CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 27 March 2017 at 9.00 a.m.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors J Fuller (Chairman) Y Bendle, M Edney, L Hornby, C Hudson and K Mason Billig

Non-Appointed: Councillors V Bell, D Bills, S Blundell, F Ellis, D Goldson, M Gray, T Lewis, R Savage and V Thomson

Also in Attendance: Mr P Grant – Unison Branch Secretary

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Business Development (D Lorimer), the Commercialisation Director (D Fergus), the Community Capacity Manager (K Gallagher), the Planning Policy Manager (A Nicholls), the Senior Economic Growth Co-ordinator (D Disney), the Senior Planning Officer (S Marjoram), the HR Specialist (L Norton) and the Policy Officer (P Chapman)

2533 MINUTES

Referring to minute 2520, regarding the Council’s performance for Quarter 3, 2016/17, Cllr M Gray requested, and Cabinet agreed, that the following be added after the first sentence of paragraph 4:

“Referring to the Peer Review Team’s comment about adopting more ambitious targets, Cllr Gray suggested that one of these could be an ambition to reach the national average recycling rate, which was 1-2% higher that the Council’s recycling rate in 2015/16.”
Subject to the above amendment, members agreed that the minutes of the meeting held 6 February 2017, were a correct record, and were signed by the Chairman.

2534 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEFS

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Policy Officer, which sought Cabinet approval for South Norfolk Council to provide further support through its discretionary rate relief powers from April 2017, to help the Government deliver on commitments it made in the Spring Budget for 2016 and Autumn Statement 2016.

The Police Officer presented his report to Cabinet, outlining the proposed support to be provided via discretionary rate relief and a discount scheme. Members welcomed the changes, noting that they would provide more support for local businesses, with no financial implication for the Council.

In response to a query regarding the discount for offices of local newspapers, the Policy Officer explained that this was a temporary measure to allow time for local newspapers to adapt to technological changes in the industry.

Cllr Y Bendle commended the report to members, explaining that further support was planned to assist those businesses affected by the revaluation of rateable values. The Policy Officer explained that this was currently out to consultation, and would be the subject of a future report to Cabinet.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To agree:
1. That additional discretionary rural rate relief is awarded in 2017/18 (to those businesses qualifying for mandatory rural rate relief), in addition to the provisions contained within the previously approved discretionary rate relief guidelines;
2. To award £1,500 business rate discount in each of 2017/18 and 2018/19 in respect of the offices of local newspapers.

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The Reasons for the Decision

To provide more support for local businesses

Other Options Considered

None.

2535 MEMBER WARD GRANTS AND COMMUNITY ACTION FUND 2017/18

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Community Capacity Manager, which sought Cabinet approval for changes to the member-led grants process.

Cllr C Hudson commended the report to members. Referring in particular to the reduction in the level of funding for the Community Action Fund (CAF), he reminded members that savings were being made across all departments.

The Community Capacity Manager presented her report, outlining the proposed changes to the scheme. During discussion, she confirmed that the Community Capacity Team would still be available to provide advice to members regarding applications, when needed. In response to a suggestion regarding the web-form, she explained that she was working with the Business Development Team to ensure that it was more user friendly and that there would be a facility for members to save and then return to the document at a later date.
Concerning the role of the CAF Panel, the Chief Executive explained that the final decision on funding needed to be made at director level, as the Council’s Scheme of Delegation only allowed such decisions to be delegated to officers. The alternative was that all Panel decisions would require ratification from the Cabinet. She confirmed that the Panel meetings would not be held in public, to allow for a more open discussion.

Referring to the CAF, the Chairman had noted that any member could sponsor an application, and there was no requirement for this to be the local member. He suggested that the ground rules should stipulate that local members should be consulted, should there be an application in their ward.

The Decision

RESOLVED: 1. To approve the proposals to amend member-led grants, subject to a minor amendment to the Ground Rules;
             2. To give delegated authority to:
                (a) The Director responsible for Communities, or a substitute Director, to award funds from the Community Action Fund, and
                (b) Members, to award funds from their Member Ward budget.

The Reasons for the Decision

To streamline the grants system, providing efficiencies and savings, whilst still supporting community projects

Other Options Considered

None

2536 VISITOR ECONOMY INITIATIVE

The Subject of the Decision
Members considered the report of the Senior Economic Growth Co-ordinator, which sought Cabinet approval for the Council’s Visitor Economy Initiative Programme.

The Senior Economic Growth Co-ordinator outlined the proposals of his report to members, explaining that the evolution of the Market Towns Initiative, had revealed a further need to co-ordinate a targeted place based programme, with focus on the wider business community, and the visitor economy.

Cllr T Lewis referred to a recent discussion at a meeting of the Growth Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee which had allowed members to examine the new programme in detail. He expressed his support for the proposals, but suggested that some focus should be given to hotel accommodation within the District. He felt that there was currently a limited offering and that this required attention, in order to boost tourism in the District. The Chairman agreed that this was a valuable point that should be explored further.

The Chairman commended the report and welcomed its principles, however, suggested that a more accelerated approach to the Action Plan could be adopted, with less emphasis on research. The Chief Executive added that there was evidence there already to support the proposed programme, and that she believed it was the right time for the Council to shift its focus to a more broader market, taking in to account the needs of existing residents, in addition to visitors. Members noted that the Council’s Planning and Licensing Policies were integral to the objectives of the Programme.

During further discussion, it was suggested that the Council could make more of the Broad’s new branding as a “National Park”, and the Chairman agreed that there were other areas of historical interest that would also benefit from marketing.

**The Decision**

**RESOLVED:** To agree the Visitor Economy Initiative Programme, subject to an accelerated approach to the delivery of the Action Plan.

