

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday 5 December 2022 at 9.00 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: A Thomas (Chairman), A Dearnley, R Elliott, G Minshull and L Neal

Apologies for absence Councillors: J Fuller and K Mason Billig

Other Member in Attendance: Councillor: 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 of Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director for Regulatory (N Howard), the Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation, the Assistant Director for Planning (H Mellors), the Governance Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer (L Mockford), the Growth Delivery Manager (E Larter), the Programme Manager (D Baillie-Murden), the Strategic Growth and Projects Manager (N Cunningham), the Strategy and Intelligence Manager (S Carey), the Senior Heritage and Design Officer, (C Bennett) the Capital and Strategy Accountant (D Slowther), the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager (R Dunsire), the Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager (K Gallagher), the National Management Trainee (E Howman), the Growth Projects Lead (T Nelson) and the Democratic Services Manager (C White).

3058 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman it was:

RESOLVED

To appoint Cllr A Thomas as Chairman for the meeting.

3059 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 31 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3060 ADOPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS FOR BERGH APTON, DITCHINGHAM AND KIMBERLEY CONSERVATION AREAS

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr L Neal introduced the report, which proposed the approval and adoption of an amended conservation area boundary for Kimberley and conservation area appraisals and management guidelines for Bergh Apton, Ditchingham and Kimberley conservation areas.

Cllr Neal informed Cabinet that the conservation area boundaries for these three areas had not been amended since their original designations in 1994. It was, therefore, considered necessary to review the areas, as during this period development could lead to a change in the character and appearance of the conservation areas. The appraisals could recommend extending, removing or leaving unchanged conservation area boundaries.

Members noted that the appraisals involved a site visit with district and parish council members, as well as interested residents in attendance. This had been followed by a statutory consultation on the appraisals.

The appraisals proposed that no boundary changes be made to the conservation areas in Bergh Apton and Ditchingham, but that a slight change be made to extend the Kimberley boundary. The Regulation and Planning Policy Committee had considered the proposals in the report at its meeting on 7 November 2022 and had recommended that they be approved.

The Senior Heritage and Design Officer added that the proposals in the report were part of a comprehensive review of the conservation areas in the District. As well as considering boundaries the appraisals also included conservation management guidelines, to ensure that improvements were made in a sympathetic manner.

The Chairman commended the report and noted that the documents gave a very interesting insight into local communities.

Cllr R Elliott agreed with the Chairman, but pointed out that the ward affected by the changes to the Kimberley Conservation Area was Wicklewood, not North Wymondham as stated in the report.

In response to a query it was confirmed that the recommendation for the reinstatement of white trellising at the Tayler and Green social housing in Ditchingham was advisory, rather than being a feature that would be subject to enforcement.

It was

RESOLVED:

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves

1. The adoption of the proposed change to the boundary of Kimberley Conservation Area.

2. The adoption of the conservation area appraisals and conservation management guidelines for Bergh Apton, Ditchingham and Kimberley Conservation Areas.

The Reason for the Decision

To provide up-to-date information on conservation areas when making planning decisions and to assist in identifying areas where there is the potential for enhancement.

Other Options Considered

None.

3061 STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 2022/23

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr A Dearnley, introduced the report, which provided an overview of the performance of the Council against the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2022/24.

Members' attention was drawn to the Finance Revenue Dashboard Overview, which showed an adverse variance of £188,000 under Individuals and Families due to pressures on temporary accommodation and the cost-of-living crisis. The report also showed that recovery in Leisure Services was going well, and members were asked to note that investment income was up by £695,000, due to an increase in interest rates, which meant that the Council's finances were in a generally healthy position at the half year position.

In respect of the Capital budget, the forecast was for a spend of £10.6m by the end of the financial year. The report also requested that Refuse Vehicles from the 2023/24 Capital budget be pre-ordered, due to the current long lead in times and that the 23/24 Remote Working Capital Budget of £165,000 be brought forward to 2022/23.

The Assistant Director for Finance informed the meeting that despite being faced with inflationary pressures, officers were working hard to bring spending back in line with budgets by the end of the financial year.

