

CABINET

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday 8 February 2021 at 9.00am.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, K Mason Billig, L Neal, A Thomas and J Worley
Apologies for absence:	Councillor: M Edney
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillors: B Bernard, C Brown, V Clifford-Jackson, T Laidlaw, N Legg, G Minshull and J Overton
Officers in Attendance:	The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (E Hodds), the Assistant Director of Finance (R Fincham), the Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Assistant Director of Planning (H Mellors), the Housing and Benefits Manager (R Dunsire), the ICT and Digital Manager (C Balmer), the Strategy and Programme Manager (S Carey), the Transformation Manager (T Sayer) and the Senior Community Planning Officer (R Squires).
Also in Attendance:	Mr J Joyce – Chairman of Poringland Parish Council

2861 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared 'other' interests in the matters detailed below:

With regard to item 5, the Poringland Neighbourhood Plan, Cllr L Neal declared an interest as a member of Poringland Parish Council, and as a former member of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan Panel.

With regard to items 6 and 7, the Greater Norwich Growth Board: Joint Five-Year Investment Plan, and the Update to the Local Development Scheme, Cllr

J Fuller declared an interest as a member of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership, and Greater Norwich Growth Boards.

With regard to item 13, the Council Tax Assistance Scheme, Cllr A Thomas declared an interest in that she had applied for a Council Tax discount due to her home being uninhabitable, due to the recent flooding.

With regard to item 9, the Covid-19 Update report, Cllr V Clifford-Jackson declared an interest as a Trustee of Voluntary Norfolk.

2862 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2863 PORINGLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2019-2039 DECISION TO PROCEED TO REFERENDUM

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which sought Cabinet approval for a minor amendment to the second examiner's recommended modified wording to Policy 2 of the proposed Poringland Neighbourhood Plan, and to proceed to a consultation on the amendment.

Mr J Joyce, Chairman of Poringland Parish Council, was invited to address the Cabinet. Mr Joyce explained that one of the key issues the Plan had tried to address was the pace and scale of development in Poringland, hence the Plan's Policy 2, to provide a detailed focus on small scale development. Unfortunately, the first examination had diminished the thrust of this policy, and it was felt that the modifications from the Examiner did not meet the aspirations of residents. Whilst the second Examiner's report was much improved, the Parish Council felt it still fell short in ensuring that the Plan would attract community support. Mr Joyce expressed his gratitude to officers who had assisting in finding a solution, that would hopefully meet approval from the local community.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr L Neal, commended the recommendations of the report to Cabinet. She explained that the residents of Poringland were not against smaller developments but had felt overwhelmed at the pace and scale of recent development. The second examination had not quite met the needs and aspirations of the Parish Council and residents, and therefore she was supportive of the minor amendments that had been recommended by officers, which she felt would satisfy the aspirations of the Parish.

The local member for Poringland, Cllr J Overton, expressed his support for the the Parish Council, and urged Cabinet to support the recommendations of the report.

The Chairman referred to officers' proposed amendment to the alternative wording to Policy 2 and explained that he felt this to be an elegant solution, which strengthened the Policy.

In response to queries, the Senior Community Planning Officer explained that if approved, the Plan would need to go out for further consultation for a six-week period, before Cabinet decided whether to proceed to a referendum. He advised that this probably would not be in time to allow for the referendum on 6 May, however, he would be liaising with the elections team to determine time scales.

The Chairman indicated that he would be in support of a special cabinet meeting, if this would ensure that the referendum could take place on 6 May along with the County and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections

RESOLVED

To

1. Approve a minor amendment to the second examiner's recommended modified wording to Policy 2 of the proposed Poringland Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in Appendix 2.

and

2. To proceed to a consultation on this amendment, in accordance with section 13 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Policy and the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions, whilst also meeting the aspirations of the Parish Council and residents.

Other Options Considered

- To approve the policy wording as originally modified by South Norfolk Council
- To approve the amended policy wording as recommended by the second examiner

2864 GREATER NORWICH GROWTH BOARD – JOINT FIVE-YEAR INVESTMENT PLAN

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager, which sought approval of the Greater Norwich Growth Board Joint Five-Year Investment Plan 2021-26, and the allocation of CIL to four specified projects.

The Chairman introduced the report, explaining that approval was sought to support a spend of £921k over four discretionary projects. He acknowledged that none of these projects fell in the South Norfolk district, however, he reminded members that South Norfolk benefitted significantly from the growth programme, making reference to investment in education at Costessey, Cringleford and Hethersett, and further investment in leisure and upgrades to libraries.

