

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 21 November 2018 at 9.30am.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: G Minshull, B Duffin, C Gould, L Hornby, T Lewis, T Palmer and R Savage
Apologies:	Councillors: B Bernard and J Wilby
Substitutes:	Councillors: D Fulcher for B Bernard and D Goldson for J Wilby
Cabinet Members in Attendance:	Councillors: M Edney (for part of the meeting) and K Kiddie
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillor: B Riches
Officers in Attendance:	The Director of Communities and Wellbeing (J Sutterby), the Head of Business Transformation (H Ralph), the Head of Early Help (M Pursehouse), the Communities Manager (K Gallagher) and the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard)

1237 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 26 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1238 MEMBER-LED FUNDING

Cllr Kiddie introduced the report, explaining to members that the current member ward funding schemes had been in place for several years and had been successful in funding many worthwhile projects but that there was a need to review the schemes and their ground rules, so that the available funds could be utilised in a more effective and focussed manner.

The Communities Manager provided the Committee with a presentation which detailed the key issues to be considered. It was noted that the Member Ward Fund had been underspent during the last two years whereas the Community Action Fund had been oversubscribed during the same period. It was also accepted that some members had spent their Member Ward monies on projects which had not met the criteria of the ground rules and that members had requested some clarification around the ground rules.

The Committee was advised of five proposed changes to the current schemes, as detailed in the report:

1. A review of the ground rules;
2. The introduction of restrictions of funding to town and parish councils;
3. The proper utilisation of funding;
4. The realignment of the budget; and
5. The Communities Team to provide support to members.

Officers advised that any changes to the schemes would require Cabinet approval and that it was intended the report, along with any further suggestions or recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee, be presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2018.

In response to a member's question regarding the underspend of the Member Ward Fund, officers confirmed that there was some consistency in the areas where funds had not been spent. Members questioned whether rural and urban areas should receive different levels of funding as it was more difficult to find suitable projects in smaller villages. It was noted, however, that wards were split according to population figures and officers reminded the Committee that members were permitted to spend their funds in other wards if they could demonstrate that their own residents would benefit from that funding.

Members discussed the underspend of the Member Ward Fund and it was suggested that this might be partly due to concerns that members should be spreading their funding throughout their wards and that it was difficult to distribute "relatively small" amounts of money to several deserving projects. Consequently, concerns were raised that the proposal to decrease the Member Ward Fund from £1,000 to £500 would exacerbate the problem and members did not feel they could support this proposal.

During further discussion around the underspend of the Member Ward Fund, the Committee was advised that, under the current scheme, any underspend of over £10,000 by 31 December would roll over into the Community Action Fund with a meeting of the Community Action Fund Panel being convened to consider applications from members. It was clarified that it would not be cost-effective to administer a meeting of the Panel to consider the allocation of less than £10,000 so, in this event, the underspend would be absorbed as a saving. It was suggested that any underspend under £10,000 should instead be rolled over into the Community Action Fund for the following year, although officers advised that the rolling over of any underspend was not in line with the Council's current practice.

The Committee welcomed the proposals that the ground rules be simplified and that members be supported by the Communities Team where further clarification and assistance was required. Although some concerns were raised that the onus was placed on members to check that funds allocated had been spent in the correct manner, it was generally accepted that it was the responsibility of members to ensure the correct utilisation of funds awarded, and members welcomed the proposal that they be sent an email reminder, nine months following the award of funding. In response to a member's question regarding any funding granted to a

group which later ceased operating, the Communities Manager advised that such cases should be referred to her so that she could make further enquiries.

In response to a member's query, the Communities Manager clarified that the rule stating that 'the funding could not be used to support any activity more than once in a two-year period' related to the 'activity' and not the group, and that the two-year period ran from when the funds were granted. Members suggested that the wording in bullet point 5 of the Member Ward Funding ground rules should be re-worded for clarity.

It was then:

RESOLVED:

To **Recommend to Cabinet** that:

1. Proposals relating to the ground rules review, introduction of restrictions to funding to town and parish councils, ensuring the proper utilisation of funding, and increased support to members from the Communities Team be agreed;
2. The proposal to reduce the member ward fund allocation from £1,000 per member to £500 be rejected and that Cabinet agree to retain the current allocation of £1,000; and
3. All underspend of the Member Ward Fund budget is transferred to the Community Action Fund budget. If the underspend is less than £10,000 the underspend should be rolled over to the next financial year to avoid the need for the CAF Panel to meet to allocate small amounts of money.

1239 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE ON COLLABORATIVE WORKING

The Chairman provided members with a brief update on the progress of collaborative working, advising that Trevor Holden had already held meetings with various members and key officers as the Councils moved towards a single paid service from 2 January 2019. The Committee was advised that the joint Greater Norwich website had been launched, progress was being made on a single domain name and website and work had commenced on other collaborative projects such as a one team review of Planning and around governance for the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Business Transformation clarified the remit of the Joint Scrutiny Committee, advising that the intention was that collaboration issues and opportunities would be considered jointly by the Committee and any recommendations made to the two individual Cabinet or Councils. She further confirmed that there were no proposals for the Councils to change their names, as they were to remain as two autonomous Councils, but there would be a single identity that would be developed to complement the existing council identities/brands.

1240 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

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

The Chairman advised members that, in the absence of any items coming forward, the meeting scheduled for 19 December 2018 would be cancelled and that the meeting scheduled for 2 January 2019 would only take place in the event of a call-in.

Cllr Lewis was pleased to advise that an issue regarding the cessation of a local bus services, as discussed at a recent meeting of Cabinet, was likely to be resolved without the need for Scrutiny's input, so this should not be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

Cllr Goldson expressed concerns regarding the suitability of some decisions made for the distribution of Section 106 monies and the Chairman agreed to speak to planning officers, outside of the meeting, to gain some clarity on the process and to ascertain whether the Scrutiny Committee could provide any input into the process.

(The meeting concluded at 10:38 am)

Chairman