

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, held on Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 6.00pm.

Cabinet Members Present:	Councillors: S Vincent (Chairman), T Mancini-Boyle (Vice-Chairman), J Copplestone, J Emsell, S Lawn and J Leggett.
Apologies	Councillor: F Whymark.
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillors: E Laming and M Murrell
Officers in Attendance:	The Managing Director, Director of Resources, Director of Place, Director of People and Communities, Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer), Assistant Director of Planning, Assistant Director IT/Digital and Transformation, Strategy and Programme Manager, Senior Finance Business Partner, Capital and Treasury Accountant, Growth Delivery Manager, Community Assets Manager and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

The Leader advised members that following the meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee on Friday 12 November 2021 it had been concluded that further work was required on the Accommodation Review and, therefore, it had been decided to withdraw the report from today's Cabinet agenda.

204 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 19 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

205 REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON CABINET MEMBERS

Cllr E Laming asked the following question in relation to the Delivery Plan (to be considered at item 11- Strategic Performance and Finance Report).

The Vision for our place in the BDC Delivery Plan 2021-2022 states that it will take proactive steps to preserve the natural environment, but mentions nothing specific about the need to reduce CO2 emissions or reach net zero. This need is not mentioned in the delivery measures table which tracks service performance.

In the programme of work (H5) there is a brief mention of the need to reduce the Council's carbon footprint but no specific targets or carbon budget.

Since climate change is the biggest issue likely to affect Broadland, I would suggest that it should have more of a focus. Would the Council be willing to reconsider its Vision and Strategy in the light of this?

In response the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence advised the meeting that: *'Cllr Laming's question refers to the Delivery Plan, which was written to cover the current period, up to March 2022. During 2021 the Council had recruited a dedicated member of staff to deliver the Environmental Strategy in which it had committed to reducing its carbon emissions and to achieving Net Zero. A Carbon Audit has been commissioned and this is due to report in January 2022. At the same time, the Council's future office accommodation is under review with a strong environmental theme. The Council's Environmental Strategy sets a target for Net Zero for our estate and, once the Carbon Audit is completed, we will know our starting point for a Decarbonisation Strategy. I expect that this will focus on options, measures and targets for achieving net zero. These would then be incorporated into the business planning process and updated Environmental Strategy as appropriate.'*

206 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised Members on the views expressed by the Committee when it reviewed the Cabinet Agenda on 16 November 2021, as each item was considered.

207 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

Cabinet received the Minutes of the meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee held on 25 October 2021.

208 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 2 REPORT 2021/22

The Capital and Treasury Accountant introduced the report, which set out the Treasury Management activities for the first six months of the financial year 2021/22 and reported on financial indicators.

During the period investments totalled £57.005 million, with interest received on external cash investments during the financial year forecast to be around £380,000. Interest rates remained low, but there were indications that these could rise during 2022.

There had been no need to borrow externally so far this financial year and there had been no breaches of the Council's Prudential Indicators.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised the meeting that she was aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made an additional recommendation regarding a green and ethical approach to treasury management. She reminded Cabinet that the Treasury Management Strategy would be reviewed as part of the budget setting process in the New Year and drew attention to the following paragraph that was already in the current Treasury Management Strategy:

The Council, in making investments through its treasury management function, supports the ethos of socially responsible investments. We will actively seek to communicate this support to those institutions we invest in as well as those we are considering investing in by:

- *encouraging those institutions to adopt and publicise policies on socially responsible investments;*
- *requesting those institutions to apply council deposits in a socially responsible manner.*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that when the Treasury Management Strategy was next reviewed consideration would be given to making this policy more stringent.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To

1. Endorse the treasury activity for the first half of the year and note that it complies with the agreed strategy; and
2. Note the 2021/22 prudential indicators for the first six months of the year.

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

209 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The Director of People and Communities introduced the report, which sought approval to spend Household Support Funding provided by central Government on supporting those households who needed additional financial help this winter.

Members were informed that Norfolk County Council had been awarded £6,696,806 from the fund and had allocated £128,000 to Broadland. The allocation had been weighted by the level of benefit claimants per district.

