COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 10 December 2012 at 7.30pm

Members Present: Councillors Allen, Bell, Bendle, Bills, Blake, Dale, Dewsbury, East, Edney, Ellis, Fuller, Goldson, Gould, Gray, Hardinge, Hornby, C Kemp, W Kemp, Kiddie, Legg, Lewis, McClenning, Mooney, Neal, Overton, Palmer, Riches, J Savage, Spratt, Tilcock, Walden, Ward, Webster, Weeks, Wheatley, J Wilby, M Wilby and Windridge

Apologies: Councillors Billig, Blowfield, Foulger, Pond, R Savage, Thomson and Watt

Officers in Attendance: The Deputy Chief Executive (A Radford)

Attendance: The Director of Development and Environment (A Jarvis)

Also in Attendance: 2 members of the public

3148 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following members declared other interests in the matter listed below:

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Minute No</th>
<th>Nature of Interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr M Gray</td>
<td>3152</td>
<td>Members of the Broads Authority</td>
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<td>Cllr C Gould</td>
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3149 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2012

With reference to minute 3146, third paragraph, members noted that it was Cllr T Lewis (not Cllr Gray as had been indicated in the minutes) who had thanked Cllr Fuller for the circulation of a briefing note regarding the five year supply of housing land.

Regarding minute 3147, Council noted that the Broads Authority had moved to Yare House in Norwich, not Thorpe House as had been indicated.

Subject to the above changes, the minutes of the meeting held 24th September 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
In response to a query from Cllr M Gray regarding minute 3146 and the Government’s proposals to allow extensions of up to 8 meters with no requirement for planning permission, Cllr K Kiddie advised that details of the consultation and the Council’s response would be communicated to Cllr Gray as soon as possible. He added that the Government’s proposals did not include changes to current building regulations.

3150 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman gave mention to the recent tragic deaths of the Leader of North Norfolk District Council, Keith Johnson, and his wife Andrea and expressed his sympathy to the families involved.

The Chairman was also sad to report the death of former Councillor, Ron Hill, who served as a South Norfolk member from 1983 until 1987, representing the Old Costessey ward. Council stood and observed a minute’s silence in his memory.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Leader of the Council had called for a Special meeting of the Council to be held Monday 28 January 2013 at 7.30pm, to consider the Joint Core Strategy Repair and the Tenancy Strategy. It was also noted that the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 7 January 2013 would not take place.

Referring to the Council’s recent carol service, held 30 November 2012, the Chairman was pleased to report that over £200 had been raised in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Regarding his civic engagements, he gave special mention to Local Democracy Week held 9 -12 October, thanking Cllr M Wilby for a most enjoyable and well organised event, which engaged pupils, members and teachers. Cllr Wilby added that feedback from both teachers and pupils had been most positive and he paid tribute to the Events Team for their involvement.

The Chairman also referred to the recent Design Awards ceremony, which raised the profile of good design, and its contribution to the quality of the built environment. Cllr D Blake explained that the event had been most successful and there had been a number of extremely good designs to consider. He stressed the importance of the event and suggested that the Council may wish to consider participation in a national event in future years.

3151 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairman advised Council, that as questions had been submitted from a member of the public in advance of the meeting, he intended to bring forward this item to be heard earlier than that indicated in the agenda.

The Chairman referred to questions and comments submitted from Mrs D Hockaday, a copy of which had been tabled at the meeting for all members. The Chairman then invited Mrs D Hockaday to address the Council.

Mrs Hockaday advised the meeting that although she served on Wymondham Town Council, she was not representing the Town Council on this occasion. She referred to the Wymondham Area Action Plan and the major housing allocation to the South East sector of Wymondham, at Silfield, and the constraints of the Silfield Road.
railway underpass, which she explained had already been recognised as being of poor alignment, substandard and very costly to upgrade. She asked how these costs would be met and expressed concerns as to the impact to residents and businesses if the underpass was closed due to service works or road improvements. She urged the Council to consider a “Plan B”, which would avoid the underpass, and take in to account the preferred options for development expressed by the Town Council and the workshop event held back in March.

Cllr J Fuller thanked Mrs Hockaday for raising her query in advance. He explained that the Council had conducted an extensive consultation with the residents of Wymondham and surrounding parishes as part of the Wymondham Area Action Plan. The Council had listened to residents but also had to balance this against the requirements of the Joint Core Strategy. The Council believed that growth in the South of Wymondham would bring more benefits than elsewhere in the town, but he stressed that the Action Plan was still at the consultation stage. He advised that a detailed written response to Mrs Hockday’s queries would be forwarded to her in due course.

