

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of a remote meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council, held on Tuesday 21 July 2020 at 9.00 am.**

### **Members Present:**

**Cabinet:** Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, M Edney, L Neal, K Mason Billig, A Thomas and J Worley

**Non-Appointed** Councillors: D Bills, V Clifford-Jackson, R Elliott, C Hudson, T Laidlaw, S Nuri-Nixon and V Thomson

**Officers in Attendance:** The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (E Hodds), the Assistant Director Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director of Regulatory Services (N Howard), the Assistant Director of Community Services (S Phelan), the Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Transformation, Innovation and Internal Consultancy Manager (E Pepper), the Environmental Management Officer (D Baillie-Murden) the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer (S Crook)

### **2804 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr J Fuller declared an 'other' interest as a client of a legal law firm, referred to under item 13, the Review of Legal Services Provision.

Cllr L Neal declared an 'other' interest by virtue of a family member working at the Framingham Earl Sports Centre (item 7, Leisure Services Recovery Plan Update)

Cllr A Thomas declared an 'other' interest by virtue of a family member being a member of the Long Stratton Leisure Centre (item 7, Leisure Services Recovery Plan Update), and also by virtue of a family member being an insurance broker (item 12 Insurance Procurement).

Cllr V Clifford Jackson declared an 'other' interest as a volunteer for Cruse Bereavement Care (Item 6, Plan for Recovery from the Covid-19 Crisis)

**2805 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Monday 15 June 2020, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**2806 PERFORMANCE, RISK, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION FOR QUARTER 4 2019/20**

Members considered the report which detailed the Council's performance against strategic measures, risk position and financial position for the fourth quarter of 2019/20.

The Chairman was pleased that the Council continued to perform strongly against most of its strategic performance indicators and advised that it was only to be expected that Covid-19 had impacted on some targets.

Referring to the financial position, Cllr J Worley explained that the Council was in a good position with a positive variance of £2.5 million at year end. He outlined those areas that had failed to meet target, explaining that CNC had experienced the wettest February on record and had also been affected by the lockdown at the end of the financial year.

He went on to explain that non-domestic rates and Council Tax collection had also been affected by Covid-19 but had only just missed their targets at year end. The Assistant Director assured members that an appropriate approach would be taken towards anyone who was unable to pay, due to hardship.

Attention was drawn to the £400k overspend on Leisure, but Cllr Worley stressed that this was to be expected due to lockdown and the previous issues concerning VAT. He did not wish this to detract from the good performance of leisure overall, with a 19% increase in income from the previous year.

The Assistant Director of Finance explained that the Council's overall general fund balance, including reserves, had risen from £21 million to over £24 million in the last year, which was an extremely healthy position. He did however stress that this was the position at Quarter 4 and members should be mindful of the Medium-term Financial Position and the impact of Covid-19 on the budgets going forward.

Turning to capital, he explained that the Council had spent £9.6 million against a balance of £38.8 million, adding that the Council had spent on key projects, however some large projects had not yet materialised due to issues outside of the Council's control.

With regard to Leisure, the portfolio holder, Cllr A Thomas wishing to highlight the variance concerning footfall of customers visiting the centres. She explained that had the centres not been closed due to Covid-19, the target of 1 million users would have been exceeded. She added that the challenge now lay with attracting visitors back and members noted that this would be considered in more detail later in the agenda.

Cllr Y Bendle wished to highlight the positive performance in affordable housing, referring to the 593 affordable homes delivered against a target of 500. She hoped that this would have a positive impact on homelessness, and she referred to the hidden homeless that had come to light during lockdown. Attention was drawn to the number of households in temporary accommodation, and the fact that this had failed to hit target, and members were reminded that corrective measures have already been put in place with the recently agreed adjustments to the allocations policy.

Turning to strategic risks, the Senior Governance Officer referred members to Risk 57, regarding the impact of Brexit in a no deal scenario, explaining that this had been removed from the register as it was no longer considered to be a current risk facing the Council. Concerning Risk 54, regarding the management of the Council's assets, she explained that an accommodation review had begun to look at the longer term requirements of both South Norfolk and Broadland, and that work was currently being carried out to ensure that the office was Covid-19 secure and safe for staff, members and other visitors.

The Chairman referred to the need in future to achieve the best devolution deal possible, working with neighbouring authorities and members agreed that failing to achieve the benefits of devolution should be an additional strategic risk.

Voting was then carried out by way of a roll call, and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED To**

1. Note the 2019/20 performance for the quarter and the combined efforts across the Directorates to deliver the vision of the Council.
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  - (a) Note the current position with respect to risks, accepting the actions to support risk mitigation.
  - (b) That an additional strategic risk be added regarding the best possible outcome arising from devolution.
3. Note the capital and revenue position and the reason for the variances on the General Fund.

