



CABINET

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Cabinet of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 6.00pm.

Cabinet Member Present:	Councillors: S Vincent (Leader), T Mancini-Boyle, J Copplestone, J Emsell, L Hemsall, J Leggett and F Whymark.
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillors: M Murrell, S Riley (for part of the meeting)
Officers in Attendance:	The Managing Director, Director of Resources, Director Place, Director People and Communities, Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer), Assistant Director Planning, Assistant Director Finance, Chief of Staff, Senior Finance Business Partner, Strategy and Programmes Manager, Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

204 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J Leggett declared a non-pecuniary interest as a trustee of Leeway Domestic Violence and Abuse Services.

205 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record, save for the following amendments:

Minute No: 198 – Delivery Plan 2021/22

The addition of 'Transformation' to the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development in paragraph five.

'Contractor' was amended to 'contract' in paragraph six.

Minute No 200: - Mutual Aid Agreement Norfolk and Waveney Health & Care Partnership

'Moratorium' was changed to 'Memorandum' in paragraph five.

206 REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON CABINET MEMBERS

The Chairman agreed that, at his discretion, all non-Cabinet Members in attendance be allowed to join the debate at the relevant point of the proceedings on request.

207 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised Members that the Committee had agreed with all the report recommendations, when it reviewed the Cabinet Agenda on 9 March 2021.

208 ECONOMIC SUCCESS PANEL

Cabinet received the Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Success Panel held on 1 February 2021.

209 WELLBEING PANEL

Cabinet received the Minutes of the meeting of the Wellbeing Panel held on 3 February 2021

210 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3

The report provided a summary of the Council's performance and finance positions for Quarter 3 and was aligned to the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2020/21.

The Leader noted that the report demonstrated the amazing achievements of the One Team in supporting the delivery of services by both Councils.

The Strategy and Programme Manager advised the meeting that 11 performance measures were on target to meet the year end success criteria; six measures were at risk of not meeting the target and two measures were not on target to meet the year end success criteria. Nine further measures were being baselined to determine their targets.

The following performance measures in the report were drawn to the Committee's attention:

- The percentage of vacant retail space in market towns had remained relatively stable over the last two quarters, however it was likely that the pandemic was having a delayed effect, therefore, the Council was working on a suite of proposals to support the economic recovery of the market town high streets.
- Due to the pandemic the collection of Business Rates was below the performance in Q3 in 2019/20 and it was not expected that the 99 percent collection target by year end would be achieved. The Business

Rates Team had worked proactively with businesses to offer extended and deferred payments where appropriate.

- Performance for the number of working days taken to process new claims for Housing/Council Tax Benefit was an impressive five working days, two days less than the target of seven days.
- Successful interventions to prevent or relieve homelessness stood at 62 percent, which was below the target of 80 percent. This was mainly Covid-19 related, as with each successive lockdown more people were finding themselves homeless. The Team were currently recruiting and providing training to improve performance in the coming weeks and months.
- The number of affordable homes delivered had improved during Quarter 3 with a total of 65 new build homes for rent and affordable home ownership being delivered, almost double that of the previous two quarters. With a cumulative total in Quarter 3 of 101 new affordable homes, Broadland has exceeded the yearly target requirement of 96 new affordable homes in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Central Norfolk.
- Staff absence levels for short term sickness was a very positive 2.83 days. The target was no more than 4.5 days.
- The collection rate of Council Tax would be lower this year than in previous years due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the collection rate had been impacted, the proactive action taken by the Council to engage and continue to issue notices had helped maintain performance above the national trend.

In respect of the Council's finance revenue position for Quarter 3, the Senior Finance Business Partner advised the meeting that it was currently estimated that the Council would have an underspend this year of £860,000.

The main driver for the underspend was the People and Communities directorate, which was forecasting an underspend of £444,000. This was primarily due to increased income from recycling credits; a favourable variance on Housing Benefit payments; a delay in the full rollout of the clinical waste collection and a saving on money set aside for waste procurement of £68,000.

The Place directorate was forecasting an underspend of £79,000 as a result of salary savings due to vacancies and additional land charges fee income, which had been generated by more people moving to take advantage of the stamp duty fees exemption.

The Capital budget spend was £1.2m against an approved total of £4.5m and an overall total budget of £10.4m.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised the meeting that Appendix 1 to the report set out in more detail the explanations for the underspends. She also noted that any Covid-19 funding that was underspend would be brought forward to the 2021/22 budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance acknowledged that the figures for Council Tax and Business Rates were below the target, but noted that these were unprecedented times and that the proactive measures being taken by the Council had kept any collection rate reduction to a minimum. She also noted that arrears would be carried over to the next financial year and collected retrospectively.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development noted the excellent performance of the Council, given the situation caused by the pandemic. He also commended officers for compiling all the data in a well presented a report and he looked forward to seeing the targets for the measures that were being baselined.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development noted that the report incorrectly stated that the Food Enterprise Park was near Eaton; it was in fact near Honingham Thorpe.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence advised the meeting that the pilot clinical waste collection was not a doorstep collection, as stated in the report. She also noted that the reduction in recycling in Quarter 2 had been in all recycling, not just dry recycling.

Members were also informed that food waste collection was to be extended to another 1,700 dwellings. Collections would commence from 26 April 2021.

Cabinet were asked to note that the target of no more than 30 missed bins per 100,000 collected was a very high standard and the slight increase over this figure was still a good performance.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence question why fly tipping incidents were being baselined when the information had been collected for a number of years. The Director for People and Communities confirmed that he would look into the matter and report back to Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing noted that the data showed good levels of staff wellbeing and that the discretionary measures to support vulnerable residents that the Council was undertaking was to be commended, as was the roll out of Disabled Facilities Grants and the Handy Person Plus scheme. He also noted the pressure that the Housing Benefits Team was working under and that the Housing Allocations Policy, which would be rolled out next month, would help staff meet this demand.

