CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 24 October 2016 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, F Ellis, C Foulger, M Gray, N Legg, T Lewis, J Mooney, L Neal, R Savage, M Wilby and K Worsley

Officers in Attendance:  The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Business Development (D Lorimer), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Head of Environmental Services (B Wade), the Head of Growth and Economic Development (J Munson), the Accountancy Manager (M Fernandez-Graham), the Projects and Performance Manager (A Mews), the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Policy Officer – Revenues and Benefits (P Chapman)

2485 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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<th>Member</th>
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<td>Cllr C Hudson</td>
<td>Development of a Community Asset Strategy (min 2494)</td>
<td>Director of Asset Management Company</td>
<td>Other</td>
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2486 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2487 PERFORMANCE, RISKS, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROVISION REPORT FOR QUARTER TWO 2016/17

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, Projects and Performance Manager and the Senior Governance Officer, which detailed the Council’s performance against strategic measures, risk position and the financial position at the end of the second quarter for 2016/17.

The Projects and Performance Manager presented the report to members, summarising the overall performance of the Council.

Attention was drawn to performance measure MI 1041, the Number of Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support claimants moving in to work. Members noted that this indicator was difficult to track because of the sharp decline in the number of residents claiming JSA who also claimed Council benefits. Cabinet agreed the proposed alternative indicator to be put in place to monitor the number of residents on Universal Credit.

The Cabinet members referred to the performance of the Council in each of their portfolios.

Cllr K Mason Billig referred to indicator LI263, the number of missed bins for all waste per 100,000 collections, explaining that the number of missed bins equated to only 0.1% of the 70,000 collections made each week. Whilst she was disappointed that the figures were not on target, she explained that the missed bins were as a result of the recent collection change –over, and she expected the figures to be back on track by the end of quarter 3. She also drew attention to the increase in recycling rates (NI 192a), and the increasing amounts collected from recycling bins and garden waste.

Cllr C Hudson made reference to the increased membership at the Wymondham Leisure Centre, explaining that a more detailed report on the Leisure Centre was to be considered at the Council’s Scrutiny meeting on 10 November. He urged members to continue to plan the allocation of their member grant budgets and advised Cabinet that £80,000 of the Community Action Fund had already been committed to community projects for the financial year 2016/17.
Referring to the performance indicators for householder planning applications and major planning applications, Cllr L Hornby praised staff for the excellent performance.

Cllr M Edney drew particular attention to BV012a, the number of working days lost due to short term sickness, informing members that 2.07 days was a commendable achievement.

Cllr Y Bendle referred to LI 350, the number of affordable homes delivered, and was pleased to report that the figure had now risen to 881 homes, already exceeding the end of year target. This meant that there were now more affordable homes in South Norfolk than there had been since the 1980s. Turning to Early Help, Cllr Bendle explained that the Help Hub service continued to assist more families, and in response to a query, she explained that debt advice played an integral part of the Early Help service. The Chief Executive added that the debt advice resource at the Council, was to be increased.

In response to a query regarding homelessness, Cllr Y Bendle explained that there been an increase in the number of households contacting the Council because of the risk of losing their homes, but through an integrated Early Help approach, homelessness was prevented in the majority of cases.

The Chairman expressed disappointment that the Greater Norwich Policy Area was still failing to meet the five year land supply, despite 18,000 planning permissions being granted over the last year. He suggested that the methodology in the calculation be examined further by the Scrutiny Committee, preferably before the Annual Monitoring Report was considered in the New Year.

In response to queries relating to Rosebery Park and Maple Park, the Director of Business Development explained that properties were not being made available as early as had been hoped due to site configuration and health and safety requirements. Officers continue to work with contractors to explore the options, and there was no impact on overall profitability levels of the developments. Members noted that there might be a requirement to lend funds to Big Sky Property Management Ltd to assist with cashflow during this period.

