CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 21 March 2016 at 9.00 a.m.

Members Present:

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

Apologies: Councillor M Wilby

Non-Appointed: Councillors D Bills, L Dale, M Gray, N Legg, T Lewis and V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Business Development (D Lorimer), the Director of Community Services (P Boyce), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Head of Growth and Economic Development (J Munson), the Accountancy Manager (M Fernandez-Graham), the Planning Policy Manager (A Nicholls) and the Policy Officer (P Chapman)

2446 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
2447 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the recent announcement from the Government, that a devolution deal to propose a combined authority for Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire was to be created. He stressed that the deal was in its early stages and explained that members would have further opportunities to debate the context of the bid, as more details emerged.

Cllr M Edney wished his thanks to be recorded to all staff involved in arranging the GEMs event held Friday 18 March. Cabinet expressed their congratulations to all those who had been nominated, and those who had won awards on the evening.

2448 UPDATED (DRAFT) SOUTH NORFOLK STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Planning Policy Manager, which sought Cabinet approval to undertake public consultation on the updated draft South Norfolk Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The Planning Policy Manager presented his report, explaining that the commencement of the Greater Norwich Local Plan was a sensible time to update the existing SCI.

Discussion followed with regard to the length of time and the resources required in order to create and adopt a Local Plan, and officers confirmed that a current government consultation did contain proposals concerning the granting of outline planning permission at the site allocation stage of the Local Plan process. Cllr Gray stressed the need to engage with the public at an earlier stage and suggested that “My South Norfolk” might be an appropriate tool to publicise proposed allocation sites. The Chief Executive stressed that the clarity of message was important throughout the whole Local Plan process.

In response to a query, the Planning Policy Manager confirmed that a new web address for the Greater Norwich Local Plan would soon be activated, to act as repository for all relevant documents.

The Decision

RESOLVED To:

1. Agree the updated draft Statement of Community Involvement (detailed at Appendix 1 of the report) for public consultation for a period of eight weeks, likely to run from late March/early April to May/June 2016;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for External Affairs and Regulation & Public Safety, to make any necessary minor changes to the document prior to its publication for consultation;

3. Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for External Affairs and Regulation & Public Safety, to assess the comments received during the consultation period, make any appropriate adjustments to the document, and then adopt it.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that the SCI is up to date, and complies with statutory requirements.

Other Options Considered

To delay going out to public consultation.

2448 BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED DIRECTIONS CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Planning Policy Manager, which presented members with the combined Greater Norwich response to the Breckland Local Plan Preferred Directions consultation.

The Planning Policy Manager outlined his report, explaining that Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) had felt that there needed to be much clearer references and emphasis on the importance of the A11 corridor as a whole. Members also noted the potential impact on Wymondham Leisure Centre due to the possible deficit in indoor sports provision in Attleborough.

Members were satisfied that the GNGB response had covered the main points relevant to South Norfolk, and that a separate response from the Council was not required.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To agree the combined Greater Norwich response to the Breckland Local Plan Preferred Directions
consultation, as outlined at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure a strategic and coordinated approach to planning policy, throughout the county.

Other Options Considered

To send a separate South Norfolk response to the consultation.

2449 CONTROL OF ADVERTISEMENTS IN SOUTH NORFOLK

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Planning Policy Manager and Development Manager, regarding the control of advertisements in South Norfolk.

The Planning Policy Manager presented his report to Cabinet. Members agreed that a review of the Council’s guidance note for signs in the open countryside in connection with businesses, was appropriate, to reflect changes caused by the adoption of Policy DM3.9 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance. The Chairman added that it was important to recognise that the Council had a responsibility to help local businesses, but that some advertisements were not acceptable due to their visual impact or as a matter of public safety. Referring to the guidance, he requested that a map detailing “Areas of Special Control of Advertisements”, be included.

Members were also informed of proposals to examine the scope for enforcement powers on highway land to be devolved from Norfolk County Council, to South Norfolk Council. Some members expressed their frustration with the promptness of enforcement action in some cases, and were therefore supportive of these proposals. The Chief Executive stressed that the Council would not be looking to take on additional responsibility without the appropriate resources being in place.

Referring to the recent case of unauthorised signage on the A140 /A47 junction, the Director of Growth and Localism informed Cabinet that the land owner and relevant business had been asked to take down the signage by 24 March, and this was welcomed by members.
The Decision

RESOLVED:

To

1. Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for External Affairs and Regulation & Public Safety, to review and update the current South Norfolk guidance note “Advertisements and Business Signs in the open Countryside - Guidance notes for Potential Applications” (detailed at Appendix 1 of the report). The guidance to include a map detailing “Areas of Special Control of Advertisements”;

2. Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Localism to examine the scope for enforcement powers on highway land to be devolved from Norfolk County Council to South Norfolk Council.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that the Council’s guidance on advertisements is up to date and in line with the NPPF

Other Options Considered

Not to update the guidance.

