

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, held on Tuesday 8 February 2022 at 6.00pm.

Cabinet Members Present: Councillors: S Vincent (Chairman), T Mancini-Boyle (Vice-Chairman), J Copplestone, J Emsell, S Lawn, J Leggett and F Whymark.

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: M Murrell, and S Riley.

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director, Director of Resources, Director of Place, Director of People and Communities, Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer), Assistant Director of Finance, Assistant Director of Individuals and Families, Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation, Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager, Housing and Benefits Manager and Democratic Services Officers (LA, JO)

Cabinet held a minute's silence in memory of Jackie Sadd, who had recently passed away. The Leader noted that Jackie had been a valued member of the Finance Team at the Council for many years and would be sadly missed.

236 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 21 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record, save for the correction of a minor typographical error.

237 MATTERS ARISING

Minute No: 233 – Planning, Regulatory, Housing Standards and Waste Team Services IT Migration

The Director for Place advised the meeting that since the last meeting it had become evident that it would be more expedient to enter into a contract for the new IT system through a framework via South Norfolk Council. This could be delegated across to South Norfolk, with protection in place in respect of the General Data Protection Regulation and the ability to withdraw from the contract and re-enter into one directly, if this should be necessary. There would be no financial impact for this change in arrangements.

238 REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON CABINET MEMBERS

The Chairman agreed that, at his discretion, all non-Cabinet Members in attendance be allowed to join the debate at the relevant point of the proceedings on request.

239 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed the meeting that the In Year Budget Options item had not been available for consideration by the Committee at its meeting on 1 February 2022. He noted that officers had suggested that members would have the opportunity to question and have input into recommendations via Cabinet and Council, however, he wished to record that he disagreed with this view, as the Committee would not have had the opportunity to fully scrutinise the report ahead of a decision being made.

Cabinet was informed of the views expressed by the Committee when it reviewed the rest of the Cabinet Agenda on 1 February 2022, by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as each item was considered.

240 PLACE SHAPING POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Cabinet received the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 24 January 2022. Two of the items considered by the Panel were on today's agenda. The Extension to Belaugh Conservation Area report would be brought to the next meeting of Cabinet.

241 IN YEAR BUDGET OPTIONS

The Leader advised members that item 14 on the agenda, (Delivery Plan 2022-2024) was to be deferred to the 15 March 2022 meeting of Cabinet to allow the projects and initiatives set out in the In Year Budget Options report to be included, if agreed by Council.

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the report, which detailed the Council's additional income, savings and efficiencies generated during 2021/22 and recommended the creation of new Earmarked Reserves to support the progress of a number of projects.

Cabinet were advised that the financial performance of the Council so far this year had been strong. In addition to this further one off income had also been received and the One Team had identified significant revenue savings and efficiencies during this period.

This in-year surplus of income over expenditure, gave the Council a one-off opportunity to: invest in carbon reduction initiatives; invest in staff; bring forward future service enhancements; and put aside money to support future initiatives.

Members' attention was drawn to section three of the report which set out a number of proposals for consideration. These were:

- £685,000 Progress Towards Carbon Net Zero
- £725,000 Accelerating our Growth Agenda
- £594,000 Supporting our Communities
- £22,500 Our Environment
- £551,000 Investing in our talent and pipeline for the One Team

These projects totalled £2,578,000.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance noted that this was an exceptional report, as the Council was not usually in such a favourable position. The report was being brought forward in Quarter Three, so that the projects in it could be progressed at pace to assist residents as much as possible during these very difficult times.

This report would be followed by a far more detailed report setting out the projects; each of which would have a full business case that would allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to fully scrutinise them.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance added that Norfolk Strategic Fighting Fund Allocation was in the savings table, as at this stage only £30,000 had been spent from this pot.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development advised the meeting that the Norfolk Strategic Fighting Fund had been used towards the Norwich/Cambridge Tech Corridor. Further money from this pot had been committed to business initiatives, start-up grants and economic growth in the District generally.

The Leader commended the report and looked forward to the business cases for these projects being brought forward.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To agree the creation of new Earmarked Reserves to support the opportunities identified in section 3 of the report.