Members also noted that funding was still earmarked to support the Long Stratton bypass, and as local member, this was welcomed by Cllr A Thomas.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:

1. Agrees the Greater Norwich Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021-2026 included at Appendix A of the report.
and
2. Approves the allocation of CIL to 4 specified projects, these projects will form the 2021/22 Annual Growth Programme (AGP); the allocation of £2M to support the Education Capital Programme within Greater Norwich; and, the allocation of an additional £341,000 to projects GP46 and GP53 that were initially allocated funding within the 2018/19 AGP.

The Reason for the Decision

To support the provision of infrastructure to benefit the District

Other Options Considered

- To make further recommendations for priority projects
- To agree only some of the proposed projects

2865 UPDATE TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager, which sought approval to make amendments to the Local Development Scheme, to reflect changes to the timetable for the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document.

The Assistant Director Planning referred members to the proposals, explaining that it was a legislative requirement for the Council to publish and update the Local Development Scheme. Referring to the Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document, she advised that this would go out for its first public consultation (Regulation 18) in May/June 2021.

The Chairman felt this to be a more realistic timetable, drawing attention to the 400 village sites that had come forward, and the need to ensure that the process was correct and thorough.

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Local Development Scheme timetable reflects the changes to the timetable for the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document.

Other Options Considered

None

2866 DELIVERY PLAN 2021/22

Members considered the report of the Strategy and Programmes Manager, which presented members with the Council's Delivery Plan for 2021/22, for approval.

The Chairman introduced the report, stressing the importance of having a Plan in place that was flexible and adaptive to change. He reminded Cabinet that all members had been able to participate in the formation of the Plan.

The Strategy and Programmes Manager provided members with a brief overview of the report, explaining that the Plan's purpose was to set out the activities and the programmes of work the Council would be undertaking to meet the priority areas in the second year of the four year strategic Plan. She explained that the Plan took account of the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan and outlined ways in which the Council would respond to the challenges the pandemic had brought and how it would support residents and businesses going forward.

Members discussed the importance of flexibility and referred to a number of areas where future changes to the Plan and budget, might be required, such as environmental protection. The Chairman acknowledged that no one could have foreseen the current pandemic, or the recent flooding across the District,

but also stressed the importance of anticipating change and being sufficiently prepared for the impact the pandemic would leave, for example on homelessness. The Managing Director was confident that officers were anticipating future challenges, and he also drew attention to work being carried out with Norfolk County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership, to consider the medium and long term implications of Covid-19, the results of which would feed in to the Delivery Plan.

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the adoption of the one-year Delivery Plan for 2021/22.

The Reason for the Decision

To provide a document that sets out the ambitions of the Council going forward and provides an in-year overview of the different activities needed to ensure that it is delivering on those ambitions

Other Options Considered

To decide not to adopt the Plan.

2867 COVID-19 UPDATE REPORT

Members considered the report of the Internal Consultancy Lead, which provided an overview of the impact of Covid-19 on residents, communities and businesses in South Norfolk, together with the detail of the Council's ongoing response.

The Assistant Director Chief of Staff outlined the salient points of the report, providing a brief update on the position of Covid-19 cases in the District, and outlining the Council's response.

Cabinet was proud of the amount of direct financial support it had been able to provide to local businesses, via a wide range of schemes, and also those people struggling financially as a direct consequence of Covid-19.

During discussion, members congratulated staff for all the work they had done, stepping up and adapting to new ways of working, with staff being redeployed and working long hours, in what were difficult personal circumstances for some. Special mention was given to staff in Economic Development, Leisure and the Help Hub.

The Chairman felt the pandemic had shone a light on the important role of district councils in connecting with residents, communities and local

businesses, and attention was drawn to the vital role the Council played in partnership working.

Turning to compliance, the Assistant Director Regulatory explained that staff had a clear remit to advise and support, to issue warnings if required, and to only issue enforcement action as a last resort. Members noted that there had been an extremely high percentage of compliance from local businesses and residents, although officers were mindful that as the country came out of lockdown, rules would become more complex and breaches would become more common.

The Chairman thanked officers for an excellent report and suggested a further update might be appropriate in May.

RESOLVED

To note the contents of the report regarding the local impact of Covid-19 together with the activities the Council is taking to mitigate those impacts.

2868 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 TO 2025/26

Members considered the report of the Capital Accountant, which presented Cabinet with the Capital Strategy and the proposed Capital Programme for 2021/22-2025/26.

