CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 2 November 2015 at 9.00 am

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors J Fuller (Chairman) M Wilby, Y Bendle, M Edney and L Hornby

Apologies: Councillor K Mason Billig

Non-Appointed: Councillors V Bell, D Bills, S Blundell, P Broome, C Easton, C Foulger, D Fulcher, D Goldson, M Gray, J Hornby, N Legg, T Lewis, J Mooney, L Neal, J Overton, T Palmer, J Savage, R Savage, A Thomas, G Wheatley and J Wilby

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Business Improvement (D Lorimer), the Director of Community Services (P Boyce), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Accountancy Manager (M Fernandez-Graham), the Communities and Democratic Services Manager (L Mickleborough), the ICT Operations Manager (M Sage), the IT Service Support Manager (A Quinton), the Planning Policy Manager (A Nicholls), the Project Manager (A Mewes) and the Planning Officer (T Barker)

2400 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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<th>Minute Number</th>
<th>Councillor</th>
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<td>2403</td>
<td>Cllr M Gray</td>
<td>Member of the Broads Authority</td>
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2401 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on Monday 14 September and 19 October 2015 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

2402 MULBARTON NEIGHBOURHOOD 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 Mulbarton Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) be accepted, allowing the Plan to proceed to referendum, to take place on 10 December 2015.

The Planning Officer presented the report to members, explaining that some of the modifications recommended by the Examiner, were issues that had been identified by South Norfolk Council back in February.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr J Joyce, a parish councillor in Mulbarton and the Chairman of the Mulbarton Neighbourhood Plan Committee, to the meeting. Cllr Joyce explained that the residents of Mulbarton accepted the need for development, but hoped that the scale of development could be restricted to maintain a “village feel” and did not support development to the south of the village. He was satisfied that the Examiner’s modifications did not alter the main character or aspirations of the Plan and was keen to proceed to the public referendum. Cllr Joyce expressed his gratitude to officers at South Norfolk Council for their support throughout the process.

Cllr N Legg, local member for Mulbarton, felt the Examiner’s report to be fair, and he recognised the need to make modifications to ensure that the Plan met the Basic Conditions. Cllr C Foulger, also local member, echoed these comments.

The Chairman congratulated Mulbaton Parish Council, and the Neighbourhood Plan Committee for its achievements, it being only the second parish in the District to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.
The Decision

RESOLVED To:

1. Accept the Examiner’s report into the Mulbarton Neighbourhood Plan, and the recommended modifications contained within it necessary to pass the Basic Conditions tests; and
2. Delegate to the Director of Growth and Localism the authority to make the modifications (including consequent supporting text changes) and to progress the (modified) Mulbarton Neighbourhood Plan to a public referendum, to take place on 10 December 2015.

The Reasons for the Decision

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

Other Options Considered

None

2403 GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN, CENTRAL NORFOLK STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT AND GREATER NORWICH WATER EFFICIENCY ADVICE NOTE UPDATE

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Planning Policy Manager, which updated Cabinet on a number of strategic and planning policy issues, and sought Cabinet’s agreement on various courses of action for future policy development.

The Planning Policy Manager outlined the key issues of his report, drawing attention to the areas requiring Cabinet approval.

Referring to the recommendation of the report concerning the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), members noted that the SHMA also covered the Broads Authority area, and had been omitted in error from the recommendations of the report. Cllr M Gray drew attention to the proposals to work jointly with the other Greater Norwich Local Authorities, to review their current and emerging Local Plan documents through the preparation of a single Greater Norwich Local Plan, covering strategic policies and
site specific allocations, noting that South Norfolk Council would prepare a separate Development Management Policies Document. He expressed concern at this approach, stressing the need for a common methodology when assessing sites.

The Chairman felt that Cllr Gray had made some valid points, but he explained that the purpose of the report was to confirm a commitment to working jointly with the other authorities, and that such details would be discussed at a later stage.

Discussion followed with regard to the process for sites coming forward for development and site allocations. Officers explained that all options / proposals would be considered, after the required growth for the area had been calculated. With regard to governance arrangements, the Director of Growth and Localism explained that there had been some debate at a recent meeting of the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB), concerning the creation of a similar body to that of the former Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP). The Chief Executive reminded members that such detailed issues would form the part of future reports to Cabinet.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To:

1. Agree that South Norfolk Council should work jointly with the other Greater Norwich local authorities (Broadland and Norwich, working with Norfolk County Council) to review their current and emerging Local Plan documents through the preparation of a single Greater Norwich Local Plan covering strategic policies and site specific allocations, with South Norfolk Council preparing a separate Development Management Policies document;

2. Note the progress to date on the Norfolk Strategic Framework, and approve the contents of the draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment covering the Broads Authority, Breckland, Broadland, North Norfolk, Norwich and South Norfolk, and to delegate to the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for External Affairs, authority to agree the final version of the SHMA (in co-operation with the other four local planning authorities) which can be then be used as evidence for planning purposes;


The Reasons for the Decision

Cab Min 02/11/15CLW
To make the most of potential cost savings by working jointly, comply with the duty to cooperate and to adhere to national policy.

