



COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Broadland District Council, held on Thursday 23 February 2023 at 7pm at the Council Offices

Members Present: Councillors: J F Fisher (Chairman), S C Beadle, N J Brennan, D J Britcher, P E Bulman, A D Crotch, J Davis, C Eden, J J Emsell, R R Foulger, S C Gurney, N J Harpley, L H Hemsall, S I Holland, N C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K S Kelly, D King, E C Laming, S Lawn, K E Lawrence, J Leggett, K G Leggett, I J Mackie, T M Mancini-Boyle, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, R E Potter, D Roper, L A Starling, D M Thomas, K A Vincent, S A Vincent, J M Ward, F Whymark

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director Place (P Courtier), the Director Resources (D Lorimer), the Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer) (E Hodds), the Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) (R Fincham), the Governance Manager (L Mockford) and the Democratic Services Officer (D Matthews).

PERSONAL REFERENCE

Council stood for a minute's silence to remember Cllr Sue Prutton who had very sadly passed away since the last Council meeting. The Chairman paid tribute to Sue and her dedicated public service. She had been a first class Vice-Chairman attending many events on his behalf and had been a member of a considerable number of committees and outside organisations. She was also a very active member of her local community. She would be very much missed.

172 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

173 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Adams, S Catchpole, S M Clancy, J K Copplestone, D Harrison, I Moncur, J A Neesam, G Peck, S Riley, C E Ryman-Tubb, J L Thomas.

174 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

175 MATTERS ARISING

No matter were raised.

176 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members noted the civic engagements undertaken by the Chairman of the Council since the last meeting.

The Leader of the Council made reference to the consultation currently taking place on the County Deal. An extraordinary meeting of the Council had been scheduled for 2 March to consider the District Council's response to the consultation and he invited members to encourage town and parish councils and local communities to respond to the consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence advised Council that the quarter two collection rate for food waste had been 548 tonnes, with 1050 collected in quarter three. Whilst the aim was still to reduce food waste, the residual waste collection stream had reduced by the same amount which was to be welcomed.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Housing and Planning highlighted the work of the handy person plus scheme and the extension to this to include care leavers. He also referred to the Norfolk County Council strategy to support young people leaving care through the Flourishing Norfolk scheme. He invited members to join the Council in pledging to support young people through Flourishing Norfolk. The Council already had many measures in place by which it supported care leavers to the age 25 to live independently including council tax exemption for under 25s, local connection on the housing register, support via the Help Hub and the Council was a care leaver friendly employer.

The Managing Director advised members that the Council's work in relation to the Food Innovation Centre had been recognised nationally and had been nominated for a LGC award.

177 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

It was noted that there had been no questions from the public.

178 PUBLIC SPEAKING

It was noted that there had been no requests for public speaking.

179 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 3 January, 24 January and 31 January 2023 were received.

180 CABINET

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 January 2023 were received.

181 CABINET

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 February 2023 were received.

The recommendations at Cabinet minute numbers 81 and 82 (agenda items 10.1 and 10.2) were dealt with at agenda item 14 – minute no 185 below.

Cabinet Minute no 83 – Treasury Management Strategy Statement

The Portfolio Holder for Finance invited Council to support the recommendations of Cabinet. There had been no fundamental changes to the strategies and the Council continued to make ethical investments.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to agree the following:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023/24;
2. The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2023/24;
3. The Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24;
4. The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1);
5. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation;
6. The Prudential Indicators;
7. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement.

Cabinet Minute no 84 - Council Tax Assistance Scheme 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Finance invited Council to support the recommendations of Cabinet. She advised that an extensive review of the scheme had been undertaken last year followed by a period of embedding the changes into the system which were now progressing well. The current proposed scheme remained unchanged.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED

To approve the Council Tax Assistance Scheme for the financial year 2023/24.

182 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The decisions of the Planning Committee meeting held on 21 December 2022 were received.

183 AUDIT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 26 January 2023 were received.

184 LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

The non-exempt minutes of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee meeting held on 13 December 2022 were received.

185 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2023/24

The Chairman advised that, as part of consideration of the Council Tax Resolution, members would be considering the following items:

- **Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2023/24** - Council agenda item 10.1 - recommendation from Cabinet 7 February 2023 (minute no 81 refers)
- **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26** - Council agenda item 10.2 - recommendation from Cabinet 7 February 2023 (minute no 82 refers)
- **Council Tax Resolution for 2022/23** - report of the Assistant Director Finance (Council agenda item 14 refers)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reflected on events for the year and the challenges these had brought: the war in Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis and cost of living rise affecting everyone, the tail end of covid restrictions and the issue of nutrient neutrality. The Platinum Jubilee celebrations had taken place and then the extremely sad passing of the Queen. The year had probably been one of the most challenging years for residents, business and councils.

As ever Broadland District Council had risen to these challenges, delivering on many levels and with many exciting projects. These included welcoming

Gridserve to Broadland Gate, one of the first in the country. Broadland Gate had gone from strength to strength, including welcoming the Police to the location, demonstrating the confidence that Business had in the Council as a forward thinking and ambitious Council.

The Council had also completed the purchase of the Horizon Centre which would deliver huge savings for the Council's finances and its carbon footprint. Building on this, the Council had been awarded a decarbonisation grant to replace the boilers for air source heat pumps. The move would deliver bringing the One Team together, which would assist the Team to continue to provide fantastic services to residents. The One Team was constantly being challenged be innovative and continued to do everything possible to keep delivering.