Reasons for Decision

To utilise additional income to support residents, enhance the environment and drive economic growth in the District.

242 REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2022/23

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the report, which presented a summary of the Council's draft 2022/23 Revenue Budget and contained details of the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23.

The main area to highlight in the report was the proposal to keep Council Tax for a Band D property at £129.91 for 2022/23, the same as 2021/22.

The Provisional Local Government Finance settlement for 2022/23 was announced in December 2021 and the Budget was based on these figures. Since then the final settlement had been announced with a slightly higher figure, however, again it only covered one year, which made longer term finances harder to predict. Due to this the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) showed a funding gap developing in 2023/24 of approximately £1m. The primary reason for this was the expected reduction in New Homes Bonus grant after this year and the cessation of one-off Government Grants.

It was proposed to increase most discretionary fees and charges this year in line with inflation, based on the September RPI figure of 4.9 percent. Garden waste fees would be frozen at current levels.

The Council recouped its costs for street lighting in Great Witchingham and Hellesdon through the Special Expense's mechanism. It was proposed to keep these at the same level as 2021/22.

The advice of the s151 officer in determining the Council's budget and Council Tax, as required by the Local Government Act 2003, was:

- Overall, in my opinion the budget has been based on a reasonable set of assumptions with due regard to the risks and is therefore robust.
- Assuming Cabinet and Council agree the revenue budget, as set out in this report, then in my opinion the level of reserves is adequate for known and potential risks at this time.

The Assistant Director for Finance informed the meeting that there had been a minor amendment to the Revenue Budget Requirement, set out in Appendix A (which had been circulated to Cabinet). This had previously shown the Planning salaries understated by £110,000. This had been corrected and offset by Planning income of £54,000 and Contingency of £56,000. There was no change in the net costs of services as a result of this, which remained at £11,168,000.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised the meeting that the Revenue Budget and the revised Delivery Plan sought to advance the Council's priority areas, which it would seek to deliver at pace. She emphasised that the good financial position that the Council found itself in was a result of hard work from officers and members.

She added that members were mindful of the difficulties faced by residents with rising inflation and fuel prices and so had chosen to freeze Council Tax, which coupled with the energy rebate that the One Team would be administering would help mitigate residents

financial difficulties. Once the budget was agreed, work would commence on next year's budget and she was confident that the funding gap developing in 2023/24 could be filled.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance proposed, as an additional recommendation, to use the surplus of £271,000 by creating a new Accommodation Requirement Reserve, for the future office accommodation of the Council, whether that be at Thorpe Lodge or in a new building.

The Leader noted that the Council faced inflationary pressures and had only received a one year settlement, which made forward financial planning difficult. These issues together with the pandemic had to be recognised and dealt with as effectively in the future as the Council had done in the past. He thanked officers and the Portfolio Holders for their hard work in going through their budgets and achieving this very positive position. He also noted how effectively collaboration between the two council's was working. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked Portfolio Holders for attending the Committee, which had allowed the budget to be thoroughly scrutinised. He noted that the Council had adequate reserves to cover the funding gap in the short term, if necessary and that the finances of the Council were in good stead.

The proposed amended recommendation was duly seconded and following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

1. The approval of the 2022/23 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 (attached at Appendix 1 to the signed copy of these minutes);
2. That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2022/23 for General Expenditure shall be £6,165,139 and for Special Expenditure shall be £120,154;
3. That the Band D level of Council Tax be £129.91 for General Expenditure and £2.53 for Special Expenditure; and
4. Changes to the proposed fees and charges as set out in section 5.
5. To create a new Accommodation Requirement Reserve, as detailed in Appendix A.

RESOLVED

To note

1. 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;
2. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy projections.

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

243 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 TO 2026/27

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the report, which presented the Capital Strategy and proposed the Capital Programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Members' attention was drawn to the Capital Programme at Appendix B, which totalled £9.1m for 2022/23. The overall Capital Investment Programme over the five year period to 2026/27 was £21.8m.

