

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 24 January 2018 at 9.30am.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: G Minshull (Chairman), B Bernard, B Duffin, T Lewis, L Neal, and T Palmer

**Apologies:** Councillors: C Gould, R Savage and J Wilby

**Substitute Members Present:** Councillors: M Dewsbury for R Savage and M Wilby for J Wilby

**Cabinet Member in Attendance:** Councillor: Y Bendle

**Officers in Attendance:** The Director of Growth and Business Development (D Lorimer), the Director of Communities and Wellbeing (J Sutterby), the Assistant Director – Resources (P Catchpole), the Head of Business Transformation (H Ralph), the Business Improvement Manager (A Mewes) and the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard)

### 1214 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 2 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 1215 REVIEW OF THE 2018/19 BUSINESS PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Business Improvement Lead, which presented members with the draft Business Plan for 2018/19.

The Business Improvement Manager outlined the key areas of the Plan, explaining that due to an anticipated increase in income, there was an overall net cost reduction of £286k, when compared with the Plan for 17/18. He informed the Committee that the Health and Wellbeing and Early Help activities attributed to the majority of revenue spend and there had also been a slight increase in capital investment in this area, relating to investments in leisure facilities. Members noted that the majority of capital expenditure continued to focus on economic growth.

Cllr T Lewis referred to the Norfolk Constabulary proposals to discontinue the role of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and expressed concern with regard to the impact of this on South Norfolk residents. Cllr Lewis suggested that officers could investigate further whether any functions currently carried out by PCSOs, could instead be carried out by the Council. In response the Director of Communities and Wellbeing stressed the need for caution when considering taking on activities that another statutory body had chosen not to pursue. He added that the PCSOs were currently still in post, and that the impact of their removal was an unknown; there was no evidence as yet to suggest that residents would be adversely affected. The Senior Governance Officer reminded the Committee that Scrutiny was “evidence based” and she suggested that she could liaise with Cllr Lewis to scope a potential future report, to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee, some six to nine months after the changes had been implemented. The Committee agreed that this was the appropriate course of action.

Members then considered the draft Business Plan, page by page, and officers responded to a number of queries on points of detail. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful if the Plan explained more explicitly why some corporate activities were repeated across different themes, and how this spend was apportioned. Members suggested that next year’s Plan should contain more details regarding the sources of funding, and more information concerning large capital spends.

During discussion, reference was made to the following activities in the Plan:

### **E3 Infrastructure Delivery Programme**

Members referred to the £5M allocated for the Long Stratton Bypass, and the Director of Growth and Business Development explained that this sum had been set aside as a precaution only and that CIL and external funding sources would be exhausted before any Council monies would be used to fund the project. In response to a query regarding the need to borrow to fund the

project, she explained that it was anticipated that a level of borrowing would be required to fund the whole capital programme, in the next five years.

### **E6 Commercial Property Investment and Development**

Following a query, the Assistant Director – Resources advised members the capital spend allocation of £5.2M would contribute to Phase 3 at Rosebery Park in Poringland, and other Big Sky Developments in Cringleford.

### **E15 Norwich Enterprise Zone**

The Director of Growth and Business Development explained that it was likely that the Council would need to provide a loan to fund this initiative, to the sum of £3M during 2018/19. Members noted that the monies would be repaid to the Council, with interest, through the business rates generated from the Enterprise Zone.

### **E28 SNC Corporate and Internal Communications**

In response to a query regarding in-house video technology, the Head of Business Transformation explained that social media content in the form of videos was more effective and interactive, attracting more public interest. A recent example of this was the marketing for the Council's annual Pub of the Year awards.

### **E32 Procurement**

In response to a question, the Assistant Director - Resources informed members that the Council currently employed a Procurement Officer who was involved in a number of the Council's larger contracts, such as the Long Stratton Leisure Centre. His work had expanded to other councils and he had also delivered training to suppliers.

### **E33 Implement the IT Strategy**

Regarding a query about telephony, the Assistant Director - Resources explained that the contract was currently out for procurement and he hoped that a new telephony solution would be in place before the end of the current financial year. Members noted that £65k had been allocated for this project during 17/18 (although there was a possibility that this may slip in to 18/19) and that a further £20k had been set aside for 2018/19. Regarding a query concerning an upgrade on mobile devices to Windows 10, it was noted that this was to be rolled out in a phased approach. The aim was to create a standard platform, so that IT staff were supporting less applications.

### **H3 Long Stratton Leisure Centre / Community Hub**

Members noted that contracts concerning the refurbishment of the Long Stratton Leisure Centre were due to be signed that week, with an expected project delivery date of before Christmas.

**H5 Development of Leisure Centre Portfolio Offering**

The Committee was informed that the £1.3M capital spend under this activity was allocated to help develop existing community provision, such as that provided at Hethersett, and Ketts Park in Wymondham. Members noted that the capital funding would all come from external funding sources.

