COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 22 September 2014 at 7.30pm


Apologies: Councillors Allen, Bendle, Dewsbury, Foulger, Gray, Neal, Riches, Thomson, Watt and Webster

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Environment and Housing (A Jarvis) and the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole) and the Acting Director of Business Development (D Lorimer)

3250 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared interests under minute 3253 (iii), the Diss Heritage Triangle. All three members left the meeting room whilst the item was being discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Nature of Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K Kiddie</td>
<td>Other interest as the Mayor of Diss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Palmer</td>
<td>Other interest as a member of Diss Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Walden</td>
<td>Pecuniary Interest as the Chairman of the Corn Hall Trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3251 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held 7 July and 28 July 2014 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman

3252 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to his engagements outlined at page 18 of the agenda. He gave thanks to all those members and officers who had attended the Chairman’s Civic Reception, held 19 September at the Diss High School.
3253 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

(i) Capital and Treasury Management Report – Quarter 1 2014/15

Cllr G Wheatley presented the recommendations from Cabinet.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To:

1. Approve the addition to the capital programme of the renewal of play equipment at a number of sites throughout the District with funding from the S106 provision.
2. Approve the 2014/15 prudential indicators for the quarter; and
3. Note the treasury activity in the quarter and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

(ii) Greater Norwich Growth Programme 2015/16 – South Norfolk Business Plan

Cllr J Fuller briefly outlined the background to the report and referred to the key areas for development during 2015/16, which included the Hempnall Crossroads, Long Stratton bypass and Longwater/Easton highways improvements.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To

1. Agree the 2015/16 Business Plan for South Norfolk (attached as Appendix A of the Cabinet report) for consideration by the October meeting of the Greater Norwich Growth Board as part of the 2015/16 Growth Programme; and
2. Agree to pool CIL payments for 2015/16 to help ensure the delivery of the Growth Programme.

(iii) Diss Heritage Triangle

Cllr M Wilby presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, regarding the proposed funding package to support the planned regeneration of the historic centre of Diss.
Referring to the recommendations, he moved the following amendment, which was duly seconded by Cllr C Kemp:

In recommendation 4, to delete “all” after “obtaining” and to add at the end of the sentence “to enable the anticipated grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be released”. The new recommendation would read: “The Diss Heritage Partnership successfully obtaining the necessary funding to enable the anticipated grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be released”.

Members noted that the current wording of the recommendation was restrictive in that it did not allow the release of South Norfolk Council funding until all other necessary funding was obtained. However, due to a small shortfall in funding, there were plans to split the project in to two phases. The amendment would ensure that the Council’s funding was released sooner, so as not to jeopardise full completion of Phase 1. Council was assured that other conditions regarding payment milestones were in place to protect the Council’s financial interests.

Cllr T Lewis expressed his support for the project which he considered to be well planned and resourced. However, he was concerned that the market towns, followed by the more rural areas, were given priority when it came to Council funding, with the more suburban areas such as Costessey, losing out. Reference was made to the Costessey Community Centre, where much of the required funds had been raised within the parish itself.

Cllr B McClenning was also supportive of the proposals, although he felt the plans to replace the toilets at the Mere with one self-cleaning toilet, to be insufficient.

In response, Cllr Fuller felt that it was unfair to infer that Costessey failed to benefit from Council funding, and he referred to a number of community projects where the Council had been one of a number of organisations, providing financial support. He felt the proposed provision of toilets in Diss to be adequate, and he reminded Council that this regeneration project was community led and had not been instigated or was being led by the Council itself.

Cllr T East stressed that Cllr Lewis’ comments were not meant as a criticism to the Council or the Diss Heritage Triangle project; the point being made was that because of its size, areas such as Costessey often failed to fit in to required funding criteria.

Members then voted on the amendment, and this was unanimously carried.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED:

To approve the funding package outlined within the report, subject to the following conditions:

1. The successful outcome of the due diligence work;
2. The agreement of Diss Town Council to the proposal and payment milestones;
3. Delivery of the payment milestones;
4. The Diss Heritage Partnership successfully obtaining the necessary funding to enable the anticipated grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be released
Cllr Fuller introduced the Chief Executive’s report regarding arrangements following the departure of the Deputy Chief Executive. He explained that it was now proposed that the plans to recruit a Commercial Director should not be progressed, and with the interim arrangements working very well, that Debbie Lorimer be appointed as Acting Director of Business Development until 30 May 2015.

Cllr Fuller also made reference to the appointment of Leah Mickleborough as Monitoring Officer and Emma Goddard as Deputy Monitoring Officer and he drew attention to the review of directorate responsibilities and the subsequent amendments to the scheme of delegation outlined at Appendix 1 of the report.

During discussion, Cllr T Lewis referred to the high numbers of staff leaving the authority suggesting that it was regrettable that not more staff were on permanent contracts. In response, Cllr Fuller explained that some staff were hired to do specific areas of work and their contracts reflected the short term nature of the job in hand. He reminded members that the Council had been awarded Investors in People Gold and he suggested that staff retention was not a problem.

Cllr J Herbert expressed concerns that the new Acting Director of Business Development would continue in her role as the Head of Finance suggesting that the appropriate “checks and balances” would not be in place. He referred back to his previous concerns relating to the audit function, which despite its need for independence, lay within the remit of the Finance, Regulation, Audit and Governance Committee, which reported directly to the Executive of the Council.