**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.

**2807 BROADLAND AND SOUTH NORFOLK – OUR PLAN FOR RECOVER FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

The Chief of Staff introduced her report which sought Cabinet's endorsement and recommendation to Council, for the approval of the Council's plan for recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chief of Staff explained that there had been an incredible response to the Covid-19 pandemic from both agencies and communities, and she stressed the importance of having a plan in place, as the focus shifted to the recovery stage.

The Chairman referred to the review of market towns confidence campaign, which was to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee in August, and he encouraged all members to attend to participate in the debate about the lessons to be learnt from the recent initiative.

Members' attention was drawn to the section of the Plan regarding the Recovery for Communities, and Cllr Bendle highlighted the partnership working that had taken place with all the districts, enabling early help work across the county. She hoped that much of this partnership work would continue.

Cllr V Clifford-Jackson endorsed Cllr Bendle's points and also suggested that the document could refer to learning points from the Council's initial response and the issues of IT connectivity facing some residents. She also raised the huge challenges facing mental health and bereavement support groups, and the need to build on existing liaisons with GPs.

Voting was then carried out by way of a roll call, and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL**

- a) Endorses the initial Recovery Plan and priorities to support recovery from the Covid-19 crisis in South Norfolk.
- b) Agrees the in-year review and update of the 2020/21 Delivery Plan, to be brought back to Cabinets in September 2020 and then onto Councils for agreement.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure a clear overview of the Council's priorities for recovery and that the Council can effectively deliver services.

**Other Options Considered**

None

**2808 LEISURE SERVICES RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE**

(Cllr Mason Billig took the chair for this item whilst Cllr Fuller temporarily left the meeting)

Before introducing the report, Cllr A Thomas gave mention to Paul Anderson, the Council's duty Manager at Wymondham Leisure Centre, who had recently passed away at the age of 37, following a short battle with cancer. Members noted that Paul had worked for the Council for 15 years and had been instrumental to the success of the swim school. Cabinet expressed its sincere sympathies at his passing, and its thoughts were with his family, friends and colleagues.

Cllr A Thomas then presented the report which provided an update on the recovery plan for the reopening of the Council's leisure centres. She explained that the Plan had already been endorsed by the Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Committee.

Members noted that the Wymondham and Diss Leisure Centres would be ready to open on 25 July. Cllr Thomas explained that it had not been anticipated that swimming pools would be allowed to open this early, and therefore the much-needed maintenance work had been brought forward, meaning that the Wymondham pool would probably open in mid-August, and the Diss pool in mid-September.

Cllr Thomas advised that a priority of the first stage of recovery was to re-engage existing customers, particularly direct debit customers. The second phase would look at new and innovative ways of taking the leisure service out into the community.

The Assistant Director of Communities explained that a lot of work had been carried out to ensure that the leisure centres were ready to open. Members were pleased to note that an independent inspection had been carried out on the leisure centres by "Right Direction", leisure industry health and safety specialists, and that the Council had received a glowing report, suggesting the Council to be a fine example to all leisure providers.

Members also noted that officers had engaged the services of an external marketing and communications agency, Spring, to assist in delivering a targeted opening campaign. This was being carried out using video, social media, emails and letters to customers. Members then viewed a short video that was to be used as part of the marketing campaign, to welcome back customers and to demonstrate how ready and safe the centres were. Members applauded the video and encouraged that it be shared widely.

Members' attention was drawn to the new product offer, as outlined in the report, and it was noted that the café, sauna and soft play areas would not reopen at this stage. With regard to lost income, officers explained that the Government had announced a support scheme, which would allow the Council to claim back some of its lost income.

Cllr C Hudson, the Chairman of the Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Committee, commended the report, and officers for their work in what was a

challenging and moving environment. The Committee had considered the report in detail and endorsed its recommendations. He explained that there were still some unknowns, which required flexibility and that this was why the Committee endorsed an additional recommendation to Cabinet, giving delegated powers to the portfolio holder for Customer Focus, in consultation with the Director for People and Communities to change the pricing structure. The Committee had felt that one of the key aims was to build the membership to a similar level to that in February 2020, and part of this would involve attracting and providing confidence to new members to join the centres. He suggested that this would form part 2 of the recovery plan.

During further discussion, members indicated their support for the Plan, noting the importance of health, in addition to the commercial recovery.

It was

**RESOLVED**

To:

- a) Note the progress being made by officers in ensuring that the facilities are able to reopen in the safest possible manner.
- b) Note the facility offer being presented to customers at the first phase of reopening, the £20 loyalty offer to existing direct debt members and the engagement of a specialist marketing and communications agency to deliver the reopening campaign.
- c) Note the income projections for the service based on the membership targets set.
- d) Note the potential level of financial support the Council may be able to reclaim from the Government for the loss of income.
- e) Note that the membership fees will be reviewed after the initial two months' introductory offer and any price increases agreed under delegated authority by the Portfolio Holder Customer Focus in consultation with the Director People and Communities.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure staff and customer safety, whilst maximising income and improving the health of residents.