Discussion followed concerning the delivery of the Long Stratton bypass and the Director of Growth and Localism explained that officers were meeting with developers at the beginning of November, to discuss options. He confirmed that there was a strong case for the Council’s preferred option, a 60 mph limit across the length of the bypass, unless technical issues prevented it. He also confirmed that the Hempnall junction was an integral part of the bypass delivery and Cllr M Wilby, speaking as County
Councillor, informed members that a roundabout would be constructed before the building of the bypass had commenced. Members expressed their support for the use of a Compulsory Purchase Order against landowners, should progress remain slow.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To:
  a) Note the 2016/17 performance for the second quarter and the combined efforts across the Directorates to deliver the Vision of the Council (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report).
  b) Note the current position with regard to risks and accept the actions to support risk mitigation (as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report).
  c) Note the capital and revenue position and the reason for the variances on the General Fund (as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report).
  d) Agree the alternative measure to MI 1041 (Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claimants moving into work) so that the number of residents on Universal Credit is monitored as it is introduced by DWP.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure processes are in place to improve performance, that the management of risks is sound, and that budgets are in place to meet the Council's corporate objectives.

Other Options Considered

None
2488  TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 2 2016/17

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which reviewed the treasury management activity for the first six months of the financial year 2016/17, and reported on the prudential indicators as required by CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Cllr M Edney commended the report to members, however, requested some clarification with regard to paragraph 4.5 and the proposed reduction in the interest rate on loans made to Big Sky Property Management Ltd (BSPM).

The Accountancy Manager explained that now that BSPM was an established company, the risks to the Council had reduced and the loan rate no longer reflected the market environment. Officers had taken advice from the Council’s treasury advisors, and a 4% interest rate was felt to be appropriate.

Brief discussion followed, during which some members expressed concern that the proposed rate of interest was too low.

The Chairman suggested that this matter be considered further by the Director of Business Development in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Finance and Resources.

The Decision

RESOLVED: 1. TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL

a) Notes the treasury activity between April and September and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

b) Approves the 2016/17 prudential indicators for the first six months of the year.

c) Approves the increase in the Affordable Borrowing Limit and the Operational Boundary as set out in section 5.3 of the report.
2. That the Director of Business Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, discuss further an appropriate change in the level of the interest rate on the loan to Big Sky Property Management Ltd.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure a balanced portfolio in terms of risk, rates and liquidity, ensuring maximum income for the Council.

Other Options Considered

To agree to the proposed 4% interest rate on the loan to Big Sky Property Management Ltd

2489 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND EFFICIENCY PLAN 2017/18 TO 2020/21

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which presented a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2017/18 to 2020/21 and the Council’s Efficiency Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Cllr M Edney introduced the report and drew attention to the major risks on which the Strategy was based. Members noted that there would be more certainty following the Government’s Autumn Statement on 23 November.

Some discussion followed with regard to the localisation of business rates, and members noted that the Financial Strategy had assumed that the net impact on the Council would be neutral.
The Decision

RESOLVED:

1. To agree the assumptions on which the MTFS is based, in particular:
   (a) That the increase in the budget for Performance Related Pay is acceptable.
   (b) That the approach to Council Tax Support for Parishes is acceptable.

2. To approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy described in this report as a basis for further work, particularly preparing the 2017/18 budget, and the Business Plan.

3. To approve the Efficiency Plan submitted to DCLG as set out in Appendix B of the report.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure long term financial and service planning

Other Options Considered

None

2490 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2017/18 TO 2020/21

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which presented Cabinet with the Capital Strategy for the Financial Year 2017/18 to 2020/21.

The Accountancy Manager briefly outlined his report to members.
The Chairman drew attention to paragraph 4.3 of the report, which highlighted capital expenditure that was already planned, or could be undertaken to meet the Council’s priorities.

**The Decision**

RESOLVED: To adopt the Capital Strategy in order to guide the formulation of the capital programme up to 2020/21, noting that the Strategy will be reviewed annually, but not updated until 2020/21, unless the Council’s environment changes significantly.

**The Reasons for the Decision**

To ensure that capital resources are being used to meet the Council’s priorities.

**Other Options Considered**

None

2491 **CHARGING POLICY**

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which detailed the corporate approach to charges for services provided by the Council.

The Accountancy Manager outlined the key point of his report to members.