The Council aimed to take a proactive approach to help vulnerable individuals and families who were most in need of support.

The funding criteria had been set by Government and was limited to support with the costs of:

- Food.
- Energy and water.
- Essentials linked to energy and water.

- Wider essentials. These may include, but were not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel.

The funding could not be used for mortgage payments or debt advice.

The Leader informed the meeting that the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing (who could not attend today's meeting) had made the following comment about the Fund:

I am pleased that we are proactively working to support our most vulnerable residents.

This support is focused upon need and not benefit criteria. With ever increasing food and fuel bills this Fund will ensure no Broadland resident will be cold or hungry this winter.

In answer to a query, the Director of People and Communities confirmed that the recipients of the Fund would be identified through the Norfolk Vulnerability Hub, which was a database used by partners and voluntary bodies across the county. Using the Hub, ensured access for those most in need, whilst mitigating against the possibility of the Fund being abused.

A key priority would be to ensure the Fund would be spent or committed by 31 March 2022. If this was spent there might be the possibility of accessing more from the overall County pot if funds remained available.

It was confirmed that Household support would commence as soon as the funding was received from the County Council.

RESOLVED

To delegate the spend of the Household Support Fund to the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing.

Reasons for Decision

To support the most vulnerable households in the District this winter.

210 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 1 AND QUARTER 2

The Strategy and Programmes Manager introduced the report, which provided an overview of the performance of the Council against the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2021/22.

Members were informed that 17 measures were currently meeting the year-end success criteria. Four measures were currently not meeting the year-end target or had missed the target by a narrow margin and had light touch monitoring in place. Three measures had not met the year-end target by a significant amount and close monitoring had been put in place. Three other measures were being baselined to determine a target.

Areas highlighted were:

- Over 1,360 vulnerable residents had been supported by a range of discretionary prevention services during Quarters 1 and 2, well over half of the year-end target of 2,000 for both Broadland and South Norfolk combined.
- In Quarter 1, over £5.7m had been secured from the European Regional Development Fund to deliver the Broadland Food Innovation Centre. In Quarter 2, £675,000 was secured as Broadland's allocation from the Norfolk Business Rates Pool.
- The collection of Business Rates, which was rated red in Quarter 4 20/21 was now amber. However, collection rates were still lower than the historical average pre-pandemic. The Economic Development Team continued to provide ongoing support to businesses in the District.
- Council Tax collection rates were also amber but were slightly ahead of this time last year (Q2 55.36% compared 55.19% 20/21). However, collection continued to be challenging in the aftermath of a very difficult 2020/21.
- The percentage of planning decisions made within statutory timescales – minors/others and householders was red, with 76 percent of planning application decisions in the first two quarters of the year made within statutory timescales. This was below the target of 90 percent and had resulted from a surge in the number of applications being submitted. The Planning Department had put additional resources in place to address this issue.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development commended the report, which confirmed that the Council was going in the right direction even during these very difficult times.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance noted the gradual improvement in Council Tax and Business Rates collection and emphasised the work being undertaken by the Council to support and engage with residents and businesses in the District.

In respect of planning decisions made within statutory timescales, the Portfolio Holder for Planning stressed that this was due to the unusual number of applications during the pandemic and that the additional resources put in place would move this measure back on track by Quarter 4.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development drew members' attention to the £5.7m in European funding and £675,000 from the Norfolk Business Rates Pool that had been secured in Quarters 1 and 2 that would be used to support economic growth in the District.

Cabinet was informed by the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence that the figures on missed waste bin collection had seen an increase due to an administrative error in how they were recorded. This had since been rectified and the correct figures should be available for the next quarter. She added that hygiene ratings for food businesses were high with 98 percent of businesses in the District rated 'Good' or 'Very Good'.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing had sent in comments commending the Communities and Housing Team and Early Help Teams for continuing to support Broadland's most vulnerable residents through these very difficult of times. In particular he noted how they were working with partners to provide discretionary services, which were essential during the pandemic. Also of note was the Council's housing offer and the Housing Allocation Policy, which was to be reviewed to further enhance the level of service provided.