The Chairman noted that the coming winter would be challenging, but that the return being achieved on investments was helping to offset additional expenditure.

In answer to a question about an increase in gate fees for refuse disposal, the Assistant Director for Finance confirmed that these fees could fluctuate widely according to world markets for materials. The Managing Director added that members should be mindful of this issue and make provision for an increase in gate fees when setting next year's budget.

A member referred to the fact that it was unlikely that Big Sky would require a loan from the Council of £2.5m during the financial year, and suggested that

this needed to be reflected with a reduction of income in the revenue budget. In response the Assistant Director for Finance explained that the revenue interest target had been set prudently and was still on target to achieve what was expected. Members noted that the current estimate stood at £1.510m.

The Strategy and Intelligence Manager drew members' attention to page 89 of the agenda (Performance Dashboard Overview), which set out the 29 performance delivery measures. During the Quarter 2 period, 21 measures had met or exceeded their year-end success criteria and were rated green; eight measures had not met the year-end target and were rated amber. These measures would be monitored, and mitigations put in place, where necessary. Members noted that there were no measures that had missed their target by a significant amount (none rated red).

Turning to risks, Cabinet was informed that the following three new strategic risks had been added to the Council's Risk Register:

- S14 - insufficient private and social housing stock to meet the demand on the Council and temporary accommodation.
- P2 - The inability to find Gypsy and Traveller sites to meet the need and enable the Greater Norwich Local Plan to be found sound.
- S15 - As a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis, there may be a significantly increased demand for Council services

Since the last quarterly report two strategic risks had been deleted; these were: A1 (ICT infrastructure failure) – this had been closed as mitigating actions had been implemented and SI1 (Council unable to respond effectively to further waves of the Covid-19 Pandemic) – de-escalated to the operational risk register.

In response to a query regarding possible reduction in planning income caused by nutrient neutrality, the Assistant Director for Planning confirmed that there had not been a major downturn in planning applications because of this issue, but there had been a delay in some planning determinations.

In response to a query about customer satisfaction members were advised that this was the first year of using this measure and it had been found that most of the dissatisfaction found was due to the timeliness and quality of information given. It was anticipated that this measure would improve as the actions in the First-Class Customer Service project were implemented.

The Chairman noted that there were many positives in the report, in particular how many vulnerable residents were supported by the Council's discretionary prevention services and the number of affordable homes delivered in the District. She also asked members to note how well the Council was working as part of the Health and Wellbeing Board to develop and maximise collaboration with health partners.

Members noted that although external funding to support growth was rated at amber there were a number of projects in the pipeline and significant investment would be coming forward in the future.

It was

RESOLVED:

1. To
 - a) Note the revenue and capital position for Quarter 2 (variance details in Appendix 1)
 - b) Note the 2022/23 performance for Quarter 2 (detail in Appendix 2)
 - c) Note the current position with respect to risks and agree the actions to support risk mitigation (detailed in Appendix 3).
 - d) Note the mid-year update of the 2022/24 Delivery Plan (detail in appendix 4)
 - e) Agree that officers can pre-order Refuse Vehicles from the 23/24 Capital budgets, due to the current long lead in times.
2. **TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the 23/24 Remote Working Capital Budget of £165,000 is brought forward to 22/23.

The Reason for the Decision

The report was a factual account.

Other Options Considered

None

3062 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 2 REPORT 2022/23

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr A Dearnley, introduced the report, which reviewed the treasury management activity during the first six months of the financial year 2022/23 and reported on the prudential indicators.

Cabinet was informed that the Council's investments totalled £96,383m as at 30 September 2022, which was due to many years of good financial management. This figure included loans and equity in the Council's wholly owned companies of £40.053m. The rise in interest rates had benefitted the Council by nearly £700,000 more than expected, which had compensated for other areas where costs had risen. It was currently forecast that this would result in an additional £300,000 being transferred into General Reserves by the end of the year.