Included in the Capital Programme was £3m for Broadland Growth Ltd, £1m for an IT replacement programme, £153,000 for the Food Hub Project and £1m per year for Disabled Facilities Grants. Works for Thorpe Lodge remained in the Programme until the matter of future office accommodation was determined. A new item in the Capital Programme was Waste Vehicles, which was a more cost effective means for funding the Waste Service.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance noted the available funding for Broadland Growth Ltd, which members were keen to see bring forward further developments. She also drew attention to a number of projects that would require a business case to be brought to Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence confirmed that the Council was no longer exploring options for developing a new waste depot, as stated in paragraph 5.1, and would instead be refurbishing the Frettenham depot.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To agree the Capital Strategy and the Capital Programme for 2022/23-2026/27(attached at Appendix 2 to the signed copy of these minutes).

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

244 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2022/23

The Assistant Director Finance introduced the report, which set out the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 and associated policies.

Members were advised that as at the end of December 2021 the Council had treasury investments of £61.8m. Broadland had a duty to protect the public purse and therefore the key treasury management principle was to ensure monies were not placed at undue risk, by investing with appropriate counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite.

The Council had due regard to revised Treasury Management and Prudential Codes in the drafting of the Treasury Management Statement and one of the requirements was that councils did not borrow to invest in purely commercial ventures. This was not an issue for Broadland, which was currently debt free and the current capital expenditure plan showed no requirement to borrow.

The Council continued to use its ethical investment policy for its treasury management function and kept an up-to-date review of the creditworthiness of the counterparties that it invested with.

The Bank Rate rose from 0.10 to 0.25 percent in December 2021. However, the Council's treasury advisors, anticipated no higher rate than 0.75 percent by March 2023. On that basis the expected investment return for 2022/23 had been calculated as £400,000. This relatively small return was part of the reason for investing in Broadland Growth Ltd, as it would generate a greater level of return as well providing more housing.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance emphasised that the Council sought to make sustainable investments where possible. She also advised the meeting that Qatar had now been added to the list of countries that the Council chose not to invest in despite their creditworthiness.

Following a show of hands and it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

1. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23;
2. The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2022/23;
3. The Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23;
4. The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1);
5. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation;
6. The Prudential Indicators; and
7. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement.

(attached at Appendix 3 to the signed copy of these minutes).

Reasons for Decision

The report was a factual account.

245 COUNCIL TAX ASSISTANCE SCHEME 2022/23

The Housing and Benefits Manager introduced the report, which proposed changes to the Council Tax Assistance Scheme for the financial year 2022/23.

The Council was required to review and approve its Council Tax Assistance Scheme on an annual basis.

Following the review it was proposed to make changes to the scheme to optimise the way Council Tax Assistance was assessed and target financial help to those who were most in need. The changes were drawn up in collaboration with members over the course of four member workshops and a ten week public consultation, which was broadly supportive of the proposed changes.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's Office was fully supportive of the proposals. Norfolk County Council acknowledged the correspondence, but did not confirm whether or not they supported the proposals.

The changes proposed would ensure the Council was being responsive to the current economic climate and ensure that assistance was effectively distributed to residents and ensure help was provided where it was needed.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance emphasised that the main aim of the changes was to simplify the scheme for officers and residents, as well as to be fair and to be cost neutral. The £5 increase to the non-dependant deduction for all non-dependents, was not considered unreasonable and would also encourage people to work.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing advised the meeting that he had been on the Joint Working Group, which had done a huge amount of work to ensure that the scheme was equitable.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed the meeting that the Committee had concerns about individuals being made aware of the discretionary relief available and recommended that Cabinet consider if the £5 a week increase to the non-dependent deduction in Council Tax Assistance was a reasonable change to make to the Scheme.

In response, the Housing and Benefits Manager confirmed that the change affected 52 residents and they would all be contacted directly and advised of the hardship fund and how to apply to it. This number was so small that the Housing and Benefits Team could easily cope with this workload.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing confirmed that those in need would not be disadvantaged by the proposed changes.

Following a show of hands and it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To approve the changes to the Council Tax Assistance Scheme for the financial year 2022/23 (attached at Appendix 4 to the signed copy of these minutes).

Reasons for Decision

To improve and simplify the Council Tax Assistance Scheme.