The Assistant Director Finance presented his report, drawing attention to Appendix A, the Capital Strategy, and Appendix B, the Capital Programme. He advised members that this equated to a capital programme of £26.5m for 21/22 but stressed that some projects were provisional, and that slippage was possible. Members noted that the project relating to Poringland Phase 3, had been incorrectly highlighted in the programme as provisional; in fact the project was approved back in June 2020 and work on the project was underway.

The Chairman referred to the capital programme as both ambitious and affordable. He believed the Council's approach to the balance of risk and reward to be appropriate, with a mix of cash, property and trading assets, and he referred to the strong governance arrangements in place with Big Sky companies.

Turning to the need to borrow, he explained that even the worst-case scenario would see the Council well within its credit limit.

With regard to a new provisional project at the Bawburgh Temporary Stopping Place for Gypsies and Travellers, the Chairman stressed the need for capital

improvements to the provision, and also a commitment for stronger management of the site.

In response to a query regarding performance figures for quarter 3, members were advised that these would be available for the March meeting of the Cabinet. The Assistant Director Finance explained that £14.9m of the current capital programme had been spent, and the Managing Director assured members that capital projects had progressed well over the last 12 months.

One member queried the rate of slippage in previous years, and the Chairman stressed that due to the complex nature of projects and partnership working, it was inevitable that slippage would occur, and for that very reason, the Council presented a five year plan.

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL approval of

- (a) the Capital Strategy (at Appendix A of the report)
- (b) the Capital Programme for 2021/22-2025/26 (at Appendix B of the report).

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Strategy represents a prudent and affordable approach to investment in the Council's assets, to support service delivery, the District and its residents.

To ensure that the Capital Programme is affordable and complies with Council policies

Other Options Considered

None

2869 REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2021/22

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Finance which detailed information regarding the Council's revenue budget for 2021/22, to enable Cabinet to make recommendations to Council on 24th February regarding the Council's budget and council tax for 2021/22.

The Assistant Director Finance drew members' attention to the key points of the report. He explained that the report had been written based on the provisional finance settlement announced back in December, and he was pleased to report that it had since been confirmed that there had been no changes to the main figures of the settlement, and an increase in the Rural

Services Delivery Grant of £19k. Members noted that the budget would allow for a £436k addition to the general fund reserves.

Regarding Council Tax, he advised that the budget proposed a £5.00 increase to a band D property, which equated to a 3.2% increase on current figures.

Members' attention was drawn to the medium term financial position, and it was noted that although the proposed budget for 2021/22 was balanced, in future years, should government funding reduce as expected, there would be a funding gap of between £0.5 and £1m over the medium term.

Turning to his responsibilities as Section 151 Officer, the Assistant Director confirmed that in his opinion, the budget had been based on a reasonable set of assumptions with due regard to the risks and was therefore robust. He also confirmed that he considered the level of reserves to be adequate.

The Chairman referred to future turbulent levels of income, and gave mention to the New Homes Bonus, Section 106 Agreements, CIL and non-domestic rates. These unknowns were in addition to the decimated income from the Council's leisure provision. With regard to the £436k earmarked for the general reserves, he explained that this might be required to respond to the ongoing impact of Covid-19, for example homelessness.

Cllr K Mason Billig referred to section 2.30 of the report, and suggested that a future report was brought to Cabinet to address the additional resources required to help implement the actions set out in the Environment Strategy, and also in response to the recent flooding in the District. This proposal was supported by Cabinet. In response to queries regarding the report, the Chairman explained that it was required to identify the level of investment required and how it would be spent. The Managing Director added that work was underway to scope out the enforcement powers of the Council and how this could be better managed within existing resources, and how additional resources might deliver more ambitious targets.

Cllr A Thomas referred to para 20.20 of the report regarding Leisure Services, and the proposal to support the service with £2.5m over the next three years. She explained that the service had been tasked with producing a recovery plan, to work within the allocated budget, and that this would come forward for scrutiny in due course. She reminded members that the service had an important role to play in getting people fit, both mentally and physically, post Covid, and to address the general wellbeing of residents across the District.

Cllr L Neal drew attention to para 5.3 of the report, regarding proposals to adjust the current categories and associated charges relating to Planning Pre-application advice and explained that this was as a result of feedback from

developers and agents. She stressed that fees were not being reduced, but had been spread out across the additional categories.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Worley thanked officers for all their hard work in preparing the budget. He felt it a real achievement that despite all the pressures, a balanced budget had been possible, along with an ambitious capital programme, and he commended the report to members.