2450 BROADBAND PROVISION – FORWARD PLAN

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Head of Growth and Economic Development, which provided an update to Cabinet on broadband provision in South Norfolk, and presented a proposed plan of activity to enable high speed broadband services based on wireless technologies to be made available to those rural areas not part of the current and future Better Broadband for Norfolk programme.

The Head of Growth and Economic Development informed members that the new Superfast Extension Programme (SEP), with the extra investment from South Norfolk Council, would take coverage in South Norfolk up to 93% by 2018/19. This went beyond the initially quoted 91% coverage, but was still short of the county target of 95%. Members recognised that 100% was not
achievable in such a rural area, but sought to close the gap and to provide maximum coverage of high speed broadband where possible.

Members noted that in order to extend the provision of superfast broadband within South Norfolk to beyond the planned level of 93%, alternative solutions, such as wireless and satellite required consideration. In some areas the only solution might be to provide public WiFi ‘hotspots’ at access points such as village halls. The Chairman reminded Cabinet that some members had used their member grant budgets to install superfast hubs in public areas, and he also stressed that parish councils had a role to play in delivering the proposals.

The Decision

RESOLVED: That officers progress the development of a detailed project proposal, with financials, for a new programme to enable high speed broadband services (based on wireless technologies) to be made available to those rural areas identified as not part of the current and future Better Broadband for Norfolk programme.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure maximum coverage of high speed broadband, wherever possible.

Other Options Considered

None.

2451 NORWICH RESEARCH PARK: ENTERPRISE ZONE

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Director of Growth and Localism, which provided more information on the benefits that Enterprise Zone status could provide to the Norwich Research Park and South Norfolk, and sought Cabinet approval in principle for the overall programme.

The Director of Growth and Localism presented his report to Cabinet, outlining the benefits and opportunities the Enterprise Zone could bring to the District as a whole.
Members’ attention was drawn to Appendix 3 of the report, the Non-Domestic Rates – Mandatory and Discretionary Rate Relief Guidelines, which required amending to ensure that they reflected the Government Deal regarding business rates in the Enterprise Zone area. It was noted that there were other changes to the guidelines, unconnected to the Enterprise Zone, and Cllr Y Bendle referred to the removal of Retail Rate Relief, and the possible impact on small businesses. The Policy Officer advised members that a full analysis of the impact of this had taken place and that some, but not all smaller businesses would be adversely affected. The Chief Executive stressed that this was a complex issue, and officers were continuing to work through future options on providing temporary relief for those affected by the changes.

Members welcomed the proposals and noted that a further report would be presented at the May meeting of the Cabinet, providing more detail on the investment programme and the working arrangements between partner bodies.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To

1. Support the proposed Enterprise Zone for Norwich Research Park and the principles outlined within the report;

2. Modify the Business Rates Transitional Relief Policy in accordance with the amendments attached at Appendix 3 of the report

The Reasons for the Decision

To create a real step change to the local economy, in terms of jobs, growth and prosperity.

Other Options Considered

None.
2452 APPROVAL OF UK MUNICIPAL BOND AGENCY’S FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND JOINT SEVERAL GUARANTEE

The Subject of the Decision

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which sought Cabinet approval to enter into the borrowing agreement documents prepared by the UK Municipal Bonds Agency.

Cllr M Edney stressed that the Joint and Several Guarantee would only be entered into if the Council borrowed from the Agency. Members agreed that the proposals were a sensible way forward and noted that although the Council had no current need to borrow externally, entering into the Framework Agreement would enable the Council to access funding from the Agency if and when required.

The Decision

RESOLVED: To:

1. Approve the Council’s entry into the Framework Agreement and its accompanying schedules including the joint and several guarantee;

2. Delegate authority to the Director of Business Development as Section 151 Officer and the Governance and Business Manager as Monitoring Officer to sign those documents, as appropriate, on behalf of the Council;

3. Grant the Section 151 Officer delegated authority to agree amendments to the Framework Agreement as appropriate.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that the Council has access to cheaper capital finance, should external borrowing be required.

Other Options Considered

None

Cab Min 21/03/16CLW
2453 CABINET CORE AGENDA

With reference to the Purchase Notice received in relation to the Kings Head, Pulham St Mary, the Director of Growth and Localism explained that the appeal submitted by the owner of the property had been dismissed by the Planning Inspector. Once the period for appeal had expired, officers planned to meet the owner to negotiate the acquisition of the property, and if this proved not to be feasible, the potential compulsory purchase of the site would be explored further.

(The meeting concluded at 10.15 a.m.)

___________________________
Chairman