Cllr K Weeks stressed the need for the Scrutiny Officer to retain an independent role, working solely for members, and he hoped that this position would not be compromised now that Mrs Goddard had been appointed as Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Responding to these queries, Cllr Fuller confirmed that Mrs Lorimer would continue in her role as Section 151 Officer, but added that the Monitoring Officer role had deliberately been appointed from a different directorate, to ensure independence. Cllr B McClennning, as Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that due to the Scrutiny Committee’s unique role, the Scrutiny Officer was required to take on an independent role in support of members and he was in no doubt that this would continue.

With 35 votes for and 1 against, it was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOLVED:</th>
<th>To Approve:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The appointment of Debbie Lorimer to the post of Acting Director of Business Development until 30 May 2015;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The appointment of Leah Mickleborough, Compliance and Risk Manager, as the Council’s Monitoring Officer, and the appointment of Emma Goddard, Scrutiny and Information Rights Officer, as Deputy Monitoring Officer;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The revision to the responsibilities of senior officers as attached to Appendix 1, and authorise the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary constitutional revisions arising from this report

3255 MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

Cllr J Fuller presented the Monitoring Officer's report to members, which provided an update on numerous administrative matters and sought approval for several constitutional amendments.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the proposed changes at paragraph 3.2 of the report, and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to make any Constitutional Changes necessary.

3256 CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

a) Cabinet - Report of the Leader

Members noted the report of the Leader of the Council.

Cllr T Lewis referred to the high numbers of staff leaving the Council's employment and asked whether any of these staff had been subject to compromise agreements. The Chief Executive agreed to look into the matter further and to report back to Cllr Lewis after the meeting.

Cllr M Edney asked Cllr Fuller if he would consider amalgamating the Neighbourhood Fund (where only 14% of funds had been spent) with the Community Action Fund (where 48% of funds had already been committed), which would not only simplify the process for applicants, but would allow more funding to benefit local communities. Cllr Fuller explained that this matter was to be discussed at the Growth and Localism Committee the very next day.

Cllr T Lewis expressed his concerns with regard to the use of informal meetings for policy committees. There were no minutes arising from these meetings and therefore there was no record for the public or other members to refer back to. He had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer regarding his concerns, and he understood that these meetings were legal and he could see why they were practical on occasions, but he stressed the need for the Council to balance this with the need to be open and transparent. He was concerned that public perception could be a real issue for the Council, in this respect. He advised that members of his Group would carefully consider on a case by case basis, whether they should partake in such meetings in the future. He went on to refer to the terms of reference of the policy committees and the rules of substitution which he felt to be very restrictive.
Cllr Fuller was disappointed that the Liberal Democrat Group might not partake in future informal meetings; policy formation did on occasions require informal meetings to allow for full and frank discussions whilst working up the options. He would not apologise for trying to engage members, and he reminded Council that these were non-decision making bodies. In relation to the rules of substitution, he stressed the need for Scrutiny to work independently from Cabinet, thus the need to ensure that not too many members of Scrutiny served on these committees. Cllr K Weeks explained that he often attended meetings neither as a member of the committee or as a substitute members, but he was satisfied that he could still contribute to the debate.

Cllr V Bell thanked Cllr D Bills for his recent attendance at the opening of the West Costessey Hall, which had attracted over 400 residents, and she hoped that he would be attending similar events in Costessey in future. Cllr Bills explained that he had been delighted to have been in attendance and would willingly support future events in Costessey.

Cllr B McClernning referred to the new materials recycling facility and queried how the new rules for recycling would be promoted. Cllr K Kiddie confirmed that bin stickers would be issued to every household and there would also be an article in the Link Magazine. Responding to further queries, Cllr Kiddie confirmed that the Council hoped to achieve recycling rates of over 50%. The payback period for the cost of the contract would depend very much on market forces, and could not be estimated at this time. With regard to a query regarding food waste, he explained that its collection was an expensive and complicated process. Whilst it might be working well in areas such as Norwich City, he felt that it would not be as cost effective in such a rural area as South Norfolk. During discussion it was suggested that a Director from the New Materials Recycling Facility joint venture company be invited to provide a presentation/briefing for members at South Norfolk Council.

b) Report of the Scrutiny Committee

Members noted that the Scrutiny Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Council

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

Members noted that the Licensing Committee had not met 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.
3258 OUTSIDE BODIES – REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

The Chairman reminded Council that should members feel that they had feedback on any outside body which required the attention of all members and was significant enough to be raised within the public arena, a short written report should be submitted to Democratic Services, for inclusion in the next Council agenda. Any other information on outside bodies should be communicated to fellow members via email, or within the Members’ Bulletin if felt appropriate.

Cllr C Kemp referred to his report submitted regarding the Police and Crime Panel for Norfolk. He reminded members that he would be delivering a presentation with regard to the Police and Crime Panel and the work of the Commissioner, at 6.00pm on Thursday 16 October; all members were welcome.

Cllr K Weeks, along with other members, was concerned at the contents of the report and he suggested that the Council put forward a proposal to make recommendations to ministers regarding the current system of police governance. Cllr Kemp referred to the Panel’s letter to the Home Secretary and explained that a response had been received from Rt Hon Mike Penning MP. Cllr Kemp felt that it would be helpful to circulate copies of both these letters to all members.

(The meeting concluded at 9.01 pm)