The Leader commended the excellent report, which was well put together and demonstrated the high level of performance being delivered by the Council.

The Managing Director drew members' attention to the high level of staff satisfaction, with 90 percent of staff feeling supported by their line manager and 75 percent of staff survey respondents feeling positive about hybrid working. Staff retention rates were also consistently high and an emphasis was being placed on increasing the number of apprentices and graduate entry roles at the Council, all of which was very positive.

The Senior Finance Business Partner provided the Committee with an overview of the Council's finances over Quarter 2.

The Resources Directorate was forecasting a favourable variance against a budget of £199,000. The reasons for this underspend was due to savings from the corporate contingency budget, the ceasing of the catering service and two IT posts supporting infrastructure work being attributed to the Covid-19 spend.

The Place Directorate was forecasting a favourable variance against budget of £162,000.

The main reasons for this underspend were:

- A change in contractor for street lighting maintenance.
- Increased income received from land charges.
- Favourable variance against budget due to vacancies across a number of services in the first half of the year, which had now being recruited to.

The People and Communities directorate was forecasting a favourable variance of £528,000.

The reasons for this underspend were primarily:

- Waste Procurement fees had not utilised the full budget.
- Recurring savings from the delivery of the Clinical Waste service currently procured through a contract with the County Council's service provider.
- Increased income through the bulky waste service, due to the pandemic.

The actual spend against budget in the Capital Programme was £3,669,000, with an estimated outturn of £14,737,000.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance drew members' attention to the proposals for utilising the one-off pot generated by the underspend. She advised the meeting that further work

needed to be undertaken on how these funds should be spent and, therefore, proposed that recommendation 1a. (to agree the proposals for the usage of this year's potential underspends) should be deleted.

This proposal was duly seconded and following a show of hands it was:

RESOLVED

To

1. Note the revenue and capital position; and
2. Note the 2021/22 performance for Quarters 1 and 2 combined; and
3. Note the update of the Delivery Plan for 2021/22.

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

211 UPDATE ON MEMBER IT

The Chief of Staff introduced the report, which provided an update on the progress to date with the Member IT project, as well as the outcomes from the recent survey. The report also included information about a new electronic committee system and the plan for trialling options for member IT ahead of the May 2023 elections.

During the summer a survey of members was conducted to understand their use of iPads and to identify if any issues remained. Unfortunately only 11 responses were received, which was disappointing, but might indicate that there were only a few members who continued to have any issues with their IT.

Members were asked to note that Cabinet had agreed that a trial would commence in spring 2022 to look at the best IT option that could be adopted from May 2023 and that the new electronic committee system would bring further benefits for Members.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development noted that member use of iPads had been successful in making savings in printing and postage and that the introduction of Office365 had further improved the technology.

In response to a request, the Chief of Staff confirmed that officers were looking into producing videos with IT hints and guidance for members. The Committee Services Team would also be trained to assist members with their iPads.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To accept the report on current IT provision for Members and note the plans for the trial

period.

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

212 FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan.

213 EXCLUSION OF 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.

214 PROPOSAL FOR A SECOND BUILDING AT THE FOOD ENTERPRISE PARK

The Growth Delivery Manager introduced the exempt report, which proposed building a second building at the Food Enterprise Park.

Members confirmed that they had considered the business case for the proposal and it had been determined that they did not want the Council exposed to the risks involved with the development.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To not proceed with the project.

Reasons for Decision

To protect the public purse.

215 AWARD OF CONTRACT – BURE VALLEY RAILWAY FENCING

The Community Assets Manager introduced the exempt report, which sought approval for the award of a contract for the replacement of a boundary fence along the Bure Valley Railway (BVR).

Cabinet was advised that, if approved, work would commence early in the New Year.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To

1. Agree to award the contract for replacement of the boundary fence; and
2. Approve the use of funding allocated capital improvements on the Bure Valley Railway for the purpose of installing a boundary fence.

Reasons for Decision

To bring the boundary fence of the Bure Valley Railway up to the required standard.

(The meeting concluded at 6.56pm)

Chairman