RESOLVED

1. TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) The approval of the base budget; subject to confirmation of the finalised Local Government Finance Settlement figures which may necessitate an adjustment through the General Revenue Reserve to maintain a balanced budget. Authority to make any such change to be delegated to the Assistant Director of Finance;
 - (b) The use of the revenue reserves as set out in Appendix E of the report;
 - (c) That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2021/22 for General Expenditure shall be £8,037,280 and for Special Expenditure shall be £7,192;
 - (d) That the Band D level of Council Tax be £160.00 for General Expenditure and £0.14 for Special Expenditure.
2. To agree changes to the proposed fees and charges, as set out in section 5 of the report.
3. To note
- (a) The advice of the Section 151 Officer with regard to section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, contained in section 10 of the report.
 - (b) The future budget pressures contained in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
4. That a future report regarding investment in flooding resilience and protecting the environment, be considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

The Reason for the Decision

To provide a budget which meets the Council's priorities and to set a council tax affordable to residents.

Other Options Considered

None

2870 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2021/22

Members considered the report of Corporate Accountant, which set out the Council's approach to the management of its borrowing, investments and cash flows.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Worley, introduced the report, explaining that as at the end of December 2020, the Council had treasury investments of £33.5m and £24m in loans to wholly owned Council companies. Members noted that the expected return on investments for 20/21 was approximately £62k.

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22;
- (b) The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2021/22 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- (c) The Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 (Appendix 2 of the report);
- (d) The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) (Appendix 3 of the report);
- (e) The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 4 of the report);
- (f) The Prudential Indicators (Appendix 5 of the report);
- (g) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (Appendix 6 of the report).

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Council's Investment Strategy remains prudent and complies with statutory requirements

Other Options Considered

None

2871 COUNCIL TAX ASSISTANCE SCHEME 2021/22

Members considered the report of the Housing and Benefits Manager and the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager, which sought agreement to remove the additional discretionary payments from the Council Tax Scheme, in to a separate and stand-alone policy.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Y Bendle commended the report to Cabinet, explaining that in accordance with the regulations, the Council Tax scheme was reviewed on an annual basis, and although there were no proposed changes to the scheme itself, there was a need to separate out the

discretionary payments. This was to ensure that the discretionary payments could be amended without being tied into the timing restrictions of Council Tax assistance regulations. Members noted that a report regarding the separate policy would be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

The Housing and Benefits Manager added that substantial changes had been made to the Council Tax Assistance Scheme in the previous year, to ensure that it was appropriate and aligned to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The Chairman expressed his support for the recommendation, explaining that it would allow discretionary payments to be more flexible in meeting the needs of residents.

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the removal of the discretionary payments from the Council Tax Assistance Scheme, into a separate stand-alone policy.

The Reason for the Decision

To allow changes to discretionary payments to occur on a more flexible basis, allowing the Council to respond quickly when needed.

Other Options Considered

That discretionary payments remain as part of the Council Tax Assistance Scheme.

2872 MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT NORFOLK AND WAVENEY HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support, which sought retrospective approval for the Council to enter in to a mutual aid agreement as a voluntary reciprocal exchange of employees between partners in the area, in order to maximise an efficient response to the management of Covid-19 across Norfolk.

The Managing Director advised members that there had been a brilliant response to the call for staff to assist the NHS, with over 100 volunteers willing to support colleagues on the front line.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support gave special mention to the Council's leisure staff who had already started work at the

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. She thanked all those involved and explained that feedback from the both the hospital and staff had been positive.

The Chairman paid tribute to all those who had volunteered, particularly those who had gone above and beyond and offered to work in their own time, and without payment. He anticipated that similar agreements might be required in future with other partners, such as schools, and he proposed that authority be granted to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader, to enter in to future Mutual Aid Agreements with public sector partners.

RESOLVED

1. To retrospectively agree the decision to enter into the Mutual Aid Agreement, as agreed under urgency provision between the Leader and the Managing Director.
2. To delegate to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the authority to enter into future suitable Mutual Aid Agreements, with public sector partners.

The Reason for the Decision

To maximise Norfolk's response to the pandemic, and to assist with the immediate need of the NHS.

Other Options Considered

None

2873 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

2874 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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

2874 ICT INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE ONE NETWORK

Members considered the exempt report of the ICT and Digital Manager and the Transformation Manager, which sought approval from Cabinet to award a contract to the preferred provider for the provision of new ICT Infrastructure.

The Transformation Manager outlined the salient points of the report to members. He explained the outcome of the tender evaluation process and the reason for the preferred provider.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr A Thomas, commended the report to members, and it was

RESOLVED

To agree the recommendations, as outlined at section 8 of the report.

The Reason for the Decision

To support the strategic ambition of the two councils to consolidate and align ICT systems across the organisations.

Other Options Considered

None

(The meeting concluded at 11.06 am)

Chairman