The Capital and Treasury Accountant added that the Council had taken advantage of increasing interest rates, as existing investments at lower rates had matured. So far, the Council had achieved a 4.7 percent return and as high as 6.8 percent on its commercial properties. It was expected that interest rates would peak at five percent in September 2023.

The Managing Director advised the meeting that a cautionary approach should be taken when setting future budgets, as inflationary pressures were likely to be more prolonged than the current high level of interest rates.

RESOLVED:

To:

1. Endorse the treasury activity for the first half of the year and that it complies with the agreed strategy.
2. Note the 2022/23 prudential indicators for the first six months of the year

The Reason for the Decision

The report was a factual account.

Other Options Considered

None.

3063 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr L Neal introduced the report which sought retrospective approval for the Council's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) proposal. South Norfolk had been allocated £915,788 from the fund to support capital projects. However, as the deadline for submitting a proposal was 30 November 2022, which did not align with the Cabinet cycle of meetings, the bid had been signed off by the Leader and senior officers in line with the Constitution, and the report was therefore requesting retrospective approval from Cabinet.

The bid was for the delivery of a roundabout and road network to unlock investment land at Hethel and help create up to 1,000 new jobs, as well as providing a link to the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor.

The Strategic Growth Projects Manager added that the bid was a significant opportunity to help in the development of Hethel Engineering. The Council would have two years to spend the allocation, so it was proposed to finalise the design of the project in the first year, with delivery by March 2025.

The scheme would add significant value by creating jobs and helping businesses grow in the key cluster areas of advanced manufacturing and engineering.

The Chairman noted that the Council had already approved £300,000 from the Council's allocation of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool 2020/21 to support delivery of this project, so this was an excellent opportunity to bring the scheme forward and support the Hethel employment land expansion.

It was

RESOLVED:

To:

1. Approve the principal areas of investment as set out in section 4 of the report.
2. Delegate to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Managing Director and the Leader of the Council, to make any non-substantive changes to the principal areas of investment as required by the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Reason for the Decision

To utilise external funding to support the economic growth ambitions of the Council.

Other Options Considered

None

3064 BEST IN CLASS - TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Cabinet considered the report, which presented a business case to address an increase in demand for temporary accommodation in the District.

Cabinet was advised that South Norfolk had a strong track record of delivering housing services and was highly rated by its partner organisations. However, due to the worsening economic climate, the Council was facing a significant increase in homelessness, caused by the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and pressures on housing stock. In addition, regionally there had been a 26 percent reduction in the private rental sector.

To address these issues, it was proposed to increase the amount of temporary accommodation stock that the Council directly owned and managed to 43 units. This investment would help mitigate the increasing costs of funding bed and breakfast accommodation.

The prevention of homelessness in the first place was a key priority of the Council and to allow the Core Team to focus on this it was proposed that additional staff be recruited for every ten units of temporary accommodation. The cost of these staff would be paid for by the additional income and would be at nil cost to the Council.

The Chairman emphasised that the proposal was about far more than just housing and that the accompanying support was essential for helping residents to move on to a secured tenancy and to deal with the issues that had required them to seek the help of the Council in the first place.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Cllr Dearnley, noted that the business case made sound financial sense, as the Council would own the properties and it would impact on the revenue budget by reducing costs.

Members noted that external expertise would be required to procure the properties.

In response to a query, Cabinet was informed that it was intended that residents should be in temporary accommodation for no more than six months, however currently this period was on average six to nine months.

RESOLVED:

To:

1. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Portfolio Holder for Better Lives and the Portfolio Holder for Finance to purchase individual properties up to £750,000.

2. TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL agrees to

- a) Create an additional capital budget of £1,808,000, to purchase additional temporary accommodation and to capitalise the staff costs of any purchases.
- b) The recruitment of 1 x FTE officer for every additional purchase of 10 units of temporary accommodation, which will be paid for by the additional income received from those properties.

The Reason for the Decision

To respond to an increase in demand for Temporary Accommodation in the District.

Other Options Considered

None

3065 REPORT ON SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL'S COST OF LIVING RESPONSE

The Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager introduced the report, which set out the Council's initial response to the cost of living crisis and asked Cabinet to support the proposals in it.

