDATED DELIVERY PLAN POST COVID-19

The Chief of Staff introduced the report, which presented Members with an updated Delivery Plan for 2020/21, reflecting the updated priorities of the Council, following the recent impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Assistant Director Chief of Staff briefly outlined the key changes to the document. Members noted that a one-year plan was also proposed for 2021/22 due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic and the need for the Council to remain as flexible as possible.

The Chairman referred to the total controllable funding for both South Norfolk and Broadland Councils (detailed at page 19 of the agenda) and asked how officers would ensure that there was no cross subsidising between the two authorities. The Managing Director advised Members that systems had been developed to apportion costs and savings across the two Councils, and that this had been approved by the auditors and would require revalidation every other year, to provide constant assurance. The Assistant Director Finance explained that the

South Norfolk costs were nearly double than that at Broadland, due to the size of South Norfolk's capital programme.

Reference was made to the future of the Waste Service, following the outcome of the Waste Services Review at both Councils, and the Director Communities advised that there was a significant future programme of works to consider, one being the current set up at Ketteringham depot. Thought would also be given to the possibility of developing a Local Authority Trading Company for South Norfolk Council and also scope for collaboration with other neighbouring authorities. Officers confirmed that work had commenced at Broadland with regard to the retender of its current waste contract.

The Chairman suggested, and it was agreed that the document also required references to the Prosperity Fund and the Greater Norwich Growth Board, and how the Council might prepare for future projects.

The vote was taken by roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL

1. Approves the adoption of the updated Delivery Plan for 2020/21.
2. Approves the development of a one-year plan for 2021/2022, returning to Councils in February 2021.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Council has a clear view of its priorities and has the correct resources in place to plan and respond effectively.

Other Options Considered

To retain the original proposal to develop a two-year plan.

2827 GREATER NORWICH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2020-2025 AND SOUTH NORFOLK AND BROADLAND ROUGH SLEEPER STATEMENT 2020-2022

Members considered the report of the Policy and Partnerships Officer, which presented Cabinet with the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 and the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Statement 2020-2022.

The Policy and Partnerships Officer presented her report, explaining that the Rough Sleeper Statement would be produced in conjunction with both Broadland and Norwich City Councils from 2022.

In terms of the Strategy, this was based on four priorities which had been developed and tested across the current Covid-19 situation. The Policy and Partnerships Officer explained that although mental health was not a priority on its own, this issue was a common theme which ran through all four priorities. Members noted that the Greater Norwich Housing Forum, a sub-regional group set

up by the three authorities, would be responsible for drawing up the Action Plans for each priority and monitoring progress.

Officers explained that the Strategy aimed to develop priorities and actions to further develop the joined up approach to tackling homelessness with partners and would feed in to the work to redesign the housing offer across the District, in taking a person centred approach, and also linking in with the Council's recovery work from Covid-19.

The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle commended the report to Members, and thanked officers for a comprehensive document. She encouraged all members to attend the briefing session the following evening regarding the 'Best in Class Housing Offer'.

Members referred to funding received by Norfolk County Council through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme. The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager explained that South Norfolk had also applied for funding to assist in securing suitable accommodation for those with high support needs.

Members referred to the net housing completions and the affordable housing completions, detailed in the Homelessness Strategy and were pleased to note that over the last five years, completions in South Norfolk accounted for over 50% of the total across the three authorities, and over 48% of the total for affordable housing.

Voting was then carried out by way of a roll call, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED To approve adoption of the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 and the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Statement 2020-2022.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure an effective response to the prevention of homelessness and the ending of rough sleeping in the area.

Other Options Considered

None

2828 COUNCIL TAX COVID-19 HARDSHIP FUND 2020-21 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES / POLICY

Members considered the report of the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager which sought retrospective approval for the Council Tax Covid-19 Hardship Fund 2020-21 Policy.

The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager presented his report, explaining that since March 2020, the Council had administered the Council Tax Covid-19 Hardship Fund, following guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Local Government. Retrospective authorisation was now sought as funds had been issued under discretionary powers s13A (1)(c) Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Members noted that the Council had received a funding allocation of £756,235, which had allowed all those in receipt of Council Tax Support to receive an additional £150 off their Council Tax bill. For those with a liability of less than £150, the resident's liability was reduced to nil. The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager explained that all new claims were also entitled to this discount.

