

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 26 September 2018 at 9.30am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: G Minshull, B Duffin, C Gould, L Hornby, T Lewis, T Palmer, R Savage and J Wilby

Apologies: Councillor: B Bernard

Officers in Attendance: The Assistant Director of Resources (P Catchpole), the Accountancy Manager (M Fernandez-Graham) and the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard)

1233 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Minute	Declaration
B Duffin	1235	Other Interest - Director on Saffron Housing Association Board
T Palmer	1235	Other Interest - Shareholder of Saffron Housing Association
L Hornby	1235	Other interest - Was a member of Cabinet when the Commercialisation Strategy was approved

1234 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 27 June 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1235 REVIEW OF COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES

The Accountancy Manager introduced the report which sought to update the Committee on the progress made towards the priority opportunities outlined in the Commercialisation Strategy. He summarised the salient points in the report, advising members that more opportunities for commercialisation would be explored as part of the process of Shared Services with the collaboration of South Norfolk Council with Broadland District Council.

The Committee discussed the Big Sky proposals for the redevelopments in Diss and Wymondham and it was noted that, although feasibility studies had been completed on both sites, local members had not been consulted. The Committee considered that local members should be consulted, at an early stage, where plans for development, on South Norfolk Council-owned land, fell within their Wards, and the Assistant Director of Resources advised he would discuss this with officers. In response to queries regarding the joint proposals with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the construction of a building on the Norwich Research Park Enterprise Zone site, officers advised that the feasibility study had identified a need for offices, for research purposes, and if taken forward, grant funding might be secured from the LEP. Members queried the potential for profit/income for the Council from the Norwich Research Park and were advised that South Norfolk Council would receive a share.

During discussion around Big Sky Property Management, the Assistant Director of Resources clarified that the purchase of two affordable houses was part of a pilot scheme utilising unspent Section 106 monies together with funding of £14,000 from the Local Government Association (LGA). Members were advised that Big Sky Property Management would manage the two shared-equity properties, which would be held as assets. Officers clarified that, unlike a housing association, Big Sky Property Management managed rental properties, built by Big Sky Developments, at the market rate. It was, however, suggested that the report did not contain sufficient information nor express the full ambition of Big Sky Developments.

In response to a member's question regarding the handyman service, officers clarified that the handyman was now managed by Big Sky Property Management but would still undertake South Norfolk Council work, such as home adaptations etc, which would be counter-charged to the Council.

Members discussed the commercial waste service and, in response to queries raised regarding the scrutiny of the service, were advised that this was undertaken as part of the Council's business planning process where any issues would be reported to Cabinet. The Assistant Director of Resources advised that all operational service reviews were undertaken by the Council's Business Improvement Team and, as far as he was aware, the relevant portfolio holder was usually made aware of the findings. Following further discussion, the Committee suggested that Cabinet Members should be involved in service reviews that related to their portfolios.

Members expressed some concerns regarding the potential consideration of a community lottery scheme, as detailed in the Strategy. It was clarified that the Council was reviewing a scheme, operated by Breckland District Council, which allowed community groups to set up a lottery scheme whereby residents could purchase tickets for a nominal fee with the majority of the profits repaid to the group, a lesser amount allocated to the Council to use for good causes in the area, with the remainder being paid to the company responsible for administering the scheme. It was noted that further information would be brought before members once the officer review had been completed.

In response to a member's question regarding the possible opportunities for commercialisation which might arise from the collaboration of South Norfolk Council with Broadland District Council, the Assistant Director of Resources advised that it was too early in the process for specific opportunities to be identified but, once the new Managing Director was in place, a more specific route map would start to develop. Responding to a member's question regarding how joint matters and decisions would be scrutinised, the Senior Governance Officer advised that it would be inefficient and unmanageable for joint matters to be considered individually by both Scrutiny Committees, so these would instead be considered by a joint Scrutiny Committee with its recommendations presented to both Council's Cabinets.

The Committee requested that a further review of the Commercialisation Strategy be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months and that the next report should contain more financial information and data relating to the income generated, and greater detail on Big Sky Developments. It was also suggested that the reference to 'profit' in the report should be amended to 'income'

It was then:

RESOLVED:

1. To note the progress made on the priority opportunities as set out in the Commercialisation Strategy;
2. That a further review, containing more financial information and data relating to the income generated, and greater detail on Big Sky Developments, should take place in 12 months; and
3. To recommend that Cabinet members are involved in service reviews relating to their portfolio.

1236 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda. The Senior Governance Officer advised that an all-member Scrutiny workshop would take place, at a date to be advised, during the week commencing 10 December 2018.

(The meeting concluded at 10:28 am)

Chairman