Cllr M Edney explained that many charges had been frozen for some years, and he reminded members that the Council was facing continuing financial pressures and was in a position where it needed to be more self-sufficient. He stressed the importance of having planned charging structures in place, with charging levels being regularly reviewed.
Cllr T Lewis queried the total fee income, and asked what percentage of this was made up of planning fees. The Accountancy Manager agreed to provide this information after the meeting.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To

a) Adopt the corporate principles as set out in Section 2 of the report.

b) Approve the list of services on which to consult as outlined in Section 6 and attached at Appendix A of the report.

c) Approve the decision making process for changing fees and charges as set out in Section 7 of the report.

d) Delegate to Directors the authority to increase all fees and charges annually by the level of inflation (as measured by the Retail Prices Index), as outlined in Section 8 of the report.

e) Review, over a period of time, those services which are currently free, to decide if this practice should continue or if a charge should now be introduced.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure maximum income for the Council, whilst ensuring the burden is not met wholly by the council tax payer

Other Options Considered

None
2492 OFF STREET PARKING PROPOSALS

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Senior Economic Growth Co-ordinator, concerning off street car parking proposals in the Council’s 17 public car parks across the District.

The Director of Growth and Localism drew members’ attention to the core principles established in the 2008 Car Parking Review, and he outlined the current issues that required consideration. The Head of Economic Development then went on to outline the proposed enhancement of services, along with the proposed package of tariff and permit charges.

Cllr L Hornby commended the report, referring in particular to the need to free up car parking spaces in the town centres.

In response to a query regarding the provision of electric car charging stations in the market town car parks, the Head of Economic Development explained that there was currently limited interest from manufacturers; however this would be monitored closely.

The Decision

RESOLVED: 1) To re-endorse the basic principles agreed in 2008 and agree:

a) A period of consultation direct with relevant Town and Parish Councils.

b) The package of proposed tariff and permit charges as outlined in the report.

2) To recommend the introduction of Long Stay charging to the Ayton Road, Wymondham car park, into an additional Pay and Display site and to agree that officers continue to investigate potential sites within the District.

The Reasons for the Decision
To strategically manage the traffic, increase footfall in the towns, and enhance existing services, whilst adhering to the core principles established in the 2008 Car Parking Review.

Other Options Considered

Charge higher tariffs
Do nothing

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR EMPTY HOMES, SECOND HOMES AND THOSE UNDERGOING/REQUIRING MAJOR REPAIR WORKS

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Policy Officer, which reviewed the Council’s approach to Council Tax discounts for empty homes, second homes and those undergoing or requiring major repair works.

Cllr Y Bendle advised Cabinet that the current approach had worked well; in particular it had encouraged empty properties to be brought back in to use. She explained that Norfolk County Council had requested that there be more consistency across Norfolk authorities in applying discounts, and she felt the proposals to retain the class C empty property discount at 100%, but to reduce the maximum period available from 3 to 1 calendar month, to be a sensible way forward.

The Policy Officer outlined his report, explaining that the proposed change would, on the current discounts applied, save approximately £235,000 in discounts and generate £19,700 in terms of additional revenue for the Council.

During discussion, the Chairman stressed that the exercise was not just about increasing income, but thought also needed to be given to assisting growth in the private rented sector and reducing the number of long term empty properties. In response to a query, the Policy Officer explained that reducing the number of long term empty properties generated further funding for the Council, through the New Homes Bonus.

The Decision

Cab Min 24/10/16CLW
RESOLVED: TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:

a) Amends the class C empty property discount to 100% to operate for a period of one month
b) Retains the class D major repair works discount at 50% for twelve months
c) Retains the class B second home discount at 5%

The Reasons for the Decision

To increase revenue to the Council, increase the tax base, and encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back in to use sooner, whilst bringing the Council’s approach closer to that of other Norfolk authorities.

Other Options Considered

To retain the class C discount as at present
To remove the class C discount
To remove the class D discount
To remove the 5% class B “second home” discount

2494 DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY ASSET STRATEGY

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services which sought approval to carry out a four week consultation, with regard to the Draft Community Assets Strategy.

The Head of Environmental Services presented his report to members, explaining that the draft Community Assets Strategy outlined proposals to manage existing assets in future, through, amongst other things, divestment, partnership working and more sustainable approaches. He drew particular attention to proposals that the Council would no longer adopt any assets as part of the planning process under legal section 106 agreements.
Cllr K Mason Billig commended the report to members, explaining that everyone wanted to see more open spaces and play areas for children. However, with future funding challenges, a more sustainable approach was required, minimising future liabilities for the Council.

