CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 17 September 2012 at 9.00 a.m.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors J Fuller (Chairman) Y Bendle, D Bills, K Kiddie, G Wheatley, M Wilby

Non-Appointed: Councillors T Blowfield, F Ellis, C Foulger, D Goldson, M Gray, T Lewis, B Riches

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive, the Director of Development and Environment, the Head of Finance, the Head of Localism and Growth, the Revenues and Benefits Manager and the Principal Policy Officer.

2118 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following member declared an other interest in the matter listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Nature of Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr T Lewis</td>
<td>2122</td>
<td>Resident of Trowse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shareholder in May Gurney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2119 MINUTES

With the exception of an error in the attendance record (Cllr Wheatley appeared twice), the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Monday 16 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
2120 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Decision

Members considered the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager, which outlined the legal requirements and features of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme, and detailed the changes made in response to the consultation process.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager advised members of the extensive consultation process undertaken and outlined the key messages arising from the exercise. Members noted that in response to the consultation, the band restriction rules had been amended to become clearer and fairer, and the non-dependent contribution had been reduced. Although the level of savings held by individuals was also an issue of some contention, the Working Group had felt it important to keep the limits aligned to that of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Cllr Y Bendle felt the proposed scheme to be both affordable to the Council and fair to claimants, protecting the elderly and families with young children. She drew attention to the proposal for a county wide discretionary fund, which would protect the most vulnerable. The success of this fund would depend on a common approach from all Norfolk districts, and financial support from Norfolk County Council.

Cllr B Riches, Chairman of the Member Working Group expressed his thanks to officers for their support during their deliberations. He felt the result had been a fair scheme which would work well alongside the discretionary fund.

Cllr T Lewis, a member of the working group, believed that the cuts in benefit would have a significant impact on a large number of people and was disappointed that the consultation did not ask the public for a view on whether the Council should be retaining the current council tax benefit scheme and looking for savings elsewhere to fill the funding gap. He stressed that the Liberal Democrat Group reserved their position with regard to the underlying principle of the scheme, which would be debated at full Council the following Monday. He suggested that as the legislation regarding the scheme had not yet come into force, and as the new scheme would not be effective until April 2013, that the matter be referred to Scrutiny Committee in the coming months, to examine in more detail the impact the new scheme would have on the residents of South Norfolk.

The Chairman stressed that the working group had already carried out a detailed analysis of the impact of the scheme and was concerned that consideration at Scrutiny Committee could provide misleading messages. He acknowledged that not all members might be fully engaged with the background to the scheme and he suggested that a member briefing session would be more beneficial than a referral to Scrutiny Committee. Cabinet also agreed that it was important to advise people at an early stage in the process, how their benefits would be affected by the new scheme, and any delays in this process would not be helpful to residents.

The Chief Executive stressed that it was important that all parties were clear on the requirements and objectives of any future consideration in the public arena.
RESOLVED: TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

1. The Council Tax Support Scheme as shown at Appendix 1;
2. That any implications arising from the legislation to be reviewed and implemented by the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Council Tax Support Scheme Working Group.

The Reasons for the Decision

To implement a scheme which supports the Council’s priorities, is aligned to welfare reform, and is efficient to manage.

Other Options Considered

As outlined in the report

2121 TECHNICAL CONSULTATION ON BUSINESS RATES RETENTION

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance and the Principal Policy Officer, which assessed the implications for the Council with regard to the proposed Business Rates Retention Scheme, and provided a summary of the Council’s response to the Government’s consultation.

The Head of Finance presented her report, referring to the 3 principal areas of the consultation: establishing the start-up funding allocations and baseline funding levels, setting up the business rates retention system and the operation of the rates retention scheme. She explained that the overall design of the scheme remained as previously indicated in past consultation papers. Members noted that the business rate baseline for the Council would be based on 40% of the rates collected, and that to ensure authorities did not benefit from excessive growth in business rates, a 1:1 levy would be applied.

During discussion, Cllr G Wheatley explained that the new consultation provided no new information which would change the funding assumptions provided in the medium term plan. The Head of Finance added that the Autumn Statement for 2012, which would provide an update on the Government’s plans for the economy, should be announced on 5 December 2012.

Members’ attention was drawn to the proposed changes to weightings for the relative needs formulae for rural services, as suggested by the Rural Services Partnership. Members noted that unfortunately the damping mechanism would remove most of the additional funding received through this change, and therefore the Council’s consultation response requested that the Government looked to allow the adjustment for rural services to be excluded from the dampening calculation.
Summing up, the Chairman suggested that the proposals still provided an incentive to promote growth, but this was not as considerable as originally envisaged. Cabinet did however note that the adverse financial impact on the Council, should there be a reduction in business rates income, was also reduced.

The Decision

RESOLVED:
1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To agree to the responses to the consultation, as contained in the appendix to the report.

The Reasons for the Decision
To provide a fair business rates retention scheme, with an incentive for authorities to promote growth.

Other Options Considered
None

2122 Response to Norwich City Council Regulation 19 (pre-submission stage) Consultation on Site Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Head of Localism and Growth, which recommended a response to Norwich City Council Regulation 19 (pre-submission stage) Consultation on Site Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Documents.

Referring to paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report, the Head of Localism and Growth explained that the issues raised by South Norfolk Council in the last consultation had been to some extent addressed. The proposed response had identified potential amendments, but did not raise soundness objections.

Cllr T Lewis referring to paragraph 3.5 of the report, was surprised that Norwich City Council was borrowing funds to build roads within the South Norfolk District, although the Chairman stressed that these were access routes only. Cllr Lewis did not believe that the Local Enterprise Partnership funding alone would address all of the infrastructure issues arising from the proposed development on the Deal Ground site, and the Head of Localism and Growth advised that this was one of several avenues of funding currently being explored by Norwich City Council.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To agree that the response set out in Appendix 1 of the report is submitted as South Norfolk Council’s formal response to the consultation on Norwich City Council’s consultation documents for its site allocations and development management development plan documents.
The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that any adverse impact from any development on the residents of the South Norfolk District is minimised and that the requirements of the Joint Core Strategy are met.

Other Options Considered
As highlighted in the report

2123 Cabinet Core Agenda

Members considered the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda, noting that an update on the Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice initiative would also be considered in October.

In response to a query from Cllr M Gray, the Chief Executive explained that the Council retained a schedule of all consultations. Only those consultations which could potentially impact on the policy of the Council, were, if time allowed, referred to Cabinet.

(The meeting concluded at 9.50 am)

_____________________________________
Chairman