The Council had delivered the Broadland Food Innovation Centre on time and on budget in challenging times during covid. This could not have come at a better time with food security in the headlines more than ever. Determined to continue to make a difference, the administration had granted the Local Development Order at Honningham some time ago. This had resulted in attracting the largest vertical farm in the Country to the site, demonstrating the Council's support for businesses and the resultant provision of high quality jobs for the District.

The Council had rolled out the much anticipated district wide food waste collection. Residents had called for this service and again the administration had delivered. This service, together with the textiles and small electrical & battery collections, would help reach the 60% recycling goal, way ahead of other Norfolk councils. This continued to be a key priority. The Portfolio Holder thanked residents and businesses for playing their part in helping the Council to achieve all this.

The Council had declared that it would reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. This was not just virtue signalling; it was being made possible by decisions of the administration over a number of years and which it would continue to make. The launch of a new environmental strategy set out details on how the goals would be achieved.

The Council had agreed to the work required at the Frettenham Depot. The extra green credentials committed to would go a long way to reducing the carbon footprint and delivering a depot equivalent to a BREAM excellent building. The savings from this work would be repaid to the environmental reserve.

The Council had launched the Bins App, which would assist residents in many ways, giving information on changes in collection dates over holiday periods, reporting missed bins and helping with recycling.

The Council had seen a large increase in the need for temporary accommodation which was extremely costly for councils. In response the administration had

sought solutions and the Council was in the process of purchasing a 20 bedroom property and had set aside more money to purchase further accommodation. This would not only save money, but would provide improved standards of accommodation. Work would also be undertaken to any properties purchased to make them as energy efficient as possible.

With regard to the Nutrient Neutrality issue affecting many of the Norfolk districts, the Council had again been forward thinking. Funding from the environmental reserve had been set aside to help set up the mitigation process required to see the building of much needed homes again. As this funding was repaid it would be returned to the environmental reserve to continue with green initiatives.

The Council would be looking for sites where it could build the type of quality, energy efficient and affordable homes delivered in the past through Broadland Growth.

The Council was well on the way to publishing the Broadland Country Park Master Plan. The country park was already proving a huge success at a time when there was an increased realisation of the benefits of open spaces.

Carrowbreck had always been seen as a really important service to residents to help in their career path or with their business and was now up and running again. Alongside this, the Business Builder programme had been launched which would help businesses grow and prosper, more vital than ever after covid.

In addition to all this, the Council had requested a Peer Review. Whilst this had been a stressful, challenging week, it had also been a great success with the Peer Review Team identifying some resounding successes. One of these was the Community Help Hub which was held as exemplar by the peer team who were envious of the offer and wanted to replicate it in their own councils. The Review Team were impressed at how quickly the two councils had managed to pull the One Team together. They had also made reference to the fact that the Council was highly ambitious. The Peer Team had made suggestions going forward and these had been taken on board with the Peer Team returning to review progress soon.

All the projects mentioned had been achieved whilst carrying on with business as usual which now also included administering regular monies received from central government. In 2022/23 there had been 6 different schemes to support residents with the cost of living; the total paid out to residents was £7.9million to date. Officers as always had risen to the challenge with the Council being one of the very first to get monies to those residents most in need in a timely manner.

This year would see the business case for a new IT system, the move to the Horizon and continued work to find properties to solve the temporary accommodation situation. Work would continue to seek viable projects for

Broadland Growth and to forge ahead with net zero and recycling targets. The Council had been very successful in attracting investment to the District and this approach would continue. The Council would continue to provide excellent services in a cost effective manner and as always have the community at heart in everything it did.

The Portfolio Holder went on to state that, at the heart of the Strategic Plan was the vision for our place: 'Working together to create the best place for everyone, now and for future generations'. This vision was underpinned by the Council's strategic priorities:

- Growing the economy
- Supporting individuals and empowering communities
- Protecting and improving the natural and built environment, whilst maximising quality of life
- Moving with the times, working smartly and collaboratively.

With this in mind, every year when setting the Council's budget, the administration's starting point was not to raise council tax, not to cut services and to continue to seek out more efficiencies. This meant finding better ways of doing things, not reducing them.

As was the situation for many residents and businesses, there were many pressures on the Council. With regard to waste, the Council had set aside additional funds for the increase in the MRF gate fees, which were always volatile, mindful of the need to reduce future risks. The food waste rollout was also a pressure pending central government's promises regarding new burdens funding; the Council would continue to lobby for this. There was also the pressure on the waste contract due to true up and inflation. There was pressure from the need for temporary accommodation which was being addressed and as business cases came forward it was anticipated the strain could be reduced or removed completely. Staffing costs for 2023/24 had been built into the budget including an increase in the real living wage and performance related pay.

In accordance with existing policy, fees and charges would rise in line with RPI as at 30 September.

Funding from central government was slightly better than expected but uncertainty still remained in relation to funding moving forward. The Council continued to lobby for more than a one year settlement to enable a more robust prediction moving forward and the Council continued with a cautious approach regarding funding.