246 GREATER NORWICH JOINT FIVE-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN AND ANNUAL GROWTH PROGRAMME

The Director for Place introduced the report, which sought agreement of the draft Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2022 to 2027, as well as approval of the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy to projects included within the Annual Growth Programme and to agree the draft loan agreement for the drawdown of £6.733m to support the delivery of the Long Stratton bypass.

The Committee were advised of the following three projects proposed within the Broadland area:

- Broadland County Park Horsford Crossing
- Yare Boat Club
- Yellow Pedalway extension (Airport to Broadland Northway)

The Committee was advised that the sum to support the delivery of the Long Stratton Bypass was only a small element of the project, as 70 percent was being provided by Government.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing confirmed that he was pleased to see that a new High School at Rackheath and the Green Loop cycleway had been prioritised for future investment.

Following a show of hands and it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To

- a) approve the Draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2022-27 (Appendix 5 attached to the signed copy of these minutes);
- b) approve the proposed 2022/23 Annual Growth Programme;
- c) agree the draft legal loan agreement for the draw down of £6.733m through the Greater Norwich City Deal, to support the delivery of Long Stratton Bypass and to allocate £350,000 of the Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF) to the cash reserve; and,
- d) Subject to the agreement of recommendation c), to delegate authority to the Council's Section 151 Officer and Director of Place in consultation with the Leader of the

Council, to finalise the terms and sign the legal loan agreement on behalf of the Council.

Reasons for Decision

To support the provision of infrastructure in the District.

247 ADOPTION OF THE NORFOLK GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECREATIONAL AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION (GIRAMS) STRATEGY

The Director for Place introduced the report, which proposed the adoption of the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS) and the collections of related obligations from applications for residential development and other relevant development proposals, in accordance with the GIRAMS evidence and Policy three of the Greater Norwich Local Plan and to ensure that the Council continued to meet its legal duty under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

It was explained that the Regulations required the Council to mitigate the footprint of visitors and growth and, therefore, it was proposed to introduce a tariff of £185.93 per new dwelling, to build up a fund that could be used for green infrastructure mitigation measures. It was proposed to introduce the tariff on 31 March 2022.

The governance for the distribution, prioritisation and apportionment of the fund was being finalised, but was likely to follow that of the Community Infrastructure Levy model across Greater Norwich. A review of the Strategy would be held within 18 months to inform the delivery of specific mitigation projects.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning informed the meeting that this was a very important Strategy that should be adopted to protect and enhance the green infrastructure in the District.

It was confirmed that the tariff would be countywide and distribution agreed on a countywide basis. The funding could be used to support and enhance existing green infrastructure, as well as new sites to help spread the footfall across recreational space.

Following a show of hands and it was unanimously:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To adopt the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation (GIRAMS) Strategy (attached at Appendix 6 to the signed copy of these minutes) and resolves to begin collecting obligations from applications for residential development, and other relevant development proposals in accordance with the following requirements of Policy 3 of the Greater Norwich Local Plan:

All residential development will address the potential visitor pressure, caused by residents of the development that would detrimentally impact on sites protected under the Habitats Regulations Directive through:

- *the payment of a contribution towards the cost of mitigation measures at the protected sites (as determined under the Norfolk Green infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy plus an allowance for inflation); and,*
- *the provision or enhancement of adequate green infrastructure, either on the development site or nearby, to provide for the informal recreational needs of the residents as an alternative to visiting the protected sites. This will equate to a minimum of 2 hectares per 1,000 population and will reflect Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard.*

Reasons for Decision

To meet legislative requirements.

248 FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan.

The Leader noted that there would be a number of additional projects going on the Forward Plan, as a result of the In Year Budget Options proposals.

249 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

250 MICROSOFT ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT – CONTRACT AWARD

The Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation introduced the exempt report, which provided details of a procurement exercise to award a new contract for the provision of Microsoft Licence Agreements for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

The procurement was delivered in accordance with the agreed timetable and the Councils' Contract Procedure Rules and formal approval to award the contract was sought from Cabinet.

Following a show of hands it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To appoint the provider for the Microsoft Licence Agreement, for a period of three years.

Reasons for Decision

To award a contract for the provision of IT software.

(The meeting concluded at 7.15pm)

Chairman

DRAFT