CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 2 December 2013 at 9.00 am.

Members Present:

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

Non-Appointed: Councillors Blake, Edney, Ellis, Foulger, Goldson, Legg, McClenning, Mooney, Neal, Palmer, R Savage, Walden and Weeks

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Deputy Chief Executive (A Radford), the Director of Environment and Housing (A Jarvis), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Head of Finance (D Lorimer), the Compliance and Risk Manager (L Mickleborough), the Communities and Active Life Manager (I Lambert), the Healthy Living Manager (R Adams), the Planning Policy Manager (A Nicholls) and the Revenues and Benefits Manager (A Adams).

Also in Attendance: Professor M Wagstaff from Cringleford Parish Council

2239 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman was pleased to announce that the Materials Recycling Facility contract had finally been signed, following a lengthy process carried out by the Norfolk Waste Partnership. Changes to the range of materials that residents could place in their recycling bins, would take place by October 2014.

2240 MINUTES

Cllr Y Bendle suggested that under minute 2227, the Performance and Risk report, fourth paragraph, all after “since” be replaced with “.April 2011, and that the Council was likely to deliver its target of ‘500 affordable homes in three years’, by the end of 2013, earlier than expected".
The Committee Clerk reported that Cllr M Gray (who was not present at the Cabinet meeting), had requested the following amendments:

Minute 2227, after the seventh paragraph an additional paragraph be inserted to read: “Cllr Gray stressed that he was making a general point that there was a risk that some areas of the Council’s performance which would have significant implications for the reputation of the Council, were not being reported to Cabinet, and he explained that he had referred to the issue regarding major planning applications merely as an example”.

Under minute number 2234, Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice Year Two Proposals, sixth paragraph, that it be amended to read “…£0.5 million over an 18 month period..” (not “6 month” period as had been reported).

Subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the meeting held 28 October 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2241 CRINGLEFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CONSIDERATION OF THE EXAMINER’S REPORT

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Planning Policy Manager, which suggested that the Examiner’s recommended modifications to the Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), be accepted, which would then followed with the publication of a formal Decision Statement and a public referendum to be held in late January 2014.

Cllr G Wheatley (local member for Cringleford) applauded the quality of the work carried out by Cringleford Parish Council in putting together the NDP, and he paid tribute in particular to the contributions made by Professor M Wagstaff. Cllr Wheatley referred to the Parish Council as “front runners” nationally, and he hoped that the residents of Cringleford would endorse the plan at the public referendum.

Members noted that Cllr C Kemp (local member for Cringleford), who was not able to attend Cabinet that morning, had also commended the work of the Parish Council and the recommendations of the report.

The Director of Growth and Localism explained that only three councils in the country had adopted NDPs, with five going through to the Examination stage. The Planning Policy Manager added that Cringleford was by far the most complicated NDP put forward so far, and he referred members to paragraph 2.1 of the report and the positive comments made by the Examiner.

Professor M Wagstaff of Cringleford Parish Council, then addressed the meeting. He explained that it had been a fraught process that had taken two years to reach the current stage. He drew attention to the comments made by the Examiner regarding the Parish Council’s willingness to “face up to the difficult issue of meeting a considerable level of housing need for a relatively small community”. He explained that the Parish Council had accepted that the level of development was inevitable, but it wanted to be able to manage it. The Parish Council accepted the modifications made by the Examiner and understood the reasons for these
modifications. Giving mention to two pending major planning applications, he stressed that time was of the essence, and he urged members to ensure that the referendum took place sooner rather than later.

During discussion, officers confirmed that the earliest date for the referendum to take place, once all procedural matters had been attended to, was Friday 24 January 2014. The Director of Growth and Localism explained that as each stage of the NDP was progressed, it carried more and more weight when considering planning applications, however, he stressed that the Council could not hold back on the consideration of any applications for reasons wholly attributed to the NDP.

Summing up, the Chairman commended Cringleford Parish Council for its enormous achievements and leading the way nationally.

The Decision

RESOLVED:

To:

1. Accept the Examiner’s report in to the Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan and the recommended modifications;

2. Progress the modified Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan to a public referendum as soon as practicable, possibly in late January 2014.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure planned and co-ordinated future development in Cringleford, allowing residents to be involved in shaping communities, and for the document to proceed to the referendum stage.

Other Options Considered

- To reject the modifications proposed by the Examiner

2242 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager, which presented members with the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.