There continued to be a need to make savings and increase income to close the funding gap going forward in the Medium Term Financial Plan and options had been included within the Council papers. One of the options was to increase

council tax. Having managed the finances of Broadland District Council in a sound, prudent way for many years, and mindful of the financial challenges facing residents, the administration did not wish to add to that burden and had worked with officers to produce a balanced budget with no increase in council tax. This was the second year of a freeze in Broadland's share of council tax and no other Norfolk council had achieved this. This was possible with no detriment to services. Broadland's share of council tax would therefore remain at £129.91 for a Band D property, one of the lowest rates of any Norfolk council. The Liberal Democrat run North Norfolk District Council had just set their Band D rate at £163.65 and did not provide the level of services, such as food waste collection, provided by Broadland.

The Portfolio Holder went on to thank the entire officer team in helping to achieve the vision for Broadland, to be prosperous, safe, with a great quality of life by protecting the environment, yet remaining innovative and being a partner of choice to work with collaboratively. She also thanked the finance team for their help and support.

She hoped members across all parties would be able to vote for the balanced budget full of ambition and a fully funded capital programme whilst requiring zero increase in the Council's share of council tax.

She proposed, duly seconded, that Council support the following recommendations:

- **Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2023/24** - Council agenda item 10.1 - recommendation from Cabinet 7 February 2023 (minute no 81 refers)
- **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26** - Council agenda item 10.2 - recommendation from Cabinet 7 February 2023 (minute no 82 refers)
- **Council Tax Resolution for 2022/23** - report of the Assistant Director Finance (Council agenda item 14 refers)

On behalf of the Green Party, Cllr Laming proposed an amendment to the proposal in respect of the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26. She stated the Council should be looking to retrofit a number of households with energy efficient measures to help residents on low income or in poorly insulated houses who were not eligible for current schemes. This would help them with the cost of living by reducing energy bills and boost the local economy by employing local fitters. She proposed an amendment that the Council reduced the capital set aside to fund Broadland Growth (2023-2025) to £5m, and ring fenced £2m for the purpose of providing a programme to retrofit houses in the district, which were not eligible for government grant funding, with appropriate energy efficient measures. The remaining £5m allocated for Broadland Growth would be redistributed in the Capital Programme with £2m in 2023/24 and £3m in 2024/25. The design of the exact programme would be delegated to the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families to ensure value

for money and to target assistance to residents in most need. Approval and fair allocation would be key and a grants-based system could be used, or alternatively a loan-based system with criteria surrounding repayment periods and interest rates etc. which would have the benefit of bringing some income back to the Council. As a fund for residents, it would be regarded as a revenue fund, so each year, grants or loans would be provided to residents to insulate their homes, using accredited installers. Broadland Growth was a form of investment where the Council stood to get a commercial return from the total £7m (2022-2025) loaned for various projects. So ideally the proposed programme would demonstrate payback for the Council. At the moment, Broadland Growth had no projects in the pipeline. The value of the allocated capital will fall with time and some could be spent now to help residents who are currently struggling. Appropriate retrofitting had a pay-back benefit in terms of fuel economies in the future. The Assistant Director of Finance had been consulted on the financial implications of the proposal and had confirmed that the budget (as amended) would still be robust and would still leave the Council with adequate reserves.

Discussion then took place on this amendment. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence drew members' attention to green loans offered as part of the "Solar Together" scheme for which there had not been a strong take up. A further green loan scheme was being launched which would facilitate interest free loans to residents to install renewable or energy saving measures to their homes which would reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. The scheme was being run in partnership with Eastern Savings and Loans Credit Union. Loans of up to £5k would be paid back over 3 years and be used for solar panels or loft/wall insulation and could be combined with national schemes such as the Government's boiler upgrade grant of up to £5k. A sum of £100,000 had been committed to the scheme.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Green Party for the amendment but felt unable to support it. Broadland Growth was used to bring income and other community benefits to the Council such as affordable homes. He would not want to see funds removed from this. Broadland Growth needed to remain in a position to respond speedily to projects as and when identified which it was hoped would be later this year.

A concern was raised that it was not possible to support the amendment as it was not prudent to allocate capital sums without a strategy or a supporting revenue funding proposal. The benefits of the proposal were supported but without a strategy this was the wrong time to support such a proposal to the budget. It was hoped there would be an opportunity to revisit this proposal at a more appropriate time.

In seconding the proposal, Cllr Davis commented that the Council did have a strategy: the Warm Homes Programme and its delivery plan which incorporated these proposals. The Warm Homes programme report recently considered by the Environmental Excellence Policy Development Panel encapsulated many of the key issues needing to be addressed. The cost of living crisis and enormous increase in energy costs was leading to an increasing number of people

struggling to afford to heat their homes. National Energy Action was predicting average bills reaching £3,000 per annum which would force 8.2 million households into fuel poverty. It had been estimated that 6,700 Broadland households were in fuel poverty. This had increased to up to 11,000 and was still rising. This had detrimental effects on health and wellbeing and on carbon emissions. Urgent attention was needed to address carbon emissions as referenced at the Carbon Literacy training session earlier that day where it had been stated that 30 million buildings in the UK were responsible for 30% of national emissions so decarbonising buildings was essential in achieving the net zero challenge. Across all funding streams, the Council had invested £6.1m improving 795 homes however there were 11,000 homes in fuel poverty. The resources for delivery of the programmes as part the Warm Homes Scheme were from external funding, with the team working tirelessly to secure this funding but there would be many households still in fuel poverty and entering fuel poverty. It was time for the Council to review its priorities and how it spent available funds. A key message from the budget consultation exercise carried out was respondents supporting the targeting of resources to those most in need. Given these circumstances, he urged Council to support the proposal.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance stated she was unable to support the amendment. She reminded members that the Council had been awarded Government funding for the Warm Homes scheme to administer on behalf of Norfolk. Further funding would continue from April this year. There had been issues in delivering the scheme: to completely retrofit 150 properties would cost £2m, the rules were continuing to evolve and change and there was a shortage of skilled labour to install refits. It was difficult to completely retrofit a whole property. The last round of funding had seen projects of a value of £1.78m across Norfolk. In Broadland a sum of £47,419 had been spent on 8 households, with 11 more completed applications awaiting approval. The cost of retrofitting was extremely high. With regard to the medium term financial plan, there were gaps in funding going forward which needed to be filled. The Portfolio Holder stated she would prefer to see this gap closed by the delivery of a return from Broadland Growth projects as opposed to raising council tax to meet the funding gaps. Broadland Growth did not currently have any active projects, mindful of nutrient neutrality issues, but she was optimistic that progress would be made this year in identifying suitable projects.