3152 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

a. Cllrs J Fuller, C Kemp and M Wilby

Cllr J Fuller, seconded by Cllr M Wilby, moved the following motion:

“This Council resolves that it will not support any arrangement for the future transmission of bulk electrical power through the District other than by means of underground cables unless it is first demonstrated to its satisfaction that any alternative solution is both environmentally sound and sustainable. The Council instructs its officers to work with their counterparts in the Broads Authority and other local councils towards the implementation of this policy.”

Cllr Fuller stressed the need to work with partners to ensure that the Council had a good understanding of all the issues, before opposing connections that were not undergrounded. The motion was of great importance due to the impact on local residents and the Norfolk countryside, and his preferred approach was the use of underground cables, however the Council had the responsibility to remain realistic and professional in its approach.

Cllr M Wilby agreed with Cllr Fuller and suggested that the Council had a very important role to play, in working with the National Grid plc, East Anglia One Windfarm, local residents and town and parish councils.

Cllr C Kemp expressed his support for the motion, and moved the following amendments:

Add the word “strategic” before the word “bulk” (first sentence)
To add “(including economic viability)” after the word “sustainable” (first sentence).

Cllr M Gray felt that the motion that he had submitted, to be considered next on the agenda (agenda item 7b), expressed the same view as the motion under discussion, and he was happy to withdraw his motion under the proviso that the current motion became a joint motion between Cllrs Fuller, C Kemp M Wilby and himself, and that the following amendment be agreed:
To add at end “and writes to the National Grid and other relevant parties expressing the Council’s position.”

Cllr M Wilby was happy to second all the amendments proposed, stressing the importance of involving town and parish councils. It was then

**RESOLVED** (nem con), with one abstention

“This Council resolves that it will not support any arrangement for the future transmission of strategic bulk electrical power through the District other than by means of underground cables unless it is first demonstrated to its satisfaction that any alternative solution is both environmentally sound and sustainable (including economic viability). The Council instructs its officers to work with their counterparts in the Broads Authority and other local councils towards the implementation of this policy and writes to the National Grid and other relevant parties expressing the Council’s position.”

b. Cllr M Gray

In light of the agreed motion (see minute 3152 a), with the permission of Council and in accordance with Standing Order D 4.11, Cllr M Gray withdrew the proposed motion.

**3153 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET:**

(a) CABINET 29 OCTOBER 2012

i. Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Wymondham

Cllr J Fuller introduced the recommendations from the Cabinet.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To agree the amendments proposed and updated appraisal, as outlined in Appendices C and D.

ii. Capital and Treasury Review Quarter 2 2012/13

Cllr Wheatley referred to the recent training delivered by Arlingclose, the Council’s Financial Advisors, regarding the Council’s Treasury Management Strategy.
It was unanimously 

RESOLVED: To

a) Note the progress of the capital programme for the half year and the projected year end position.

b) Approve the ongoing expenditure for Equity Home Loans and the corresponding capital receipts from Great Yarmouth Borough Council for this financial year.

c) Approve the long term investments made for £2 million at 1.75% with Lloyds plc for 140 days, which was agreed by the Leader and Portfolio Holder.

d) Note the treasury activity in quarter two and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

e) Approve the quarter two 2012/13 prudential indicators.

(b) CABINET 26 NOVEMBER 2012

i. Review of Rules of Financial Governance and Contract Standing Orders

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

(a) Agree the revised Rules of Financial Governance, as set out in Appendix A of the report;

(b) Agree the revised Contract Standing Orders as set out in Appendix B of the report

3154 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Members considered the report of the Compliance and Risk Manager, which provided various changes required to the constitution in order to implement changes agreed by Cabinet in relation to Neighbourhood Boards, proposed amendments to the Committee structure, and suggested modifications to the terms of reference of the Joint Consultative Committee.

Cllr J Fuller presented the report, outlining the salient points. He advised Council that he wished to withdraw the recommendations outlined at paragraphs 2.5 to 2.8 of the report regarding changes to the committee structure and the work currently undertaken by the Local Planning Steering Group (LPSG), suggesting that these proposals were premature. It had been envisaged back in May, that at this stage, the work of the LPSG would have diminished, however as this was not the case, he felt consideration of these changes should be deferred, and this was agreed by Council.

Considerable debate followed with regard to the Terms of Reference of the Neighbourhood Boards with members noting that paragraph 18.2.2 should refer to the “first 2 categories” (not 4 as had been indicated) and that the document required some re-numbering. Cllr P Allen queried paragraph 18.2.3, that the Vice-Chairman
be appointed by the Chairman, suggesting that this was not a very open or democratic process. She further suggested that the document needed to indicate (at paragraph 18.2.6), the date on which community representatives would be elected, for example at the Board’s AGM. Cllr Allen also voiced her concerns regarding informal meetings, explaining that current practice was not consistent over the attendance of community representatives. Cllr M Wilby indicated that he was willing to speak with Cllr Allen outside of the meeting in order to resolve her concerns.