Other Options Considered

None

2404 PERFORMANCE, RISKS, AND REVENUE BUDGET PROVISION REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 2015/16

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Project Manager, the Accountancy Manager and the Scrutiny and Information Rights Officer, which detailed the Council’s performance against strategic measures, risk position, and the revenue budget position at the end of the second quarter for 2015/16.

Cllr M Edney was pleased to report that quarter 2 performance had generally been positive, with 25 measures meeting or exceeding target (green status), two indicators within an acceptable tolerance of target (amber status), and one measure not reaching the stretched target (red status). He referred to recent successes such as the “Waste Minimisation” Award, the re-opening of the Wymondham swimming pool, and the high performance of CNC Building Control. With regard to BV012, the number of working days lost to sickness, Cllr Edney was disappointed that this figure was not on target, but he suggested that this was a difficult indicator to influence, due to serious long term illness of some staff. Members also noted that sickness levels were in fact lower than they were two years previous.

With reference to NI 181, the number of days taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit claims (currently allocated a red status), Cllr Y Bendle explained that there was always a dip in performance at quarter 2 for this indicator, and that she had every confidence that the year would end on target. There had been an increase in demand in Quarter 1 which had led to a backlog of claims, but the team had worked hard and the backlog had reduced significantly. Members noted that the current performance of 15 days was still considerably higher than the national average which stood at 22.

Referring to targets, the Chief Executive explained that these were examined as part of the Business Planning Process, and that members would have an opportunity to be involved in shaping future performance measures, ensuring that they were meaningful, with appropriate targets in place. She hoped that this work would identify where targets needed to allow for seasonal dips in performance, such as that described for NI 181 (the processing of Housing/Council Tax claims).
The Project Manager drew attention to areas that had shown exceptionally high performance, referring in particular to LI 323, the number of vulnerable people helped to maintain independence in their own homes, MI 1038, the % of major planning applications processed within agreed timescales and MI 1039 the % of business units liable for business rates occupied. Cabinet members made reference to other areas of good performance, including the number of empty homes that were back in use, the Member Grants budget, recycling rates and the number of affordable homes delivered. Members noted that although the Council was performing well in relation to the affordable homes target, the Government was changing the definition of affordable homes, and as a result the Council would need to change the way it calculated this indicator.

During discussion, Cllr M Gray queried the figures for MI 1037, the % of householder applications received within 6 weeks and 1038, the % of major planning applications processed within agreed timescales, and whether the figures reported were cumulative, or referred to the second quarter alone. The Project Officer agreed to examine the figures in more detail and to respond to Cllr Gray after the meeting.

Turning to risks, the Communities and Democratic Services Manager reported that at present, all risk factors were positive, indicating that risks were being proactively managed, with opportunities being realised as they were identified. Referring to strategic risks, she gave mention to the recent adoption of the Local Plan, the successful re-opening of part of the Wymondham Leisure Centre, the development at Poringland and the plans to use Wymondham Leisure Centre and the Ketteringham Depot to store data remotely. Cllr Fuller made reference to the risks associated to the future of the New Homes Bonus, and the plans for devolution. He hoped that the situation would be much clearer following announcements in the Autumn Statement in November.

Referring to the revenue position for quarter 2, the Accountancy Manager explained that there was a positive variance of £1.1 million to the end of the quarter, with positive variances across all directorates. The positive variances across pay and non-pay budgets, were greater than last year to date, and there was a positive forecast outturn to the end of the year of £1.7 million.

Members’ attention was drawn to Appendix 4 of the report (exempt papers) regarding the recommendations from the Finance Regulation, Accounts and Governance Committee, concerning Opting Tax on Commercial Properties and after brief discussion, members confirmed their agreement with these recommendations.

