

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held on Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 9.30am.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: G Minshull (Chairman), B Bernard, V Clifford-Jackson, B Duffin, J Rowe and R Savage
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor: J Wilby
Substitute:	Councillor: M Wilby
Cabinet Member Present:	Councillor: L Neal
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillors: D Bills, N Legg and V Thomson
Officers in Attendance:	The Assistant Director of Planning (H Mellors), the Assistant Director of Regulatory (N Howard), the Development Manager (T Lincoln), Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Committee Officer.

1284 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 January 2021, were confirmed as a correct record.

Minute No: 1280 – BRIEFING REPORT ON RECENT FLOODING IN SOUTH NORFOLK

The Assistant Director of Regulatory provided an update on the work undertaken following the Committees recommendations, he advised that:

- An article for the Link magazine was being prepared to provide residents with the relevant and up-to-date information on flooding support and prevention.
- 2 separate officer roles created to cover environmental enforcement and emergency incident response.

- A briefing for Town and Parish Councils had been arranged for April to cover local emergency response plans and resilience response groups.
- The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance had commenced a review on sandbags and methods of flood defence. Officers had decided to delay the review of the Councils own policy on sandbags until the outcome of the Flood Alliances review was known.

1285 BRIEFING REPORT ON HOW THE PLANNING SYSTEM ASSESSES FLOODING ISSUES

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr L Neal introduced the report and asked the Committee to consider the planning related contributing factors of the recent flooding and recommend improvements that the Council could implement.

The Assistant Director of Planning presented the briefing to the Committee where she outlined how planning officers assess planning applications and form decisions in line national advice and the Council's own development plan. She also advised members that the current Water Management Officer would soon be leaving the Council and that Members could consider expanding the role into a full-time post.

In response to member's question, the Development Manager advised that flood boards were not currently a condition in planning applications, and as the Council directs developments out of flood zone 2-3 areas it was not considered to be a relevant condition which could be added.

During a discussion on the types and importance of responses from statutory consultees, the Assistant Director of Planning informed members that Anglian Water commented on all applications which involved foul water and surface schemes, she noted that they were an important consultee and that planning officers have delayed determination in the past in order to receive the statutory response. She also advised the committee that consultee requests went the lead local flood authority for all applications of 10 or more properties, however they advised they would only respond to consultations on developments of 100 or more properties, due to a lack of resource in their department. The Council's own Water Management Officer provided consultee responses on applications of 1-10 properties and could where needed provide comments on applications of over 10 properties.

Several members noted their disappointment that the lead local flood authority were not responding to consultee requests of less than 100 properties.

One member queried whether there was evidence that a lack of maintenance of drainage systems contributed to the recent flooding in the district. The Assistant Director of Planning stated that the Council did not have evidence of

whether or not this contributed to the recent flooding. She advised members that the Council's current planning practice did not request completion reports from developers as evidence that works had been carried, however this could be added as a condition to applications if the committee felt it necessary, after further discussion the committee agreed that this recommendation should be made.

In response to comments that members would like to see factual local knowledge put forward by Parish Councils to be accessed by the lead local flood authority and environmental agency, the Assistant Director of Planning confirmed to members that evidence provided by Town and Parish Councils were already passed on as additional evidence, but highlighted that developer were responsible for the flood risk on their site only and not the local area.

Members discussed the possibility of expanding the role of the Water Management Officer into full-time position, where it was agreed that this increase in capacity would provide an opportunity for increased proactive work to take place.

In response to a members query regarding flooding caused by developments and not lack of maintenance, the Assistant Director of Regulatory advised that no figures were available, and explained that flooding was often the result of an accumulation of sources and not from a single source.

After further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

1. To note the contents of the report
2. To recommend that:
 - a. Training regarding the role of planning in regard to how the planning system assesses flooding issues be provided to all members
 - b. The Water Management Officer post become a full-time role, in line with paragraph 2.34 of the report
 - c. An additional condition be added to all relevant planning application approvals, requiring a verification report to be submitted to provide assurance that drainage has been installed and meets relevant requirements, in line with paragraph 2.34 of the report
3. To note the Committee's disappointment that the Lead Local Flood Authority does not comment on planning applications of less than 100 houses.

1286 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2020/21

The Chairman introduced the report on the activity of the Scrutiny Committee over the last year. He highlighted to members that the recommendations of the committee were taken seriously and often implemented by Cabinet.

One member requested an update on the proposal for temporary free parking in the market towns which was brought before the committee in August. The Chairman advised that this proposal was withdrawn after the August meeting as there was no indication at the time that a 3rd lockdown would occur and explained that this work was delegated to officers for a decision. He requested that officers provide a report to the committee at its next meeting.

It was then,

RESOLVED

To commend the Annual Review of the Scrutiny Committee 2020/21 to Council

1287 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

The Committee noted the Work Programme and Cabinet Core Agenda.

The Chairman informed members that as current legislation on remote meetings ended on 7 May this would be the last remote meeting of the committee, members noted their disappointment that remote meetings were not allowed to continue.

The Chairman expressed his desire to limit the number of in person meetings whilst social distancing guidelines were still in effect and proposed that the June meeting of the committee be cancelled.

(The meeting concluded at 10.53am)

Chairman