Cllr Laming responded that she felt everyone had a right to a warm home and affordable heating. Improving energy efficiency was essential to tackling the energy crisis and the cost of living crisis. She acknowledged that the Country was slowly working towards having all new homes and businesses built to the highest energy efficiency standards but there was a need to go much faster. Most residents lived in existing homes not new homes which needed to be retrofitted. With 40% of UK homes built before 1945, the UK had some of the most energy inefficient housing in Europe. Buildings accounted for 23% of UK greenhouse gas emissions and these needed to be reduced. Insulation would be a step in achieving this.

Cllr Laming stated that the Council had on 13 October 2022, supported a motion recognising the need for action to address climate change claiming that the

Council had a track record of putting environmental concerns at heart of delivery. The current proposal to amend the budget would enable the Council to put this ambition into action. A great deal of additional funding from central government was needed with continued lobbying to secure this but there was also an opportunity to take direct action and not just be beholden to central government for funding for schemes which were often difficult to put into practice. It was not essential to completely retrofit all homes as any improvements would help. The cost of living crisis was hitting families hard and there was a need to give help to those most in need. The cheapest energy bill was the one that wasn't needed as a home was fully insulated.

Council then voted on the amendment proposed by Cllr Laming, seconded by Cllr Davis, in relation to the **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26**

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which set out the requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on all budget and Council Tax setting matters, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

FOR THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT – 5

Councillors: J Davis, C Eden, N J Harpley, E C Laming, K E Lawrence

AGAINST THE AMENDMENT - 22

Councillors: N J Brennan, P E Bulman, A D Crotch, J J Emsell, J F Fisher, R R Foulger, S C Gurney, L H Hempsall, K S Kelly, D King, S Lawn, J Leggett, K G Leggett, I J Mackie, T M Mancini-Boyle, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, R E Potter, K A Vincent, S A Vincent, J M Ward, F Whymark

ABSTENTIONS: 7

Councillors: S C Beadle, D J Britcher, S I Holland, N C Karimi-Ghovanlou, D Roper, L A Starling, D M Thomas,

The amendment was declared LOST

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Roper proposed an amendment to the Council's budget. He stated that in principle he would be supporting the budget but that he wished to see two amendments:

With regard to the revenue budget and the hopeful resolution of the nutrient neutrality issues, Cllr Roper stated there would be increasing pressure on the Planning Service and a surge in demand for services. He was proposing an increase of 5% for one year totalling £66,000 for planning staffing for 2023/24 funded from general reserves. If not needed the additional funding could be returned to the general fund. This would give the service a greater degree of flexibility to respond to the increase in work.

With regard to the capital programme, Cllr Roper stated he endorsed the Council's approach to managing the increasing level of homelessness and to this

end was proposing an increase in the capital budget for homelessness of £1m for temporary accommodation to enable the Council to progress this work more quickly. The additional funding would be allocated from the 2024/25 budget for Broadland Growth and allocated to the temporary accommodation budget for 2023/24.

Cllr Roper confirmed that the Assistant Director of Finance had been consulted on the implications of the proposals and confirmed they were sound.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities Housing and Planning commented that the addition of 5% to the Planning staffing budget would not be effective as there was a national shortage of qualified Planning Officers. Regular meetings were held with the team to explore solutions, one of which was the current engagement of agency staff. With regard to the additional funding proposed for temporary accommodation, the Portfolio Holder stated that £2m had already been allocated for this work and the addition of a further £1m was not necessary at this time. This would also divert funds from Broadland Growth which was an enterprise which generated income.

The Leader of the Council stated there was currently no backlog of planning applications with all applications being processed subject to resolution of nutrient neutrality issues. There was no need for additional resources but this would be reviewed should the situation change. With regard to the amendment to set aside additional funds for temporary accommodation, the Leader stated that £2m had already been set aside for the purchase of properties to increase the temporary housing stock and to relieve any future financial pressures arising from increasing costs associated with the expected increases in the need for temporary accommodation. He did not believe there was a need for additional funds for this work. In supporting these views, the Portfolio Holder for Finance added that the current provision for temporary accommodation had not as yet been spent and should the need arise consideration could be given to allocating additional funds to this at a later date. A fully considered proposal was needed to ensure the right type of accommodation was sourced. It was possible that a suitable project could be identified for Broadland Growth and it would be premature to allocate funding from Broadland Growth to temporary accommodation when this might be needed for Broadland Growth projects. The Portfolio Holder reminded Council that over £7.9m of cost of living grants had been given to those in need so the Council was already helping. The Help Hub was also available to those facing difficulties.