Referring to the role of community representatives, and the need for them to complete a register of interests form and declare interests, Cllr B Spratt stressed the importance of not making the Board meetings too formal and bureaucratic, which might discourage community representatives from participating.

In response to a query from Cllr M Gray, concerning the proposed revisions to Article 10 of the constitution (Neighbourhood Boards), officers confirmed that the Chief Executive would publish Executive Decision notices on the Council’s website.

Cllr C Kemp referred to paragraph 18.2.3 regarding the appointment of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, suggesting that it needed to reflect that all appointments were made at Council, by resolution of full Council. With regard to co-opted members, and the need for members of the Board to declare interests, he suggested that some of the wording required amendment. The Monitoring Officer agreed to discuss these matters outside of the meeting.

With regard to the proposed changes in membership to the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr C Kemp informed Council that Cllrs C Gould and L Hornby would replace Cllrs J Herbert and N Ward. He also referred to the proposals to include officer names in future meetings, explaining that this would assist in ensuring a full historic record.

Cllr T Lewis drew attention to the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of the Joint Consultative Committee, and suggested that at paragraph 16.4.2, provision be also given to staff to attend meetings at the discretion of the Chairman.

Referring to any future changes to the constitution, Cllr Lewis proposed that officers clearly highlighted any changes or additions, so that members could easily identify areas of new text.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the revised terms of reference for Neighbourhood Boards and Article 10 to the Constitution as set out in the report, subject to minor amendment;
2. To approve the changes to the terms of reference for the Joint Consultative Committee as outlined at Appendix 3, subject to minor changes,
3. To note the change to include officer names in addition to post titles in records and minutes;
4. To endorse the changes to the membership of the Scrutiny Committee;
5. To authorise the Monitoring Officer to undertake any further constitutional modifications required arising from the report.
3155 COUNCIL TAX REFORMS

Members considered the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager which sought Cabinet approval to go forward with Council Tax Reforms with effect from 1 April 2013.

Cllr Y Bendle outlined the proposals of the report to Council. She drew particular attention to the additional 50% to be levied on a property that had been empty for a period of 2 years or more. It was hoped that such a higher charge would act as an incentive to bring empty properties back in to use.

In response to a query from Cllr T Lewis, Cllr Bendle confirmed that there had been broad agreement across Norfolk District Authorities for a common approach to the changes, in order to achieve consistency within tax collection across the county.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To agree the proposals as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

3156 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Members considered the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager, which sought Council approval to go forward with a Transitional Council Tax Support scheme following an offer of transitional grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Cllr Y Bendle outlined the background to the report, reminding members that back in September, Council had approved a new Council Tax Support Scheme. Since then, the DCLG had announced additional funding to support local authorities, where schemes met certain criteria. To take advantage of the additional funding, it was proposed that the agreed scheme was deferred for a year, with a new transitional scheme (which met the DCLG’s criteria) put in place for the first year. Cllr Bendle added that there were advantages in implementing a transitional scheme, as this would allow for a phased approach for those claimants who had previously not needed to contribute towards their council tax bills.

Cllr J Fuller explained that Norfolk County Council recognised the financial benefits of introducing the transitional scheme, and had agreed to assist in meeting the shortfall and additional administrative costs. He stressed the importance of assisting parish councils through what was a difficult period of financial planning, explaining that it was proposed that the base funding grant and transitional grant would be passed on to town and parish councils to ensure that there was no impact on their finances as a direct result of anticipated awards of Council Tax support in 2013/14. He added that South Norfolk was the only District Council in Norfolk to support its parish and town councils in this way. In response to a query from Cllr M Gray, Cllr Fuller said that town and parish clerks had been fully briefed at a recent Town and Parish Clerks meeting and he assured members that they would be kept fully informed.
During discussion, Cllr T Lewis stressed the importance of ensuring all recipients were aware that the transitional scheme would run for a period of 12 months only. In response to a query from Cllr T East regarding the hardship fund, Cllr Fuller explained that the fund still existed, but added that as some liabilities were being capped to 8.5%, the need for this fund during the transitional year was greatly reduced.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED: To agree the Transitional Council Tax Support Scheme as shown at Appendix 1 of the report, and the level of support proposed for town and parish councils.

3157 CHAIRMEN’S REPORTS

a) Cabinet - Report of the Leader

Members noted the report of the Leader of the Council.

