

Agenda Item: 4

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday 14 March 2022 at 9.00am.

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| Committee Members Present: | Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), A Dearnley, R Elliott, K Mason Billig, G Minshull and L Neal |
| Apologies: | Councillor: A Thomas |
| Other Members in Attendance: | Councillor: M Edney and T Laidlaw |
| Officers in Attendance: | The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Chief of Staff (E Hodds), the Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation (C Lawrie), the Assistant Director Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Assistant Director Planning (H Mellors), the Internal Consultancy Senior Lead (S Bessey) and the Policy and Partnerships Officer (V Parsons) |

2989 URGENT BUSINESS – UKRAINIAN EVACUEES

The Chairman referred to the war in Ukraine, and requested that officers, as a matter of urgency, explored ways in which the Council could assist with the humanitarian crisis, and offer practical help to Ukrainian evacuees. He referred to the possibility of South Norfolk House being used as a reception or triage centre.

The Managing Director agreed that officers would explore the issue as a matter of priority. He explained that the situation was fast moving; he had spoken to the Home Office that morning, and intermediary arrangements were in place to line up evacuees with sponsoring organisations and families. Norfolk County Council was looking to set up an accommodation centre, and the Managing Director suggested that the Council could play an important role in the Norfolk wide agenda.

Members indicated their support for the proposals, and it was

RESOLVED:

That officers consider further how the Council can assist Ukrainian evacuees, including the possibility of offering accommodation at South Norfolk House.

2990 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2991 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 2021/22

Members considered the report of the Senior Finance Business Partner and the Strategy and Programmes Manager, which provided an overview of the performance of the Council against the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2020/21.

Cllr K Mason Billig congratulated officers on the strong performance of the last quarter and made particular reference to the improved performance at the Council's leisure centres. She also referred to the Council's risk register and suggested that amendment was required to reflect the current position associated with cyber security and the impact of inflation on operating costs.

Members agreed that provision needed to be made to cover the inflationary impact on costs, and that it would be prudent to keep aside some of the year's underspend (which was only a prediction at this stage), to fund such increases. The Director of People and Communities explained that steps were being taken to improve resilience around fuel supply at Ketteringham Depot, through the purchase of a 30,000 litre tank, and mention was also given to plans to reduce the Council's dependence on fossil fuels with a shift to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, as an alternative to diesel.

Cllr A Dearnley explained that the Council was in a good position financially but stressed that the situation could change quickly and that it was important not to be complacent. He drew attention to the progress made in delivering savings through the collaboration with Broadland and was pleased to report that savings were on track.

Discussion turned to borrowing and the Assistant Director Finance advised that an application to the PWLB to borrow £20m, had been submitted, and that the funds would be in the bank the following day. The loan interest rates averaged at 2.4% and was made up of 15-year, 20-year and 25-year loan periods, which provided more options for the future. Members noted that the Council would immediately begin to incur interest costs.

The Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation outlined the current position with regard to performance measures, and the Council's risk register.

Members were informed that two measures, the Number of Working days taken to process new Council Tax and Housing Benefit claims, and the percentage of Planning Decisions made within Statutory Timescales – Majors, were not on track to meet the year-end targets. Members noted that the Benefits Team had faced significant challenges in processing additional payments to support the Covid response, but performance was now improving. With regard to Planning, officers explained that the number of planning applications submitted had increased by 400 for South Norfolk, when compared to the previous year, and there had also been problems with the recruitment of staff. Cabinet noted that nationally, the team was continuing to perform highly, and that the Council had chosen to set challenging targets.

In response to queries, the Director of Place confirmed that the deadline to allocate Covid Support money to local businesses, was 31 March, and he assured members the funds would be distributed to benefit local businesses. Members noted that the Council had recently appointed an officer who would provide support to businesses both on regulatory and economic development matters.

Turning to the Risk Register, the Chairman reiterated the need to make amendments to reflect the current risks of war, and cyber security. The Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation assured members that the Council was acting on guidance from the National Cyber Security Centre, and the Managing Director added that the Council's Emergency Plan was also being updated to reflect the current issues.

It was

RESOLVED:

1. To note the revenue and capital position (variance detailed at Appendix 1 of the report)
2.
 - a) To note the current position with respect to risks and agree the actions to support risk mitigation (detailed in Appendix 2).
 - b) That the risk register be updated to reflect the current position associated with cyber security, inflationary effects on operating costs and the war in Ukraine.
3. To note the 2021/22 performance for Quarter 3 (detailed in Appendix 3).

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that processes are in place to improve performance and that budgets are managed effectively.

Other Options Considered

None.

2992 COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN 2021 – 2022: PROGRESS REPORT AND FINANCIAL POSITION

Members considered the report of the Director of People and Communities, which provided an update on the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Business Plan and an overview of the Council's financial position with regard to Covid budgets.

The Director of People and Communities outlined the salient points of his report to members. He drew attention to section 5 of the report, which outlined proposals to spend the surplus un-ringfenced Covid funding to improve office facilities for staff.

The Chairman agreed that the Council had made excellent progress with the deployment of Covid resources, and he congratulated all officers, organisations and volunteers that had assisted the process.

Cabinet indicated its support to use the surplus un-ringfenced funds, to improve current staff facilities, including those needed for catering, and suggested that this would be required, should the building be used in future as a triage centre for Ukrainian evacuees (see minute 2989).

It was

RESOLVED:

1. To note the progress made against the COVID recovery plan, endorsed by Cabinet in June 2021.
2. To agree to the deployment of Un-ringfenced COVID grant to fund Options presented in section 5 of the report.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that Covid resources are targeted where needed to assist the response and recovery.

Other Options Considered

None.

2993 SOUTH NORFOLK AND BROADLAND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY 2022-2025

Members considered the report of the Policy and Partnerships Officer which presented the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Strategy 2022-2025, for approval.

The Policy and Partnerships Officer introduced her report and explained that the Strategy had been developed in line with central government's own Rough Sleeper Strategy and also following a review of the Council's Rough Sleeper service, which had been in place since August 2019. She explained that the findings of the review indicated that there was a consistent small number of rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, throughout South Norfolk.

During discussion, the Chairman reminded members that the issue of rough sleeping was a wider issue in the county, and he referred to support provided by South Norfolk to the YMCA in Norwich. He also referred to a recent decision to refurbish the Council's temporary accommodation, and the need for this work to be carried out as soon as possible.

In response to questions, the Policy and Partnerships Officer explained that rough sleepers were asked whether they were ex military, and although she did not have numbers, she believed them to be low across both South Norfolk and Broadland.

It was

RESOLVED:

To approve adoption of the South Norfolk and Broadland Rough Sleeper Strategy 2022-2025.

The Reason for the Decision

To continue to work towards the commitment to eliminate rough sleeping.

Other Options Considered

None

2994 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

2996 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

2997 SINGLE IT SOLUTION FOR REVENUES & BENEFITS

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families and the Internal Consultancy Senior Lead, which presented a business case for a joint Revenues and Benefits IT solution.

Cabinet welcomed the proposals, however, did express concerns as to whether a cloud-based system was appropriate, given current circumstances. Officers agreed to consider further whether a cloud based system would offer appropriate security and resilience.

It was

RESOLVED:

To agree the recommendations as outlined at section 6 of the report.

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(The meeting concluded 10.05 am)

Chairman