In addition to this, the Council had also set up a discretionary pot of which £80,000 still remained. However, it was noted that some aspects of the discretionary fund policy might be covered under a new Track and Trace Isolation Fund, recently announced by the Government.

Voting was then carried out by way of a roll call, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED To agree the policy for the Council Tax COVID-19 Hardship Fund 2020-21

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that additional support is available to those who need it.

Other Options Considered

None.

2829 RESPONSE TO MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Planning, which sought Cabinet approval on Council responses to two government consultations; the White Paper: Planning for the Future, and Changes to the current Planning System.

The Assistant Director Planning introduced the report to Members, briefly outlining the proposed responses as set out in the report. Members noted that the comments from the Regulation and Planning Policy Committee had yet to be incorporated.

Cabinet turned firstly to Appendix 1; the White Paper 'Planning for the Future' and the Assistant Director Planning summarised the changes proposed at the Regulation and Planning Policy Committee at its meeting on 12 October:

Question 6:

The need to stress the importance of still having local planning policies;

Question 8a:

That the methodology as proposed would not be deliverable for the Greater Norwich area and could undermine the ability to deliver houses.

Question 10:

To add statistics, for example how quickly applications were determined, how many were delegated, how many get approved and the success rate of appeals.

Question 15:

To emphasise that the Council already has a Place Shaping Guide.

During discussion members suggested that the comments around community engagement required strengthening. In terms of sustainability, it was also suggested that the response needed to stress that South Norfolk was a rural area, and that reliance on the motor car was essential. The Chairman referred to the response regarding Community Infrastructure Levy and suggested that a single CIL to cover all circumstances was not viable, and that a much more sophisticated approach was required. The need to ensure the supply of affordable housing was also raised.

The Chairman referred to the comments set out in a proposed motion to Council, at its meeting on 21 September, and requested that some of the issues raised, be fed in to the response.

It was agreed that Cllr L Neal would email all members asking for any further comments with regard to the White Paper, before the Council's response was finalised.

Turning to Appendix 2, the draft response to the Changes to the current Planning System, Cabinet agreed that these responses required some significant work. There was a need to expand some responses and also to strengthen the language in some areas. Members also requested more examples of the impact of the proposed methodology.

The Assistant Director Planning agreed that more detail was required, especially around methodology, and she explained that there had been considerable discussion at the Policy Committee, particularly with reference to affordable housing.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. To note the early draft responses to the MHCLG consultation documents, as outlined in appendices 1 and 2 of the report:
2. To agree that the responses require further amendment, with final approval to be delegated to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and the Portfolio Holder for Stronger Economy.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Council takes the opportunity to convey its views to Government.

Other Options Considered

None.

2830 DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Members considered the report of the Managing Director, which provided an overview of the current context and developments and potential next steps for South Norfolk Council, with regard to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

Members noted that the publication of the Government's Recovery and Devolution White Paper had been delayed due to Covid-19, and was expected later this year, or early January 2021. The Managing Director explained that it would be a fast-moving agenda, and that it was entirely appropriate for officers to start to undertake preparatory work to ensure the Council's readiness to respond appropriately, when needed.

The Chairman stressed the importance of focussing on the needs of the community and the recovery, in light of Covid-19, and had been disappointed by recent comments made by a small number of county councils, in a bid to ensure their survival.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. To note the current developments for devolution and local government reorganisation nationally.
2. Subject to the issue of the White Paper or demonstrable intent by Central Government to progress Local Government Reorganisation; to endorse the use of officer time and resource within current budgets, where appropriate and with agreement by the Leader of the Council, in order to undertake preparatory work to ensure the Council's readiness to respond appropriately to the Recovery and Devolution White Paper, which is anticipated to be published in the autumn.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Council is in a position to be able to respond to the White Paper, when published, and to seize any opportunities it might bring.

Other Options Considered

None.

2831 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the considerable number of reports for consideration at the November meeting of the Cabinet, and stressed their forbearance, should any reports need to be delayed due to officer time being diverted to other services, because of the impact of Covid-19.

The Chairman suggested that it would be appropriate to consider a paper in November regarding the Harleston public realm improvements project.

The Director Communities confirmed that an update report regarding waste, could be presented at the December meeting.

2832 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was

RESOLVED: To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

2833 EXEMPT MINUTE

The minute of the meeting held on 24 August 2020 regarding the Waste Services Review was agreed as an accurate record.

(the meeting concluded at 10.25 am)

Chairman