Cllr Y Bendle presented the report to Cabinet, outlining the background to the current proposals. She explained that the proposed scheme was similar to the one approved by Cabinet back in September 2012, with one new feature for 2014/15, which sought to protect newly unemployed people for 13 weeks by awarding full Council Tax Support. Following the recent consultation, two amendments to the
proposed scheme had been made, which would result in the level of non-dependant 
deduction reducing from £7.50 per week to £5.00 per week and to lessen the extent 
of the further reduction in support for those in receipt of “passported” claims from 
20% to 15%. Cllr Bendle stressed it was a fair scheme, that was both operationally 
effective and affordable.

Members were pleased to note the Council had given further thought to those areas 
which did not attract more than a 50% satisfaction rate, such as the non-dependant 
deduction rate. It was noted that the discretionary fund would continue, but that 
very little had been spent to date from this fund during 2013/14. Officers advised 
members that alternative discretionary funding had been used to help people in 
need, and that the council tax support discretionary pot was used when all other 
options had been exhausted.

During discussion, the Revenues and Benefit Manager explained that over 90% of 
those having to pay council tax for the first time this year, were paying regularly, 
and that the reasons for non-payment could not be directly linked to welfare reform.
In response to a query from Cllr D Goldson, the Head of Finance explained that as 
transitional funding from the Government would not continue in to 2014/15, the 
Council would have to pass on the reductions in general funding to Parish Councils. 
The Council would therefore not be providing parishes with a top up element or a 
transitional grant and there would be an overall reduction in funding of around 30% 
which would vary between parishes. She advised that there would be an increase 
in tax base, which would offset some of this extra cost.

The Decision

| RESOLVED: | TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the proposed Council Tax 
| Scheme for 2014/15, as outlined in the report. |

The Reasons for the Decision
To ensure a fair scheme, protecting families with children, that incentivises work 
and residents’ views have been taken in to account.

Other Options Considered

- To continue with the current scheme
2243 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2014/15 TO 2016/17

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance, which sought Cabinet approval for an updated Capital Strategy 2014/15 to 2016/17.

Cllr G Wheatley presented the report, explaining that the focus continued to be on the use of capital resources to deliver either on-going revenue savings or additional revenue income, achieved by investing in the Council’s assets and within the District, to create economic growth. The Head of Finance confirmed that the emphasis of the Strategy had not deviated from the previous year, and she briefly detailed the proposed projects within the programme.

During discussion, the Chairman drew attention to paragraph 3 of the report and the VAT Shelter agreement with Saffron Housing Trust, which was due to cease in 2013/14. He added that this signified the shift in relationship with Saffron and the need to support and allow Saffron to grow, whilst ensuring that it maintained its critical mass in South Norfolk.

Cllr K Weeks expressed his concerns with regard to the Council’s potential to need to borrow funds in future. Cllr Wheatley explained that the example in the report of a PWLB loan was merely for illustration purposes at this stage and he stressed that any capital borrowed would be used to generate income which would be used to offset the cost of any borrowing.

The Decision

| RESOLVED: | To adopt the Capital Strategy in order to guide the formulation of the new three year programme, noting that the Strategy will be reviewed annually, but not updated until 2016/17, unless the Council’s environment changes significantly. |

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure the delivery of on-going revenue savings and income, and a capital programme that is realistic and deliverable, reflecting the Council’s priorities.

Other Options Considered

None
2244 LEISURE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Healthy Living Manager, which presented the business case for the Leisure Enhancement Programme, for approval.

Cllr D Bills commended the report to members, urging them to support the recommendations of the report, which would see a phased implementation.

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded Cabinet of the background to the report and the agreed strategic direction for the future leisure provision in South Norfolk, which would involve offering a broader range of services and facilities which would increase footfall and income. Concerning the Long Stratton Leisure Centre, he explained that the County Council was willing to transfer the freehold of the centre over to the Council but details were still being finalised. Officers had met with the school governors of Long Stratton High School and a meeting was also arranged with Diss High School to look at the possibilities of the Council managing a site on the schools’ premises.

The Healthy Living Manager briefly outlined the three phases of the programme, and the benefits of the enhancements and new activities, during which he drew attention to plans to create cafeterias and play areas, which in turn would broaden the centres’ appeal to residents, and increase revenue.

Cllr J Mooney, local member for Wymondham, welcomed the proposals and queried the timescales for the programme. The Healthy Living Manager confirmed that works at Wymondham should conclude in 2014/15. With regard to the proposals at Diss, Cllrs G Walden and T Palmer were concerned that this phase would be delayed due to the need to source a new site, and as local members, offered their assistance. The Chairman assured members that plans were in place to obtain suitable premises and plans would be progressed as quickly as possible.