During discussion, the duration of the consultation process was queried, with some members suggesting that four weeks was too short a period for those parish councils that met infrequently. Cabinet agreed that the consultation process should be extended to six weeks.

It was suggested that a definitive list of parcels of land, and assets, would assist town and parish councils. Cllr Mason Billig reminded members that this document was a strategy, and would not contain such detail, however, officers were looking to provide a list in due course, of assets split by ward.

Some concern was expressed with regard to SUDs, village commons and the upholding of bye laws, and the point was made that management companies could fail and cease to trade. The Chairman explained that management companies were entitled to draw up sinking funds to cover any major works that could be needed in future. He suggested that all new development should signal a new approach, with a change in the way they are developed and sold. He acknowledged that this required a more forward thinking approach, placing greater obligation on planning officers to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To approve the content of the draft Community Assets Strategy and endorse a 6 week consultation with interested parties in order to inform a final version of the Strategy for adoption.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure a more sustainable approach to the management of assets
To understand from a wider cross section of stake holders how the Strategy could work in practice.

Other Options Considered

None
The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Planning Policy Manager, which sought Cabinet approval for some amendment to the Council’s Local Development Scheme, which set out the timetable and details of Local Plan document production.

The Director of Growth and Localism outlined the report, explaining the amendments to be a “tidying up” exercise to ensure consistency with Norwich and Broadland. He referred to the delay in the Gypsies and Travellers Local Plan and he explained that the Greater Norwich Caravans and Houseboats Assessment would be commissioned shortly.

Members noted that the Housing White Paper, which was to be published shortly, could supersede the contents of any Self Build / Starter Homes Supplementary Planning Document.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To approve the updated South Norfolk Local Development Scheme (as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report), and that it is brought in to effect immediately.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure consistency across the Greater Norwich area.

Other Options Considered

Not to update the Local Development Scheme.
Members noted that the revised Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2017/18 - 2021/22, would be considered at the December meeting of the Cabinet.

CABINET CORE AGENDA

Cabinet noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RECYCLING MATERIALS

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services, which detailed the progress being made to maximise recycling across the District, and sought approval for the basis of a targeted communication campaign to reduce contamination and increase recycling across the County. The report also sought approval for a variation to the contract in relation to the jointly procured Comingled Dry Recycling Contract, as detailed in the exempt Appendix 1 of the report.

Cllr K Mason Billig began by explaining that recycling rates had significantly improved in the District in recent years, with the current recycling rate standing at 46.86%. However, contamination was a real issue, and despite having the lowest contamination level in the county, it was impacting on performance and costing the council £100,000 per year in additional costs.

Discussion followed regarding communication campaigns and members agreed that a focussed and innovative approach was required. The Chairman referred to the Council's “new resident welcome packs”, suggesting that the information regarding recycling should be more prominent and interesting. It was also proposed that schools be targeted, so young people were well informed and could educate parents.
Members agreed that as the amount of recyclable material had increased, it had become more confusing with regard to what could and could not be recycled. In response to a query regarding problem areas, the Head of Environmental Services explained that communal bins and areas where there was a high turnover of tenants, were more of a challenge.

Cabinet agreed that the Growth, Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee should consider further a wider strategy for combating contamination.

It was then

RESOLVED: that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

Members then turned to Appendix 1 of the report, which detailed the proposed contract variation, with regard to the jointly procured Comingled Dry Recycling Contract. Members agreed that the proposals outlined were the appropriate course of action.

The Decision

RESOLVED: 1. To note the progress made to date to recycle residents' household waste in South Norfolk and to delegate to the Director of Community Services in consultation with the portfolio holder for Environment and Recycling, the detailed targeted communication schemes for a proactive approach to reduce contamination and increase recycling tonnage as set out in the report;

2. To approve the contract variation as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;

3. That the Growth Infrastructure and Environment Policy Committee consider a wider strategy for combating contamination.
The Reasons for the Decision

To increase recycling rates, and drive greater efficiency and performance at the Material Recycling Facility.

Other Options Considered

None

(The meeting concluded at 11.34 a.m.)

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Chairman