The Leader drew members' attention to Measure 1 (progress towards delivery of the predicted £8.6m savings through collaboration with South Norfolk), which was on track and indicated better than predicted savings. The One

Team was also proving to be more resilient and was delivering faster and more effectively despite the pandemic and well as floods both internal and external. He commended staff for their hard work in delivering services to residents.

Voting was carried out by a show of hands and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

To

1. Note the revenue and capital position; and
2. Note the 2020/21 performance for Quarter 3.

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

211 COVID-19 HARDSHIP FUND POLICY 2021/22

The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager introduced the report, which recommended that Cabinet approve the adoption of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund Policy for the year 2021/22 to provide short-term stability for residents suffering financial hardship.

The Policy was a continuation of an assistance fund that had been established in 2020 by the Council to help residents who were experiencing severe financial hardship due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Council had been allocated a Covid-19 support grant from central Government of £117,302. It was proposed that £25,000 of this be apportioned for the Hardship Fund.

The amount applicants could receive was limited to £500 and would be for daily living essentials such as food and heating. A wide criteria would be used to ensure that all those in need could qualify for the fund.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance Officers advised members that the policy would only be utilised after all other support and welfare systems had been explored and that officers would be using the Joseph Rowntree minimum income standard as guidance when calculating an application for the hardship fund.

It was confirmed that the fund was in addition to the existing Hardship Fund that the Council had in place.

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

RESOLVED:

To approve the adoption of the Covid-19 Hardship Policy for the financial year 2021/22 and the apportionment of £25,000 to support the Fund.

Reasons for Decision

To assist residents in hardship, as a result of the pandemic.

212 SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

Prior to the meeting it had been decided that this item be referred to the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee for consideration before being brought back to Cabinet for determination at a later date.

213 AFFORDABLE HOME OWNERSHIP

The Director of Place introduced the report, which proposed the expansion of the local connection criteria for Affordable Home Ownership to include current residents of South Norfolk and Norwich City, via a reciprocal agreement for a trial period of two years.

The pilot scheme proposed that current residents living in any of the three districts could apply for a new build Shared Equity or Discounted Market Sale product within the district that they wished to live.

The scheme would cover around 15 percent of the annual affordable housing provision in the District.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing noted that there was a lack of data in the report and proposed that the matter be deferred and referred back to the Wellbeing Policy Development Panel for further investigation. The proposal was duly seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

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

RESOLVED:

To defer a decision on this matter and refer it back to the Wellbeing Policy Development Panel for further consideration.

Reasons for Decision

To undertake further investigation before a decision was made on this matter.

214 NEW HOMES BONUS CONSULTATION

The Director for Resources presented a draft response to the Future of the New Homes Bonus Consultation, which had been tabled as a late paper due to the pressures of the timescales for a response.

Members were advised that the figure for affordable homes delivered since 2011, in the Council's response could now be confirmed as over 4,000.

The Director for Resources gave a brief overview of the 30 questions in the consultation and the areas that they covered. This included:

- The current 80/20 split in New Homes Bonus between the District and the County Council
- The £350 premium per additional affordable home, which had not increased since the scheme started.
- Views were sought on the reward for local authorities bringing long-term empty homes back into use. It was noted that the Council could now increase Council Tax on these properties by up to five times the standard charge to encourage owners to bring them back into use.
- The time period on which payments were based. The Council was proposing using a three year average to reward consistent delivery.

The following questions on seven options were also asked in the Consultation:

- A. *Raising the baseline for growth in housing stock, above which local authorities were rewarded for additional homes.* The Council had requested that the current baseline be retained, as it would be financially detrimental to increase it.
- B. *Rewarding improvement: setting the payment threshold by reference to a local authority's past performance.* The Council did not agree with this proposal, as it would reduce the incentive for local authorities that had delivered significant housing growth in the past.
- C. *A hybrid approach: rewarding improvement and high housing growth.* Some modelling work on this option was still required in order to give a full response.
- D. *Repurposing the Bonus to support infrastructure investment in areas with low land value.* The Council disagreed with the proposal, as it was not considered that Broadland would benefit from this option.
- E. *Introducing a premium for modern methods of construction.* The Council disagreed with this and considered that other approaches should be used to promote modern methods of construction.
- F. *Modern methods of construction as a condition on receipt of funding.* The Council disagreed with this proposal as the market should determine the appropriate method of construction for each site.
- G. *Requiring an up-to-date local plan.* The Council noted that there were many reasons why a local plan might be delayed, which could unfairly penalise a local authority.

It was proposed that as the consultation was still to be finalised that the final sign-off be delegated to the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Planning, in consultation with the Director Resources and the Director Place.

Members commended officers for their hard work in putting the consultation response together in such a short time.

The Leader suggested that the recommendation be amended to clarify exactly what was being delegated.

Voting was carried out for the amended recommendation by way of a roll call

and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

To delegate the response to the future of the New Homes Bonus Consultation to the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Planning in consultation with the Director Resources and the Director Place.

Reasons for Decision

To respond to a Government consultation.

215 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

216 EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt minutes for the meeting held on 9 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

217 EXEMPT ECONOMIC SUCCESS PANEL MINUTES

Cabinet received the exempt minutes from the meeting of the Economic Success Panel held on 1 February 2021.

(The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm)

Chairman