A member commented that there would be some impact on planning staffing arising from the need to assess current planning applications in terms of nutrient neutrality mitigation and they supported the proposal to increase the staffing budget. Support was also expressed by some members for the proposed amendment relating to the increase in temporary accommodation budget as this would help secure vital temporary accommodation.

In seconding the two amendments, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group expressed her support for increasing the staffing budget for planning to provide flexibility in securing solutions to the current situation and shortage of qualified staff. With regard to the proposed increase in the capital budget for temporary

accommodation, she commented that the cost of living crisis was only set to worsen over coming months with many people unable to afford their rent. The identification of suitable projects for Broadland Growth had been delayed due to the current economic conditions and funds could be diverted from Broadland Growth to the more urgent need to increase temporary accommodation and support residents.

Cllr Roper indicated his confusion about some of the comments made that these additional funds were not needed.

Council then voted on the amendments proposed by Cllr Roper, seconded by Cllr Holland in relation to the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 and the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which set out the requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on all budget and Council Tax setting matters, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

FOR THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS – 12

Councillors: S C Beadle, D J Britcher, J Davis, C Eden, N J Harpley S I Holland, N C Karimi-Ghovanlou, E C Laming, K E Lawrence, D Roper, L A Starling, D M Thomas,

AGAINST THE AMENDMENTS - 22

Councillors: N J Brennan, P E Bulman, A D Crotch, J J Emsell, J F Fisher, R R Foulger, S C Gurney, L H Hempsall, K S Kelly, D King, S Lawn, J Leggett, K G Leggett, I J Mackie, T M Mancini-Boyle, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, R E Potter, K A Vincent, S A Vincent, J M Ward, F Whymark

ABSTENTIONS: - 0

The amendment was declared LOST

With the amendments all having been lost, debate then returned to the three recommendations proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stated she was happy to support the budget. Her group had called for a council tax freeze last year and this was to be welcomed. She was disappointed with elements of the proposals but was pleased that reserves had been used to prevent the need to increase council tax.

A member made reference to the role of the Council as a provider of public services. The current capital programme of £25.3m would be financed from capital receipts, grants and revenues. Reserves were currently above the level recommended for local authorities which suggested that additional funding could have been made available to provide additional services at a time when they were much needed. In addition, the treasury management strategy included assumptions about investment returns of over £1m so there was an argument that the Council could support additional expenditure. It was suggested there

was a strong case for utilising available and future funds for the benefit of residents struggling with the cost of living and energy crisis. The Council could be much more ambitious in providing meaningful services with the funds available. The Council could invest in infrastructure to support delivery of services but it should be recognised that high proportion of the budget had recently been spent on the cost of running the Council and not on delivering services for place or people. Broadland was consistently a low spending Council. With regard to spending per head it was one of the lowest and it was not providing the services it could. LGA data indicated a reduced spending per head of 5% since 2017/18, lower than its statistically nearest neighbour, and in 2021/22 and 2022/23 continued reduced spending per head when others were increasing spending during a period of covid and cost of living rise. There was a need to recognise the work of help hub and others such as the mindfulness towns and villages initiative to plug gaps due to the failure of statutory services. Many services were dependent on charitable bodies and volunteers seeking funding where ever they could which demonstrated wonderful community spirit but was unsustainable. The amendments to the budget put forward demonstrated there were opportunities at a time of a cost of living, energy and climate crisis to better use funding for more progressive schemes to support residents and this would have been welcomed.

In seconding the three budget recommendations, the Leader of the Council stated that the Conservative administration had promoted strong financial management at the heart of all its decision making which was why it was now in a strong position, unlike many other councils, and had a fully funded ambitious business plan. He referred to examples such as the FIC which would provide a return on investment, support the local economy and support the food industry to reduce food mileage and reduce its carbon footprint. The food waste collection service was a current government ambition which the Council had already delivered on. The Council had also set itself a target of net zero emissions by 2030, aiming to achieve this before the target date with an 80% reduction by the end of this year.

The Council had provided many services to support the vulnerable and had a Help Hub which was regarded as exemplar. The budget had been developed to deliver a range of quality services going forward and he was pleased to support a budget with a council tax freeze for the Broadland element for the second time in two years.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance welcomed the cross party support expressed for the budget.

Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2023/24

Having been proposed and seconded, Council voted on the recommendation from Cabinet - 7 February 2023 (minute no 81 refers).

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which set out the requirement for a recorded

vote to be taken on all budget and Council Tax setting matters, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

FOR THE PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION – 34

Councillors: S C Beadle, N J Brennan, D J Britcher, P E Bulman, A D Crotch, J Davis, C Eden, J J Emsell, J F Fisher, R R Foulger, S C Gurney, N J Harpley, L H Hemsall, S I Holland, N C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K S Kelly, D King, E C Laming, S Lawn, K E Lawrence, J Leggett, K G Leggett, I J Mackie, T M Mancini-Boyle, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, R E Potter, D Roper, L A Starling, D M Thomas, K A Vincent, S A Vincent, J M Ward, F Whymark

AGAINST THE RECOMMENDATION – 0

ABSTENTIONS – 0

RESOLVED TO AGREE

1. The approval of the 2023/24 base budget.
2. That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2023/24 for General Expenditure shall be £6,252,179, and for Special Expenditure shall be £121,962.
3. That the Band D level of Council Tax be £129.91 for General Expenditure, and £2.53 for Special Expenditure.
4. Changes to the proposed fees and charges as set out in section 5 of the Cabinet report 7 February 2023.

Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which set out the requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on all budget and Council Tax setting matters, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

FOR THE PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION – 34

Councillors: S C Beadle, N J Brennan, D J Britcher, P E Bulman, A D Crotch, J Davis, C Eden, J J Emsell, J F Fisher, R R Foulger, S C Gurney, N J Harpley, L H Hemsall, S I Holland, N C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K S Kelly, D King, E C Laming, S Lawn, K E Lawrence, J Leggett, K G Leggett, I J Mackie, T M Mancini-Boyle, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, R E Potter, D Roper, L A Starling, D M Thomas, K A Vincent, S A Vincent, J M Ward, F Whymark

AGAINST THE RECOMMENDATION – 0

ABSTENTIONS – 0

RESOLVED to agree

1. The Capital Strategy (***Appendix A in the Cabinet Agenda***); and
2. The Capital Programme for 2023/24-2027/28 (***Appendix B in the Cabinet Agenda***).

Council Tax Resolution for 2022/23

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which set out the requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on all budget and Council Tax setting matters, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

FOR THE PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION – 34

Councillors: S C Beadle, N J Brennan, D J Britcher, P E Bulman, A D Crotch, J Davis, C Eden, J J Emsell, J F Fisher, R R Foulger, S C Gurney, N J Harpley, L H Hemsall, S I Holland, N C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K S Kelly, D King, E C Laming, S Lawn, K E Lawrence, J Leggett, K G Leggett, I J Mackie, T M Mancini-Boyle, M L Murrell, G K Nurden, R E Potter, D Roper, L A Starling, D M Thomas, K A Vincent, S A Vincent, J M Ward, F Whymark

AGAINST THE RECOMMENDATION – 0

ABSTENTIONS – 0

RESOLVED to agree

- 1 That it be noted that the following amounts for 2023/24 have been determined under delegated authority and in accordance with regulations made under the local Government Finance Act 1992:
 - a) **48,127** being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax Base for the year.
 - b) The amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amount of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items (i.e. Parish precepts) relate, as shown in ***Appendix A of the Cabinet report***.

- 2 That the Council calculates the following amounts for 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011):
- a) **£42,086,226** being the aggregate expenditure which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act (including the General Fund, Special Expenses and Parish Precepts).
 - b) **£31,249,352** being the aggregate income which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.
 - c) **£10,836,874** as its council tax requirement for the year including Special Expenses and Parish Precepts being the amount by which the aggregate expenditure at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate income at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act.
 - d) **£225.17** as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year, being the council tax requirement at 2(c), divided by the Council Tax Base for the year (48,127) at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act.
 - e) **£4,584,696** being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (i.e. Parish Precepts and street lighting special expenses).
 - f) **£129.91** as the basic amount of its Council Tax for dwellings in its area, excluding Special Expenses and Parish Precepts, being the amount at 2(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2(e) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act.
 - g) The amounts given by adding to the amount at 2(f) above the amounts of the special items for the relevant Parish divided in each case by the Council Tax Base for the Parish at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in each Parish is as set out in ***Appendix B of the Cabinet report.***
 - h) The amounts given by multiplying the basic amounts for each Parish 2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.
- 3 That it be noted that for the year 2023/24 the main precepting authorities have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with s40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Band	Norfolk County Council	Police & Crime Commissioner	Total Preceptors
A	£1,061.76	£201.96	£1,263.72
B	£1,238.72	£235.62	£1,474.34
C	£1,415.68	£269.28	£1,684.96
D	£1,592.64	£302.94	£1,895.58
E	£1,946.56	£370.26	£2,316.82
F	£2,300.48	£437.58	£2,738.06
G	£2,654.40	£504.90	£3,159.30
H	£3,185.28	£605.88	£3,791.16

- 4 That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts of the District's and preceptors requirements, in accordance with s30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, **hereby sets** amounts of the council tax for the year 2023/24 for each category of dwelling as follows.

Band	District & Parishes Council Tax	Total Preceptors	Total 2023/24 Council Tax
A	£150.11	£1,263.72	£1,413.83
B	£175.13	£1,474.34	£1,649.47
C	£200.15	£1,684.96	£1,885.11
D	£225.17	£1,895.58	£2,120.75
E	£275.21	£2,316.82	£2,592.03
F	£325.25	£2,738.06	£3,063.31
G	£375.28	£3,159.30	£3,534.58
H	£450.34	£3,791.16	£4,241.50

The council tax for each category of dwelling by parish is as set out in **Appendix C**.

- 5 Determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax (including special expenses) for 2023/24 is not excessive, in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and thus there is no need to hold a Council Tax referendum.

186 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Members considered the report of the Chief of Staff regarding the requirement in Section 38 of the Localism Act introduced in 2012 that all Local Authorities produce an annual Pay Policy Statement, which needed to be approved by Council and made available to the public.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development invited Council to approve the Broadland District Council's Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 in advance of its publication on the Council's website.

RESOLVED to

approve the content of Broadland District Council's 2023/24 Pay Policy Statement in advance of its publication on the Council's website by 31 March 2023.

