

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 3 February 2020 at 9.00am.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, K Kiddie, K Mason Billig and L Neal

Apologies: Councillor: A Thomas

Non-Appointed Councillors: D Bills, C Brown, V Clifford-Jackson, T Laidlaw and V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Community Services (S Phelan), the Assistant Director Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (E Hodds), the Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager (R Dunsire), the Finance Manager (J Brown), the Housing and Benefits Manager (L Sayer), the Transformation, Innovation and Internal Consultancy Manager (E Pepper), the Strategy and Programmes Manager (S Carey), the Capital Accountant (H Craske), the Principal Infrastructure and Planning Policy Officer (S Marjoram), the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer (S Crook)

2770 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised members that former Councillor and Honorary Alderman, Sue Thomson, was currently recovering from an operation, following a cancer diagnosis. On behalf of members, he wished Mrs Thomson a full and speedy recovery.

Cllr K Kiddie referred members to recent reports in the local press regarding feral chickens roosting in a housing estate in Diss. He explained that although some residents were happy for the chickens to stay, the numbers of chickens had reached unacceptable levels, and volunteers were being called in to re-home the chickens.

2771 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2772 PERFORMANCE, RISK, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION FOR QUARTER 3 2019/20

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director of Finance, the Business Improvement Lead, and the Senior Governance Officer, which detailed the Council's performance against strategic measures, risk position and financial position for the third quarter of 2019/20.

The Transformation and Innovation Lead introduced the report and explained that the position regarding performance, management of risks and financials, was positive at the end of Quarter 3 for 2019/20. He drew attention to a number of key areas of performance.

During discussion, members cited many examples of good performance, with reference being made to external funding, Big Sky developments, Planning, the Help Hub, Community Grants and short-term staff sickness.

Members discussed HE1901, the target to achieve cost neutrality at the Leisure Centres, and although this had not met stretched target, members applauded the performance which had been a 21% improvement on last year. The set target had been very ambitious, and the Chairman reminded members that the Council's focus was not just on profit, but on getting people fit and healthy; members noted that there had been a 27.4% increase in attendance at the leisure centres in Quarter 3.

Referring to HE 1603, the % of households in temporary accommodation for 8 weeks or less, members noted that although it had missed stretched target, it was moving in the right direction. The Transformation and Innovation Lead explained that this was a measure of a snapshot in time and that performance was traditionally low at the current time of year. The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle, explained that officers were working very hard on prevention and were currently looking to develop new ways of dealing with temporary accommodation across both South Norfolk and Broadland.

The Assistant Director summarised the position with regard to revenue and capital budgets and members noted that as of Quarter 3, there was a positive variance on the revenue budget of £2.3m, and that capital spend was £5.3m against a budget of £21.5m. He drew attention to the recommended additions to the capital programme, outlined at paragraph 5.4 of the report.

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2 of the report, the Analysis of Major Variances on Service Areas, and questioned whether the positive variance of £1.4m was sustainable with regard to Business Rates. The Assistant Director explained that that officers were mindful of the risks and members agreed that there was no room for complacency.

The Senior Governance Officer advised that the corporate risk capacity at the Council remained positive. She referred members to the management of risks and explained that due to the termination of the Visitor Economy Initiative, it had been removed from the register, however, stressed that numbers would continue to be monitored and tourism support across the two councils would be reconsidered in light of the one team collaboration.

Referring to Operational Risk (O1) (major illness / accident/ risk to health at a Leisure Centre), the Senior Governance Officer explained that this had been updated to incorporate risk to health to take account of the recent legionella bacteria found in the Long Stratton Leisure Centre water system. Officers stressed that this had been managed in detail by the leisure team locally, but it had been felt prudent for it to also be reflected in the corporate risk register.

The Chairman suggested that Strategic Risk S7 “That the Council is unable to respond to an unforeseen impact as a consequence of Brexit”, required expanding to include other aspects of the political environment, such as devolution.

It was

RESOLVED

1. To:
 - a) Note the 2019/20 performance for the quarter and the combined efforts across the Directorates to deliver the vision of the Council (detail contained in Appendix 1).
 - b) Note the current position with respect to risks and accepts the actions to support risk mitigation (detailed in Section 6 of this report).
 - c) Note the capital and revenue position and the reason for the variances on the General Fund (detail contained in Appendix 2).
2. **TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** the additions to the 2019-20 capital programme as detailed at paragraph 5.4.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that processes are in place to improve performance, the management of risks is sound, and that budgets are managed effectively.

Other Options Considered

None.

2773 BROADLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL AND SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL – STRATEGIC PLAN AND DELIVERY PLAN

Members considered the report of the Strategy and Programmes Manager which sought approval and adoption of the new Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and interim Delivery Plan 2020/21 for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

The Strategy and Programmes Manager presented her report to Cabinet, and members were reminded that a key element of the Feasibility Study, agreed by members in 2018, had been the ambition to develop joint strategic priorities and delivery plans to enable a common focus for the new one joint officer team.

Cabinet concurred with the recommendations from the Joint Lead Members Group, that some amendments were required, to place greater emphasis on the environment and the delivery of the Environmental Strategy.

RESOLVED **TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL** approves the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and the Interim one-year Delivery Plan for 2020/21, to include proposed changes regarding the environment and Environmental Strategy.

The Reason for the Decision

To allow the delivery of the ambitions of both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils, through one officer team.

Other Options Considered

None.

2774 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 TO 2024/25

Members considered the report of the Capital Accountant, which presented Cabinet with the Capital Strategy and the Capital Programme for 2020/21-2024/25.

The Finance Manager drew members' attention to the key issues from her report.