Cabinet was pleased to note the positive revenue position, however, members were mindful of the fact that it was only quarter 2, and that some relevant costs were yet to be taken in to account.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To:

1. Note the 2015/16 performance for the second quarter and the combined efforts across the Directorates to deliver the Vision of the Council;
2. Note the current position with regard to risks and to accept the actions to support risk mitigation;
3. Note the revenue position and the reason for the variances on the General Fund.
4. Agree the recommendations from the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee as outlined in Appendix 4 of the report.

The Reasons for the Decision

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

Other Options Considered

None.

2405 CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 2 2015/16

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which detailed the position on the Council’s capital programme for quarter 2 of the financial year, the treasury management activity during the quarter, and the performance against the prudential indicators required under the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

The Accountancy Manager outlined the key issues of his report, explaining that capital expenditure was £4.8 million for quarter 2, against a profiled budget of £6.4 million. Members noted that the positive variance against budget was partly due to the later than anticipated payments to the contractor for the property development in Poringland.

Turning to Treasury Management, the Accountancy Manager explained that there had been a temporary breach of the upper limit of £25 million for exposure to variable interest rates investment from 16 July to 21 July, 17 to 18 August and 16 to 20 September. Cllr M Edney expressed his support for the proposal to increase the upper limit for this prudential indicator to £30 million.

With regard to the joint insurance tender for services to the Council, North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth Councils, members noted that to ensure the best value for money, this had been awarded to five different insurers, splitting the business in to five different categories. In response to a query from Cllr T Lewis, he explained that business interruption referred to under the cover provided
from Zurich Municipal Insurance, related to engineering type failures. Personal Accident and Business Travel to be provided by ACE European Group, related to employees of the Council. The Accountancy Manager confirmed that separate insurance arrangements had been made for Build Insight.

Summing up, Cllr Fuller referred to solid performance, but stressed the need to remain cautious with regard to positive variances, due to hidden and delayed costs.

The Decision

RESOLVED: 1. To:
   a) Agree to the request to re-programme £40,000 of the budget for capital grants for neighbourhood projects into 2016/17, as outlined in paragraph 2.3 of the report;
   b) Approve the request to re-programme the entire £302,624 budget for low cost housing into 2016/17, as outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report;
   c) Approve the request to bring forward £50,000 from the 2016/17 programme for the Long Stratton Leisure Centre project as outlined in paragraph 2.11 of the report;
   d) Note the decision to award contracts for insurance services as outlined in paragraphs 8 and 9.

2. TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:
   a) Approves the 2015/16 prudential indicators for the quarter and note the breaches of one indicator.
   b) Increases the prudential indicator for the upper limit on exposure to variable rate investments to £30 million.
   c) Notes the treasury activity in quarter two and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

The Reasons for the Decision
To ensure that the capital programme is on target and is aligned to the Council’s priorities. To ensure a balanced portfolio in terms of risk, rates and liquidity.

Other Options Considered

None.

2406 ICT STRATEGY (INCLUDING DRAFT CAPITAL PROFILE)

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the ICT Operations Manager, which sought Cabinet approval for a revised ICT Strategy.

The ICT Operations Manager outlined the salient points of his report to members, referring in particular to the key principles and strategic themes, which underpinned the revised Strategy. He drew attention to the main risks and considerations associated with the proposals.

The ICT Operations Manager responded to a number of minor queries and provided clarification with regard to a number of acronyms. In response to a query regarding members’ IT, he explained that the Council was looking to move away from the Good Platform, to Office 365, for both staff and members. He confirmed that existing devices would be compatible with the Office 365 solution.

Cllr J Fuller expressed his concern that the Strategy made no links to the Council’s website, and after some debate, members agreed that appropriate links should be made to the Digital Engagement Strategy (to be considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet).

Turning to the exempt paper, Appendix B of the report which outlined the draft capital profile, it was

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

Member discussed the draft capital profile, and the ICT Operations Manager responded to queries on points of detail. With regard to one of the capital requirements, the Chief Executive assured members that officers were taking a hard line and were negotiating with the relevant parties in a co-ordinated and cohesive way, to ensure best value for the Council.

Cab Min 02/11/15CLW
(It was then **AGREED** that the public and press could be readmitted to the meeting)

The Decision

**RESOLVED:** To:

1. Approve the revised ICT Strategy as outlined at Appendix A of the report, subject to appropriate cross referencing to the Digital Engagement Strategy, with final approval to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet member for Finance and Resources;

2. Note the draft capital spend as detailed in Appendix B of the report.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure a more efficient and effective IT service

Other Options Considered

None

2407 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Members noted that the Environment Policy was deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2408 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.
(The meeting concluded at 10.39 am)

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Chairman