187 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer. The Leader paid tribute to the late Cllr Sue Prutton stating that the number of vacancies requiring to be filled due to her sad loss was a testament to her commitment to the Council and her hard work. These comments were echoed by Cllr Roper who indicated that the Liberal Democrat Group would not be filling its vacant seat on the Appeals Panel. The Leader invited members to support recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 (recommendation 6 being taken separately), together with the following additional appointments to be included to those in the report:

Licensing and Regulatory – add Cllrs Brennan and Adams

Member Development Panel – add Cllr Brennan

Planning Committee – add Cllr Hemsall

Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee – add Cllr Crotch

RESOLVED to agree

1. The allocation of committee seats to each political group as set out in the table at Appendix A and reproduced below:

Committee	No of seats	Cons	Lib Dem	Labour	Green
Appeals	8	5	3	0	0
Audit	5	4	1	0	0
Awards	10	6	3	0	1
Emergency Committee	6	4	2	0	0
Electoral Arrangements	10	6	2	1	1
Joint Scrutiny	6	4	2	0	0
Joint Appts. Panel	4	3	1	0	0
Licensing	13	8	3	1	1
Overview & Scrutiny	15	9	4	1	1
Planning	11	8	3	0	0
SIEC	11	8	3	0	0
Standards	5	3	1	1	0
Total	104	68	28	4	4

Changes highlighted

2. The appointment of members to committee seats, as set out in section 4.4 of the report and reproduced below:

Conservatives

Appeals Panel – Cllrs Adams and Fisher to replace Cllrs J Thomas and Prutton. Cllr Ward to replace Cllr Clancy. Cllr Potter to be removed.

Awards Panel – seat vacant

Licensing and Regulatory – Cllrs Brennan and Adams

Member Development Panel – Cllr Brennan

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – seat vacant

Planning Committee – Cllr Hemsall

Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee – Cllr Crotch

Labour

Member Development Panel – Cllr Eden to replace Cllr Cook

Standards – Cllr Eden to replace Cllr Cook

Liberal Democrats

Appeals Panel - seat vacant

3. The appointment of members to Cabinet Panels, as set out in section 4.5 of the report and reproduced below:

Communities, Housing & Planning Panel – Conservative seat vacant

Environmental Excellence Panel – Cllr Gurney to replace Cllr Prutton

4. The appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to committees and panels, as set out in section 4.6 of the report and reproduced below:

Chairman of Communities, Housing & Planning Panel – Cllr Brennan to replace Cllr Prutton

Vice-chairman of Appeals Panel – Cllr Adams to replace Cllr Prutton

Vice-chairman of Licensing & Regulatory – Cllr Bulman to replace Cllr J Thomas

5. The appointment to outside bodies as set out in section 4.7 of the report and reproduced below:

Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Panel – vacant

Norfolk Arts Forum (substitute member) – vacant

Norfolk Against Scams Partnership – Cllr Mackie to replace Cllr Prutton

Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Cllr Murrell to replace Cllr Prutton

Great Norwich Development Partnership (substitute member) – Cllr Brennan to replace Cllr Prutton

Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership (substitute member) – Cllr Mackie to replace Cllr Prutton

Norfolk Waste Partnership (substitute member) – Cllr Kelly to replace Cllr Prutton

7. The appointment of Emma Hodds and Nicola Tullock as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for Broadland District Council.

Recommendation 6

The Chairman invited nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

It was proposed, seconded and further

RESOLVED

that Cllr K Kelly be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the remainder of the municipal year.

188 OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Members received and noted the feedback from members appointed to represent the Council on Outside Organisations.

189 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

The following questions had been received in accordance with Procedural Rule 12.4:

1. Question from Cllr Laming

I note that in the Norfolk Devolution Deal document, published 8 December 2022, paragraph 31 says:

Norfolk County Council will be scrutinised and held to account for their devolution deal by the Council's Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of Scrutiny Committee will be appointed by council and will be an opposition member, normally the Leader of the main opposition party, and shall not be a member of a registered political party of which the directly elected leader is also a member.

BDC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is currently chaired by a member of the governing political party.

Would BDC please consider changing its constitution to require the above arrangements to be in place for its Overview and Scrutiny Committee from May 2023?

The following wording could be used to bring it in line with Norfolk County Council's proposed governance:

Broadland District Council will be scrutinised and held to account by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be appointed by council and will be an opposition member, normally the Leader of the main opposition party, and shall not be a member of a registered political party of which the Leader of the Council is also a member.

Response from the Leader

The Leader responded that he would not be changing the constitution to require alternative arrangements to be put in place for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from May 2023. When the decision had been taken to change chairmanship of the committee, the role had been offered to the Green Party who had declined the offer. The current arrangements were working well with the new Chairman ensuring that Cabinet was held to account.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Laming

In response, Cllr Laming commented that when offered the role, she had only just been elected as a Councillor and felt it was too soon to undertake such a role.

2. Question from Cllr Karimi-Ghovanlou

I understand four of the famous corgis were auctioned off on the 2nd February, making a fraction of the purchase cost, with the proceeds going to Nelson's Journey, a very worthwhile charity. Could the portfolio holder inform this council how much the total cost of refurbishment was before being sold, and the net loss to the council in financial terms? Also, this council was informed recently that one corgi had gone to Sandringham - but that Broadland would be keeping two corgis. Where will these be displayed and why do we need two?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance

The Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that she had a very different perception of the corgis. She did not see them as a loss to the Council. The corgis had been commissioned as a tribute to the late Queen and not as a commercial exercise. She was proud that Broadland District Council had taken the opportunity to recognise a once in a life time event unlike other districts. The Corgis had been placed throughout the District for everyone to enjoy and many people had visited them, with many photo opportunities enjoyed. This had created opportunities for local businesses to enjoy the extra footfall. The family of the original breeder of the Queen's corgi, Susan, who lived in the district had been thrilled to see them. At the outset there had been no decision around the fate of the Corgis, auctioning had been an option but this was never the purpose in commissioning them.