Cllr B Spratt referred to a number of small businesses that were struggling to pay business rates in his area and asked what support the Council could offer them. Cllr Fuller explained support for small businesses and public houses had been reconfirmed during a recent revision of the Mandatory and Discretionary Rate Relief Guidelines. Thresholds for bar takings for sports grounds and clubs had also been up-rated. Cllr Fuller also referred to the Government’s recent announcement that 100% rate relief would be awarded to businesses with a rateable value of £6,000 or less, this relief gradually decreasing from 100% for properties with a rateable value up to £12,000. For businesses that did not qualify but had a property with a rateable value under £18,000, their business rates would be calculated using a smaller business multiplier.

Referring to the Council’s Council Tax Reform scheme, Cllr T Palmer stressed that he was very relieved at the level of support that would be given to Town and Parish Councils during this period of change. Cllr Fuller said that the Council recognised the importance of supporting parishes, stating that South Norfolk Council had an enviable record of working in and with the community.

Cllr G Walden was pleased to announce that Diss had been awarded £61,000 from the heritage lottery fund and that which would be used to prepare the final bid for the Lottery Grant which would complete the refurbishment of the Corn Hall and town centre. It was hoped that further funding could also be obtained, which would also be invested in attracting visitors to the town. He hoped that the Council would support a bid from Diss Town Council to take over the maintenance and cleaning of the town’s toilets, and this was welcomed by Cllr M Wilby.

Cllr T Lewis asked Cllr K Kiddie what progress had been made for parish clerks to trial planning and development on-line consultations, expressing concern that some parishes would have very limited access to the internet and equipment at their parish council meetings. Cllr K Kiddie advised Council that 2 parishes had expressed an interest in trialling the process, stressing that the process was still very much a trial at this stage.
b) Scrutiny Committee – Report of the Chairman

Members noted the report of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

c) Licensing, Appeals and Complaints Committee / Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee – Report of the Chairman

Members noted that there was no business to report for the Licensing Committee, since the last meeting of the Council.

d) Development Management Committee – Report of the Chairman

Members noted the report of the Chairman of the Development Management Committee. Cllr J Mooney advised Council that the appeal for the supermarket in Wymondham at Station Road, had been withdrawn. Cllr M Gray welcomed this news and stressed the need to keep a total of planning consents for major developments. Cllr J Fuller updated members on the current progress of the Focus DIY application, which was going through the appeal process.

Concerning the Head of Development Management, Cllr Mooney informed Council that this post had not been appointed to and that an email had been sent to all members outlining the future plans for the service.

3158 REPRESENTATIVES ON STRATEGIC OUTSIDE BODIES

Members noted the report submitted by Cllr C Gould updating members on the work of the Broads Authority.

Cllr N Legg referred members to the Council’s e-link, where he had placed an update with regard to the outcomes and actions of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He referred to discussions regarding “super” treatments and the possibility of developing a regional centre either in Norwich or Cambridge to specialise in certain types of cancers.

With regard to the Norfolk Waste Partnership, Cllr K Kiddie reported that the procurement exercise to award a contract to market dry recyclables for the county was ongoing. He referred to the unsuccessful bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for funds to collect food waste, but was pleased that 5 new waste collection vehicles were now on order. He was also pleased to report a recycling rate of 42% and a reject rate of only 5.85% in South Norfolk. Members noted that a WEEE even would take place in Costessey the following day.

Members noted that the South Norfolk Alliance was due to meet the following Friday. Cllr M Wilby informed members that he, along with the Head of Localism and Growth had paid a most interesting visit to Swale District Council, where localism was high on the agenda. Cllr Wilby also reported that Sue Thomson had recently attended a “Pub is the Hub” celebration in London, where the Council’s pub of the year award had received national recognition. Mr Brandon Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had agreed to attend the final presentations for South Norfolk Pub of the Year in 2013.

Cllr T Palmer reported that Saffron Housing Trust was currently working in partnership with Diss High School to administer an apprenticeship support scheme, a model which was currently attracting national attention.

Cllr C Kemp referred to his report regarding the Police and Crime Panel for Norfolk, referring in particular to the meeting to be held 14 December to consider the Commissioner’s proposed candidate for Deputy Commissioner. This issue fuelled some debate and Cllr T East suggested that the public would not be best pleased that Deputy Commissioners could be appointed to carry out the functions of the Commissioner, without a public vote. Cllr C Kemp confirmed that the Police and Crime Commissioner was empowered but not obliged to appoint a Deputy Commissioner. He understood that the role was a full time post which would attract a standard local government officer rate equivalent to 80% of a salary paid to a principal officer.

The Council concluded at 9.20 pm

CHAIRMAN