Members were reminded that the key areas of high inflation were currently transport, food and energy and it was anticipated that 37 percent of people in South Norfolk would be in fuel poverty after April 2023. Vulnerable groups included those on benefits, low income households, people of pensionable age, households with children and lone parents.

The overarching aim set out in the report was to enable residents, employees and businesses to weather the impacts of the cost of living crisis now and in the future.

Members noted that to help support vulnerable residents a programme had been developed with the following four work streams:

- **Business Support** – including the Business Builder and Regulatory Support.
- **Staff** – support and training to help staff deal with the rising demand on services, alongside the personal impacts of the crisis.
- **Living Well** – ensuring residents had the necessities for everyday life.
- **Participating in Daily Life** – allowing residents to be part of their local communities and carry on with their daily lives.

Work currently being undertaken included the funding of a number of community warm spaces across the District, which had proved very popular. Through the Health and Wellbeing Partnership a lot of work was also being done to provide access to food. Grants of up to £2,000 were available for organisations to undertake food related activities, such as training, equipment and food stock and social supermarkets had been established in Diss and Loddon, which had been identified as priority areas. Social supermarkets were open to everyone and were not restricted to those on benefits. It was anticipated that further social supermarkets would be rolled out elsewhere in the District, in due course.

In order to ensure that this support reached the maximum number of people, communications were being kept as simple as possible by making the Help Hub the key point of contact for all those in need.

The Chairman noted that this was a useful means for members to let their communities know about the help available and she commended the huge amount of work being done by the Help Hub Team.

A member stressed the importance of providing support for businesses and for helping people with debt and welfare advice, in order to help people to help themselves.

The Managing Director added that, as with the earlier Rural England Prosperity Fund report, much of the work being done was to provide opportunities for residents to get higher skilled jobs that would move them away from state support. He also emphasised the importance of using data to target and prioritise those in most need of intervention and confirmed that a further report would be brought to Cabinet on developing the Council's use of internal data analytics to target vulnerable residents in due course.

The Chairman noted that the new LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) was a very important tool in providing targeted support to some residents who had previously not been in such difficult financial positions.

RESOLVED:

To endorse the proposed programmes and direction of travel of the Council, to support the rise in cost-of-living, as set out in the report.

The Reason for the Decision

To support residents during the cost-of-living crisis.

Other Options Considered

None

3066 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr G Minshull, introduced the report, which proposed a new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy for adoption. He informed the meeting that the Economy and Environment Policy Committee had considered a range of implications and principles during the development of the Policy, which would help to balance out issues between parties when anti-social behaviour arose and would give officers a clear steer on managing these issues

The Assistant Director for Regulatory informed Cabinet that the Council had a wide range of services for the prevention, intervention and, where necessary, enforcement to prevent anti-social behaviour and the Policy would establish a documented framework that would inform the Council's approach.

Members were asked to note that the Policy took due consideration of vulnerable people and the protection of all residents equally. The Policy also defined what was and, importantly, what was not anti-social behaviour. It also set out the aims of the Policy, how victims would be supported and how anti-social behaviour would be dealt with whilst working with partner organisations.

Members welcomed the Policy and it was

RESOLVED:

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL agrees the adoption of the proposed Anti-social Behaviour Policy at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Reason for the Decision

To adopt a balanced prevention and intervention enforcement policy that would meet the expectations of recognised good practice.

Other Options Considered

None

3067 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

3068 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).

3069 SOUTH NORFOLK CO-INVESTMENT GRANT FUND APPLICATION – EASTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Cabinet considered the exempt report, which sought approval for a grant from the Co-investment Grant Fund, to deliver a multi-use community centre off Marlingford Road in Easton.

The Growth Delivery Manager outlined the proposals and responded to a number of queries from members.

It was

RESOLVED:

To agree the recommendations as outlined at paragraph 8 of the report.

The Reason for the Decision

The project will benefit the residents of Easton and wider communities in the area and the application and associated business case is in line with the scheme's criteria.

Other Options Considered

None

(The meeting concluded at 10.25 am)

Chairman