Following the return of the corgis, after their summer on location, a decision had been made to see if the Royal Household would accept one of the Corgis, Susan, as a gift. The Portfolio Holder was delighted that the gift had been accepted and the corgi was now at its new home in Sandringham.

With regard to the financial facts, the previously quoted costs had not changed apart from the addition of £1080 for all seven corgis to be refreshed. A sum of £2140 had been donated to Nelson's Journey.

With regard to why the Council kept 2 corgis, the Portfolio Holder stated that one would be situated at the Council's new office at the Horizon and the other could be available to go "on tour" as and when events were held. For example a corgi had been taken to the Norfolk Show and to the Community at Heart Awards. On both occasions, it had been a great hit. The Portfolio Holder hoped this had answered the question and now closed the matter, as she felt that something so lovely was being made political.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Karimi-Ghovanlou

Cllr Karimi-Ghovanlou stated she was not making the issue political; she felt the money could have been better used elsewhere. She understood two of the sold corgis had recently been put up for re-auction with a reserve of £1000.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance

The Portfolio Holder for Finance responded that the corgis did not sell at the subsequent re-auction. She reminded the councillor that the district council had commissioned the corgis as a tribute to the late queen and had chosen to not give funds to parish / town councils for local celebrations, instead leaving parishes to organise these themselves.

3. Question from Cllr Eden

I am very concerned about the implications of voter ID for 4th May and subsequent elections. Official estimates suggest up to 2 million people in the UK do not have the right ID. Inevitably some will be in Broadland. Many other voters do not know of the changes, including several constituents I have spoken to. We do not have mandatory ID in this country, and it is confusing for most constituents which photo ID they can use even if they have photo ID and know of this new requirement. The primary aim of any elected councillor should be to ensure constituents can freely vote, not to put unnecessary and confusing barriers in their way that will result in lower turnout.

Please answer the following questions:-

1. How many Voter Authority Certificates have Broadland issued?
2. How can Broadland justify the expense of this measure, not least in staff time and training, when there are so many urgent demands on our council?
3. Are Broadland proactively reaching out to groups such as the elderly, minorities and young voters?
4. Are Broadland training voting clerks to deal with multiple acceptable forms of ID, potential voter confusion and potential delays?
5. Will Broadland commit to proper evaluation after May to see if local voters have in effect been disenfranchised?

Response from the Leader

The Leader responded as follows, adding that he too had concerns about the implications of voter ID:

1. As at 20/2/23, Broadland had issued 38 Voter Authority Certificates (VACs) via the Governmental Portal.
2. New burdens funding would be provided to local authorities to cover the additional costs as a result of the new legislation. Funding would be provided through a hybrid approach comprising of grant payments and Justification Led Bids (JLBs). A single grant payment had already been received and the elections team were keeping a track of costs, should there be a need to apply for a JLB. Initially funding would be received for the first two years, then further funding would be paid at a general election.
3. The Council was using a wide range of communication channels to ensure that the messaging around voter ID reached as many residents as possible. These channels included:
 - a) local newspapers, TV and radio
 - b) information on our website
 - c) regular posts on our social media channels
 - d) working with our parish and town council network
 - e) working with community groups, charities and libraries
 - f) providing posters and flyers throughout the district
 - g) direct mail, such as council tax inserts and council magazines
4. All polling station staff would receive detailed training. The Council would be using online training provided by the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) – the organisation recognised by election professionals. This would be supplemented with face to face training for all presiding officers, to ensure they understood the new requirements and were confident in the processes that needed to be followed.
5. The Elections Act placed a statutory duty on the Secretary of State to report on the effects of the new rules on the first set of local elections (2023) and the first two parliamentary elections. The Electoral Commission was likely to report too. All presiding officers would be required to complete an evaluation form (VIDEF) and anonymised collated results would be sent to DLUHC.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Eden

Cllr Eden thanked the Leader for the response adding that he was concerned that the message was not reaching voters and that more was needed to raise awareness. As elected members it was vital they were able to give a voice to all.

The Managing Director clarified that responsibility for holding elections rested with the Returning Officer and the concerns raised were acknowledged. The campaign to raise awareness of voter ID was increasing nationally and locally.

4. Question from Cllr Roper

Please could the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence give her views on the County Council proposal to close the Mayton Wood recycling centre?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence

The Portfolio Holder stated that responsibility for the recycling centres rested with the County Council. She understood that the current proposal was now to relocate the Mayton Wood recycling centre and this was currently subject to public consultation. The role of the District Council was to ensure residents were fully aware of the locations of recycling centres.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Roper

Cllr Roper acknowledged the comments of the Portfolio Holder but asked if she had any views on the proposals?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence

The Portfolio Holder stated she would await the outcome of the consultations.

190 MOTIONS

No motions had been received.

191 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

To exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining item of business because otherwise, information which was exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part I 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.

192 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The EXEMPT minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2023 were received.

193 CABINET

The EXEMPT minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2022 were received.

Chairman

(Meeting closed at 9:05 pm)