Members noted that an additional budget had been included in the capital programme, for the investment in IT Infrastructure and software upgrades that would be required to support the collaboration with Broadland District Council. The Assistant Director – Governance and Business Support explained that this investment was necessary to provide a common shared ICT platform to enable and facilitate services transformation across the organisation.

RESOLVED **TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL**

- (a) Approval of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A of the report) and the Capital Programme for 2020/21-2024/25 (Appendix B of the report).
- (b) Approval of the programme of work for 2019/20 to align key elements of ICT infrastructure and corporate systems in use across Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council as set out within Appendix D 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.

2775 REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Finance, which provided information affecting the Council's revenue budget for 2020/21 in order for the Cabinet to make recommendations to Council on 17 February regarding the Council's budget and council tax for 2020/21.

The Chairman introduced the report, referring members to the projected positive variance on the revenue budget of £1.7m. He explained that despite this healthy position, there was still a need to propose an increase in Council Tax (of £5.00 for a Band D property), due to the future uncertainty relating to business rates and New Homes Bonus.

The Assistant Director outlined the key issues arising from his report. Members' attention was drawn to his view as s151 officer; that the budget had been construed on a prudent basis and was robust, and that reserves were adequate.

The Chairman referred to Appendix D of the report, detailing the Council's reserves. Referring to the Localisation of Business Rates Reserve, he suggested that this be repurposed as the Business Rates Reset Transition Fund, to be used to mitigate any loss of Business Rates income, due to changes to the Business Rates Retention Scheme, and this was supported by Cabinet.

RESOLVED 1. TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) 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) That the "Localisation of Business Rates Reserve is repurposed as the "Business Rates Reset Transition Fund" and is used to mitigate any loss of business rates income due to changes to the Business Rates

- Retention Scheme, and the use of the other revenue reserves as set out in Appendix D.
- (c) That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2020/21 for General Expenditure shall be £7,744,730 and for Special Expenditure shall be £11,102.
 - (d) That the Band D level of Council Tax be £155.00 for General Expenditure and £0.22 for Special Expenditure.
2. To agree 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 this report;

The future budget pressures contained in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

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.

2776 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Finance Manager. which outlined the authority's approach to management of its borrowing, investments, cash flows, banking, money market and capital market transactions; and the effective control of the associated risks and performance.

The Finance Manager outlined the salient points of her report, reminding members that the security of cash remained a primary consideration.

During discussion, attention was drawn to a key prudential indicator, representing a control on the maximum level of borrowing. In response to queries, the Finance Manager confirmed that the level of borrowing proposed was prudent and affordable, and she referred to paragraph 10.9 of the report, which highlighted potential sources of funding.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement;
- (b) The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2020/21 (Appendix 1 of the report).
- (c) The Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21 (Appendix 2 of the report)
- (d) The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) Credit and Counterparty Risk Management (Appendix 3 of the report).
- (e) The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 4 of the report)).
- (f) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (Section 8) that sets out the Council's policy on MRP;
- (g) The Prudential Indicators and Limits for the next 5 years contained within 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.

2777 COUNCIL TAX ASSISTANCE 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager, which informed the Council of the proposed revised Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme effective from April 2020.

The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager introduced his report, explaining that the proposals would introduce a tolerance level for claimants in receipt of Council Tax Assistance, and Universal Credit. This would reduce confusion for claimants with frequent changes of circumstances and also reduce the administration required to manage claims. Members note that the proposals had attracted a favourable response during a consultation process.

The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle expressed her support for the proposals, and it was

RESOLVED

1. **TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL** approves the amendments outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, and that the Scheme for 2020/21 is updated accordingly
2. To note the work officers will continue to undertake across the two Councils on processes to mitigate the wider impact of Universal Credit on Council Tax billing and collection.

The Reason for the Decision

To introduce a simplified scheme that would reduce the impact of Universal Credit on Council Tax Assistance claimants.

Other Options Considered

None.

2778 GREATER NORWICH JOINT FIVE-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN (2020 – 2025)

Members considered the report of the Principal Infrastructure and Planning Policy Officer, which sought approval for the Greater Norwich Five-Year Investment Plan (IIP) for 2020 to 2025, and the allocation of pooled Community Infrastructure Levy within the first year of the IIP as the Annual Growth Programme (AGP) for 2020/21.

The Principal Infrastructure and Planning Policy Officer outlined the key issues of his report to members. Members noted that the approach to estimating CIL had been refined and the revised projects were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:

1. Agrees the Greater Norwich Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2020-2025, included in Appendix 1; and,
2. Approves the allocation of CIL to twelve specified projects, these projects will form the 2020/21 Annual Growth Programme; the allocation of £2M to support the Education Capital Programme within Greater Norwich; payment of the previously committed CIL funding of £561,760 to the Hempnall Crossroad project within 2020/21; and, the full reinstatement of the £2M IIF cash reserve

The Reason for the Decision

To support the provision of infrastructure in the District

Other Options Considered

None.

2779 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

2780 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

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)

2781 LEISURE PRICING

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Assistant Director, Community Services, which presented Cabinet with the annual review and proposed pricing, for the Council's leisure services.

Members discussed the proposals and suggested that officers gave the proposals further consideration, to ensure a pricing scheme that was fair, and simpler for users to understand.

Members agreed that any new proposals should be presented in a further report, at the next meeting of the Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the Leisure pricing structure is redrafted and presented at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure a simplified pricing structure, that is easy for the public to understand.

Other Options Considered

As set out in the report.

2782 REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES PROVISION

Members noted that this was deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2783 EXEMPT MINUTE

The exempt minute regarding the Hethersett North Land Option considered at the Cabinet meeting held 13 January 2020, was confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(The meeting concluded at 10.59 am)

Chairman