Cllr B McClenning welcomed the proposals and suggested that young entrepreneurs should be encouraged to take over the management of the new cafeterias, as opposed to a major chain.

The Decision

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the release of £1,021,000 from the approved capital programme for the enhancement works at Wymondham and Diss Swim and Fitness Centre (Phase 1). The learning from this phase will then determine the precise nature of further phases.

2. That the proposed stand-alone fitness centre at Diss will form part of a second phase, costing £800,000 with an additional £30,000 to create a cafeteria area within the existing swim and fitness facility. The final stage will be the improvement programme at Long Stratton Leisure Centre. A further report will be presented.
to Cabinet to approve these later phases.

3. To agree that the implementation of Phase 1 of the enhancement programme be steered through the Leisure Policy Panel.

The Reasons for the Decision

Ensuring the health and well being of residents, whilst increasing footfall and income and reducing the subsidy for the service.

Other Options Considered

- Do nothing
- Minimal redecoration

2245 REFOCUSsing THE NEW HOMES BONUS TO BETTER DEMONSTRATE THE BENEFITS OF GROWTH

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Communities and Active Life Manager which recommended to Cabinet a coherent programme of initiatives aimed at ensuring that communities of South Norfolk reaped the benefits of growth.

Cllr M Wilby presented the report to members, explaining that new priorities for the Communities Team had been identified and that the Council’s approach to localism and the investment of New Homes Bonus money would be part of a mainstream corporate activity, rather than a discrete programme of activity under ‘Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice’.

Cllr J Fuller voiced his support for the proposals, referring to the market towns’ important role within the local economy and communities, and how they played a vital part in securing the future growth and economic and social vibrancy of the district as a whole.

The Communities and Active Life Manager outlined his report, explaining the shift in focus towards economic growth and the need to ensure that local communities could feel the benefit of economic growth. Members noted that the proposals were now separated in to two parts, the Market Towns Initiative supporting economic growth and Wellbeing and Supporting those in need. An officer dedicated to support the Market Towns Initiative would soon be in post.

During discussion, members’ attention was drawn to the planned Retail Skills Workshops. Cllr F Ellis explained that this was opportunity for retailers to attend training events to help increase footfall in to their shops and the town. This initiative was welcomed by members and Cllr B McClennen stressed the need to engage
more young people in business and retail, suggesting that the "taster sessions" be extended in to schools.

The Chairman reminded members that the more rural communities were just as important, which was why Neighbourhood Chairman had discretion to fund local initiatives that built capacity within communities and reduced the demand on Council services. The Chief Executive reminded members that it was important that residents understood that all projects needed to contribute towards economic growth and benefit the communities that local businesses served.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To:

(a) Ratify the Programme of Initiatives contained in Appendix 1 of the report;
(b) Agree the remaining initiatives identified in Appendix 2 of the report.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that the New Homes Bonus funds contributed towards economic growth and that local people were able to benefit from this growth.

Other Options Considered
None

2246 RESPONSE TO COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, which provided a draft response to Norfolk County Council's budget consultation.

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined his report to members, and drew their attention to the draft response at Appendix A and the major proposals at paragraph 2.7.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To:

1. Approve the formal response to the Norfolk County Council Budget Consultation contained in Appendix A.
2. Note the major proposals being discussed with Norfolk County
The Reasons for the Decision

To assist Norfolk County Council in achieving its savings targets, whilst improving services and protecting those most vulnerable.

Other Options Considered

None

2247 GREATER NORWICH CITY DEALS UPDATE

Cabinet received a verbal update from the Director of Growth and Localism concerning a possible City Deal for Greater Norwich.

The Director of Growth and Localism explained that the bid document had been agreed and submitted following agreement of the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, exercising the authority delegated to them by Cabinet on the 26 November 2012.

Members noted that it was anticipated that the bid document would be agreed by Government shortly, before the next meeting of Cabinet. It was suggested that the Leader of the Council be given authority to sign the Greater Norwich Deal document, on the understanding that a report detailing the City Deal and proposed governance arrangements be presented to Cabinet at its next meeting in February. Members did not object to this proposal.

It was agreed details of the content of the Greater Norwich City Deal would be circulated to all members once confirmation from the Cabinet Office had been received.

2248 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda

(The meeting concluded at 10.59 am)