**The Reasons for the Decision**

To increase visitor numbers, create jobs and boost economic growth.

**Other Options Considered**

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SMOKING AND VAPING POLICY

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the HR Specialist, which sought Cabinet approval for a proposed Smoking and Vaping Policy.

Cllr M Edney commended the report to members, explaining that a Policy had been considered at the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting, held 8 March, and had subsequently been amended to reflect the concerns that had been expressed at that meeting.

The HR Specialist outlined the background to the report, explaining that the topic had first been raised by the Staff Forum. However, the Policy that had been originally presented to JCC, was unanimously rejected due to concerns mainly around enforcement. She believed that the revised Policy, which was presented at Appendix 1 of her report, had addressed the concerns raised at that meeting. Members noted that the revised Policy did not propose a complete ban on smoking or vaping on the premises, but instead proposed an end to permitted smoking breaks in Council time, allowing smoking or vaping during unpaid lunch breaks only.

Mr P Grant, speaking as Unison Branch Secretary, was disappointed that the revised Policy had been referred directly to Cabinet, and had not been referred back to JCC, for discussion and negotiation, as was the normal procedure. He advised Cabinet that the revised policy failed to address all of JCC’s concerns, and he was very frustrated that he had not been consulted or advised of the Cabinet report, until after its despatch the previous week. He felt there to be a real danger of the JCC becoming nothing more than a “talking shop”, and he urged members to reject the policy, in order that it might be reconsidered through the correct route.

In response to a query, Mr Grant explained that Unison still had concerns relating to:

- Staff from partner agencies not agreeing with the new policy
- Staff at the Ketteringham Depot, where staff were entitled to paid breaks
The reasons for not flexing out, and the pressures on staff, and how smoking did alleviate the pressure for some.

In response to those concerns, the HR Specialist advised Cabinet that the Early Help Hub had been consulted on the proposals and no staff from any of the partner agencies had raised any concerns. The Commercialisation Director also advised that management would be providing a secure and discreet place for staff to smoke or vape at the Ketteringham Depot, and staff would still be able to smoke whilst waiting for vehicle checks.

During discussion, the Chairman urged the need for consistency in line with the Alcohol and Drugs Policy and stressed the need to treat all staff equally. The issue of health and safety was also raised, and members noted that the Council was willing to provide support to those staff who wanted to give up. Cllr Edney made the point that some partner agencies, for example the Norfolk Constabulary and the NHS, had gone a step further and had enforced a total ban of smoking on their premises.

Discussion followed on whether the Policy should be referred back to the JCC meeting scheduled for 7 June 2017. It was agreed that, on balance, a referral to JCC and a delay in the implementation of the Policy was unnecessary. However, some members of the Cabinet remained concerned at the perception that Cabinet was undermining the role of the JCC and stressed the importance of good relationships between Cabinet, JCC and the unions.

Cabinet then agreed to implement the Policy, and requested that JCC review the Policy after a 12 month period, its findings to then be reported to Cabinet.

The Decision

RESOLVED: 1. To approve the Smoking and Vaping Policy, to come in to force from 1 April 2017; 2. That the Policy be reviewed after a 12 month period by the Joint Consultative Committee; its findings to be then reported back to Cabinet.

The Reasons for the Decision

To safeguard the health and well-being of the Council’s employees
Other Options Considered
To forward the Policy back to the JCC for consideration.

2538 ADVICE NOTE ON PROPOSALS FOR SELF-BUILD AND CUSTOM-BUILD HOUSING

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Senior Planning Officer, which sought Cabinet approval for a Council Advice Note, for those looking to undertake a custom / self-build proposal.

The Senior Planning Officer reminded members that a decision had been made to develop self and custom build as an advice note, not a Supplementary Planning Document, as had previously been proposed. The Advice Note drew together in one place a range of information, making it more easily accessible for those wanting advice on self or custom build housing. The ultimate aim of the document was to achieve higher quality proposals, which were in accordance with the Council’s policies and requirements. Members noted that the advice note could easily be amended to reflect changes in circumstances, for example should the exemption from CIL change, as part of the Government CIL Review.

The Senior Planning Officer reported that that the Advice Note had been considered by the Regulation and Planning Policy Committee on 20 March 2017, and it had wished to recommend its approval by Cabinet, subject to the following changes (shown in bold):

- Para 3.3, 3rd sentence, be amended to read “…a number of parish councils are in the process of undertaking Neighbourhood Plans,…”
- Para 5.1, 2nd sentence, that the word “before”, is highlighted in bold.

Members welcomed the proposals and the Chairman suggested that it could be strengthened further by the addition of a foreword, setting out how planning decisions were made, similar to the document provided within the Development Management Committee Agendas.

Cab Min 27/03//17CLW
The Decision

RESOLVED: To

1. Agree the Advice Note on proposals for Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing, subject to minor amendment;
2. Authorise the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise any desired wording changes, prior to publishing the Advice Note.

The Reasons for the Decision

To assist those wanting advice on self or custom build housing and to achieve higher quality applications, in accordance with the Council’s policies and requirements.

Other Options Considered

Not to produce an Advice Note.

2539 OPEN SPACE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Members noted that this item had been deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2540 GREATER NORWICH JOINT FIVE YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN 2017-18 TO 2021-22

Members noted that this item had been deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2541 INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING AND REVIEW OF THE STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY AND ACTS USED FOR SERVICE
Members noted that this report would be considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2542  LONG STRATTON LEISURE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Members noted that this item had been deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2543  CABINET CORE AGENDA

Member noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 10.25 am)

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Chairman