

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 2 January 2018 at 2.00pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: G Minshull (Chairman), B Duffin, C Gould, L Neal, T Palmer, R Savage and J Wilby

Apologies: Councillors: B Bernard and T Lewis (Cllr Lewis was in attendance but did not sit as a member of the Scrutiny Committee)

Substitute Members Present: Councillors: M Gray for B Bernard and V Bell for T Lewis

Cabinet Member in Attendance: Councillor: Y Bendle

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: T Lewis and M Wilby

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Growth and Business Development (D Lorimer), the Head of Business Transformation (H Ralph), The Head of Governance (E Hodds) and the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard)

1210 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following member declared an interest in the matter listed below:

Councillor	Minute	Declaration
T Lewis	1212	Cllr Lewis declared an interest as a member of the Joint Members' Working Group and did not sit as a member of the Scrutiny Committee

1211 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 15 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1212 BROADLAND AND SOUTH NORFOLK – COLLABORATIVE WORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Members considered the report of the Joint Broadland and South Norfolk Feasibility Study Team which sought to advise members and gain their views regarding the proposed introduction of an interim shared planning management team between Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council. It was noted that the report had already been endorsed by the Joint Members' Working Group and the Joint Members' Scrutiny Group, which consisted of members from both Councils.

The Head of Business Transformation summarised the salient points contained in the report, highlighting the similarities in the planning priorities and structures of the two Authorities. Members noted that the Councils had a history of collaboration, having worked closely together on projects such as the Greater Norwich Growth Board and the Greater Norwich City Deal, and with their investment in the Norwich Northern Distributor Road (NNDR), with a shared objective of driving and delivering economic and housing growth and prosperity.

Concerns were raised regarding the costs and efficiencies as detailed in the report and also the potential for costs to escalate as the proposed arrangement continued. It was noted that, although the report showed an additional cost of £5,803 to be split between the two Councils, the sharing of expertise across both Authorities would result in savings and efficiencies, including the reduced need to engage external consultants, and by removing the requirement for senior officers from both Councils to attend strategic partner meetings. It was also envisaged that collaborative working would allow the Authorities to share best practices and identify opportunities for working more efficiently and effectively across the two organisations and to work together with a greater combined voice and influence. In addition, the collaboration would improve the potential to attract additional funding and influence on a national and regional stage. Members requested that detail of these efficiencies and savings be added to the rationale in the report before its consideration by Cabinet on 8 January 2018.

In response to a member's question regarding any wider changes proposed, officers clarified that only the three senior planning positions were currently being considered and that other planning officer posts would not be affected. It was, however, noted that should, during the arrangement, further efficiencies be identified then changes might be considered in the future.

Cllr Bendle advised members that although the original intention had been for both Councils to consider the whole schedule in March/April 2018 with a proposal to commence collaborative working for any areas identified in June/July 2018, the vacancy for a Planning Policy Manager at South Norfolk Council had presented an earlier opportunity for an interim shared planning management team between the two Authorities. The Head of Business Transformation confirmed that details of the wider collaboration would be discussed and developed by the two informal joint working groups before consideration by Council in April and June 2018. It was suggested that Cllr Minshull provide the South Norfolk Scrutiny Committee with feedback on the work undertaken by the Joint Members' Scrutiny Group and also his observations from the Joint Members' Working Group, and that this be added as a standing item to the Scrutiny Committee's work programme. It was also requested that the Head of Business Transformation should seek the views of the Broadland District Council's Scrutiny Committee and communicate this, as required.

In response to a member's query regarding the reporting process for planning in the two different organisations, officers clarified that although South Norfolk Council's management structure differed to Broadland District Council's in that Broadland operated with a Deputy Chief Executive and Heads of Service rather than a director directly responsible for planning, the current reporting processes would remain unchanged. Officers also confirmed that planning applications would be dealt with in the same way in both Councils.

After discussion, members requested that the wording in Recommendation 4 in the report be made more specific and suggested that the additional words: *"regarding shared posts where vacancies arise and other contract opportunities"* be added after the wording: *"to pursue other early opportunities"*. It was also suggested that the Scrutiny Committee review the arrangements after six months at its meeting scheduled for 27 June 2018.

After members had noted the above points discussed, it was then:

RESOLVED to:

1. Endorse Recommendation 1 in the report;
2. Endorse Recommendation 2 in the report;
3. Endorse Recommendation 3 in the report and that South Norfolk Council's Scrutiny Committee consider the review in 6 months-time at its meeting scheduled for 27 June 2018;
4. Endorse Recommendation 4 in the report and recommend to Cabinet that the additional wording: *"regarding shared posts where vacancies arise and other contract opportunities"* be added after the wording: *"to pursue other early opportunities..."*

5. Add a standing item to the Scrutiny Committee work programme to allow the Chairman to update the Committee on work undertaken at the Joint Scrutiny Group meetings;
6. Recommend that the Head of Business Transformation seek the views of the Broadland District Council's Scrutiny Committee and communicate this, as required;
- and
7. Recommend that Officers expand on the rationale contained within the report prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 8 January 2018.

1213 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

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

(The meeting concluded at 3:06pm)

Chairman