**Other Options Considered**

None.

**2809 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY**

Members considered the report of the Environmental Management Officer, which presented Cabinet with the revised Environmental Strategy and Action Plan.

The Chairman commended the Strategy to members, referring to it as much clearer and more adventurous than the version previously considered by Cabinet.

The portfolio holder, Cllr M Edney, thanked the Growth Infrastructure and Environment Committee and the relevant officers, for their work on the Strategy. He felt its format to be much more user friendly, and particularly liked the separate action plan, which would be monitored and amended accordingly.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL** approve:

- a) The Environmental Strategy.
- b) The Action Plan.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To ensure a Strategy and action plan based on key themes, that is user friendly and can be set to improve the environment and address environmental challenges.

**Other Options Considered**

None.

**2810 TEMPORARY PAVEMENT LICENSING**

Members considered the report of the Senior Environmental Health Officer, which sought Cabinet approval on the delegation of authority to officers and the setting of fees and licence conditions for new temporary pavement licences to local business premises.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory) outlined the background to the report, advising that this was a temporary scheme that would close in September 2021. He referred members to the proposed fee of £75, and local conditions, outlined in the report.

Members noted that there was a need to balance the requirement to help businesses survive, with the environmental concerns of the local community, and the Assistant Director stressed that this would be managed carefully.

In response to a query regarding the possibility of the Council placing its own chairs in a public place for all local premises to share, the Assistant Director

explained that he would need to look in to this in more detail, however, he thought that there would still be a need for each individual business to apply for a licence.

The Chairman of Licensing, Cllr R Elliot, expressed his support for the recommendations, referring to it as a great example of responding to the needs of local businesses.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED**

To agree to:

- a) Set the temporary pavement licensing application fee at £75.
- b) Delegate authority to the following officers for the purposes provided at sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) below:
  - Licensing & Enforcement Officers
  - Senior Environmental Health Officer (Licensing)
  - Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager
  - Assistant Director Regulatory
  - Director for Place
- i) To decide whether to approve, refuse, or revoke pavement licences, also to set their durations.
- ii) To decide which licence conditions are attached to each licence (selecting from local standard conditions as established, and non-standard conditions as appropriate to individual circumstances).
- c) Delegate authority to the following officers the power to enforce licence conditions and to vary or revoke individual licences:
  - Senior Environmental Health Officer (Licensing)
  - Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager
  - Assistant Director Regulatory
  - Director for Place

**The Reason for the Decision**

To enable applications to be administered without delay, enabling businesses to safely expand their customer capacity and assist economic recovery.

**Other Options Considered**

None

**2811 URGENT ITEM - LOANS TO PARISH COUNCILS**

The Chairman agreed to consider this item as a matter of urgency, due to the need for the Parish Council concerned to carry out urgent repairs to the village hall.

Members considered the report which sought agreement for the delegation of authority to the Assistant Director of Finance, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, to agree interest free loans of up to £25k to parish councils. Cabinet noted that a small parish council had requested a loan from the Council to assist with urgent repairs to its local village hall.

The Assistant Director briefly outlined the report, and members indicated their support for the proposals.

Voting was carried out by way of a roll call and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** To delegate to the Assistant Director of Finance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, authority to agree interest free loans of up to £25k to Parish Councils.

**The Reason for the Decision**

To demonstrate the Council's support for Parish and Town Councils, recognising the important role they play in the community.

**Other Options Considered**

- To reject the loan
- To charge interest on the loan
- Not to delegate future requests

**2812 CABINET CORE AGENDA**

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

**2813 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was

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

## 2814 INSURANCE PROCUREMENT

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Director of Resources, regarding the Council's current insurance contracts.

Cllr J Worley briefly outlined the proposals and it was

**RESOLVED** To agree the use of the ESPO framework to re-appoint the Council's broker and to award a one-year contract for insurance.

### The Reason for the Decision

To allow for the future alignment with Broadland District Council and to maximise future efficiencies.

### Other Options Considered

- To undertake an OJEU procurement exercise

## 2815 REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES PROVISION

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support, which provided options for the future provision of legal services for the Council.

The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support outlined the options available to members and responded to a number of queries on points of detail.

After a full discussion, regarding all the options (see exempt minute), it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** To agree Option 4 (as outlined in the report) as the preferred option for the Legal Service provision.

### The Reason for the Decision

To ensure a high quality, effective and efficient legal service provision for the Council.

### Other Options Considered

As outlined in the report.

(the meeting concluded at 10.50 am)

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Chairman