**H8 Universal Credit Scheme**

Referring to the Universal Credit Scheme, members noted that only some residents from the Beccles Job Centres had been affected, with the Norwich and Diss branches yet to move over to the scheme. In response to a query, the Director of Communities and Well-being confirmed that there was not one nominated officer dealing with Universal Credit at South Norfolk, instead the knowledge was spread across the team.

**H13 Support for Residents to Access Early Help Services**

The Committee's attention was drawn to the recent appointment of the Minister for Loneliness and the dedicated fund set up to tackle this issue. The Director of Communities and Wellbeing confirmed that the Council would be seeking funding from this source and he also referred to funding provision from Norfolk County Council.

**P1 Sustainably Manage the Street Scene****P2 The Delivery of Waste and Recycling Services**

In response to a query regarding the planned £103k capital spend in this area, the Director of Growth and Business Development confirmed that new sweepers were required for the Street Cleansing Team. Members noted that the allocated £778k would be used to replace some of the aging refuse fleet. It was explained that two of the older vehicles would be maintained as spares, to reduce the need to use hire vehicles on occasions.

**P7 Environmental Quality including Community Assets**

Referring to the £435k capital spend allocated to Environmental Quality and Community Assets, members noted that some of this spend would be invested in the upkeep of play areas and divestment of toilets.

**P12 One Public Estate**

The Director of Communities and Wellbeing confirmed that the Council was not currently working on any tangible projects regarding the One Public Estate initiative. Referring to previous plans to share the Ketteringham Depot with Norfolk County Highways, the Director of Growth and Business Development explained that it had not been feasible to pursue this project as Norfolk County Council was unable to provide the substantial investment required. Members were reminded that the Council continued to capitalise on its office space at South Norfolk House, with Children's Services recently moving in to the Daniel's Room.

**M4 MFT/OD Moving Forward Together Programme and Organisational Development**

Members queried the £145k capital allocated under this activity, and officers suggested that this may have been assigned incorrectly. The Head of Business Transformation agreed to look in to the matter further and to report back to members after the meeting. (subsequent to the meeting, members were informed that this figure had been incorrectly assigned to this activity. This allocation was for IT spend on pc requirements, server replacements, tablets and the telephony project).

Turning to Appendix B of the report, Cllr Lewis queried whether the 2018/19 targets were really “stretching” as most of them appeared to be the same as those set for the current year. The Business Improvement Manager confirmed that targets were already stretching and reminded members that it was possible to set lower intervention levels if appropriate. With regard to a query regarding LI758, External Funding Identified and Brought in to the Local Economy, the Director of Growth and Business Development explained that the current target for 2017/18 was over- achieved due to some significant one-off grants which had been successfully obtained in the current year. It was therefore felt appropriate not to increase the target for 2018/19.

**RESOLVED: TO RECOMMEND THAT CABINET:**

1. Approves the 2018/19 Business Plan, subject to:
  - a) An explanation in the Plan, as to why some activities are repeated across different themes, and how spend is apportioned;
  - b) That officers check the £145k capital spend against activity M4 MFT/OD.
2. That in future years:
  - a) The Plan details sources of funding that have been secured in relation to identified capital spend, i.e grant, income or loan;
  - b) Where capital costs exceed £250k, a brief explanation is provided regarding what the spend is for.

**1216 BROADLAND AND SOUTH NORFOLK COLLABORATIVE WORKING OPPORTUNITIES – UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman updated members on the progress of collaborative working opportunities between Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

Members noted that interim planning arrangements had come into effect from 22 January, following agreement from Scrutiny and Cabinet at both South Norfolk and Broadland. This was one of the first services looking at further ideas for collaboration and this would feed in to the June/July feasibility report to members. He advised that Helen Mellors, the Development Manager, John Walchester, the Spatial Planning Manager and Phil Courtier, the Head of Planning, would share their working week across the two councils.

The Chairman referred to a visit to East Suffolk Council (Suffolk Coastal and Waveney) on 11 January, where the two councils had been working collaboratively for over ten years and were now merging to become one. He explained the visit to have been most useful, and that advice received had been to concentrate on “quick wins” and to ensure that all members were on board going forward. Over £18M had been saved over the last 10 years of working together, however it was noted that most of these savings had focussed on one of the councils, with initially one of the authorities being in a much stronger position than the other. Members were reminded that South Norfolk and Broadland’s focus was to drive the growth agenda and gain more of a national voice, which was different to that of East Suffolk Coastal.

The Head of Business Transformation explained that the feasibility study was underway with the first staff workshops having already taken place. She explained that staff from all levels would be involved, and that a progress report would be fed back to the joint member groups week commencing 26 March 2018, and then on to both full Councils in April.

Members were reminded that an informal networking event was to take place at Poringland Community Centre on 29 January, 5 – 7pm for both Broadland and South Norfolk members.

## **1217 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE AGENDA**

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 10:54am)

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Chairman