COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 21 September 2015 at 7.30 pm

Members Present: Councillors Amis, Bell, Bendle, Bills, Blundell, Broome, Dale, Dewsbury, Duffin, Edney, Ellis, Foulger, Fulcher, Fuller, Goldson, Gould, Gray, Hardy, L Hornby, Hudson, C Kemp, Kiddie, Legg, Lewis, Mason-Billig, Minshull, Mooney, Neal, Overton, Palmer, Riches, J Savage, R Savage, Stone, Thomas, J Wilby, M Wilby, and Worsley.

Apologies: Councillors Bernard, Easton, J Hornby, W Kemp, A Pond, V Thomson and G Wheatley

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Growth of Localism (T Horspole), the Director of Business Improvement (D Lorimer) and the Director of Community Services (P Boyce)

3302 URGENT ITEM – DEVOLUTION IN THE NEW ANGLIA AREA

The Chairman agreed that given the current status of the negotiations across Norfolk and the potential agreement of a negotiation document between the Leaders of the Norfolk authorities and key partners on 22 September 2015, that this item should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Cllr J Fuller outlined the background of the report to members, explaining that the current stage of the process was to indicate a willingness to consider future options. He stressed that failure to be part of the process at this time could result in a failure to reap the significant potential benefits associated with devolution, such as funding to encourage economic growth and infrastructure provision.

Members noted that a meeting between the Leaders within the New Anglia LEP area would take place the following day, to discuss and sign off the negotiation document. On 22 October, there was to be a Government challenge process regarding the
content and governance arrangements of the negotiation document, ahead of its consideration by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and announcement in the Autumn Statement on 25 November. Following Government approval, further work and negotiations would then be required, to establish the delivery mechanism for any such proposals.

Discussion followed with regard to the Cornwall Devolution proposal, and members stressed the importance of ensuring that any proposals put forward were right for Norfolk. Cllr Fuller explained that the Government had made it very clear through informal discussions, that there needed to be an alignment between Norfolk and Suffolk, with a “Norfolk only” devolution option not being viewed as viable. There was also a possibility that Cambridgeshire might want to be part of any future combined authority model, although this was by no means a certainty. Members were assured that they would be kept fully up to date through member briefings and by way of special cabinet / council meetings when deemed appropriate.

With regard to a question relating to the role of the Broads Authority in any new combined authority, the Chief Executive explained that Government guidance had indicated that National Parks would be considered separately. The Broads Authority had therefore been consulted and involved in negotiations, however, it would not be an official written partner in any devolution deal.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To

1. Note the contents of the report, and in doing so acknowledge that devolution provides a potential opportunity for the transfer of resources, powers and accountability from central government to local government;
2. Agree that South Norfolk Council follows up work on the initial expression of interest undertaken with partners across the Norfolk and Suffolk area to maximise the opportunity presented by the Government’s commitment to devolution.
3. Delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, any resources required, providing costs are met from the existing approved council budget.

### 3303 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Nature of Interest</th>
<th>Minute No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr M Gray</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Member of the Broads Authority</td>
<td>3302</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr K Mason Billig</td>
<td>Pecuniary (Cllr K Mason Billig left the room for the duration of this item)</td>
<td>Partner has worked for a company referred to in report</td>
<td>3307</td>
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3304 MINUTES

The minutes of both the Special Council meeting and the Ordinary Council meeting held 13 July 2015, were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

3305 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members noted the Chairman’s and Vice-Chairman’s engagements since the last meeting of the Council. The Chairman made reference to the Chairman’s reception to be held the following Friday at the Centrum Building, Norwich Research Park.

3306 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Cllr T Lewis and Cllr M Gray

Cllr T Lewis moved the following motion, which was duly seconded by Cllr M Gray:

“That this Council supports the Government's decision to admit to the United Kingdom refugees who have fled from Syria into neighbouring countries, and stands ready to welcome, and provide its share of support to any that come to South Norfolk.

The Chief Executive is accordingly instructed to notify this to Central Government, the District's MPs and Norfolk County Council.”

Cllr Lewis referred to the recent refugee crisis and the period of ongoing instability on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. He hoped very much that all members would agree that the Council should admit, welcome and do its very best to support any refugees that enter South Norfolk. He stressed that this motion referred to the agreed number of refugees, legally entering the United Kingdom, having fled from Syria.

Cllr Y Bendle then proposed the following amendment to the motion (papers detailing this amendment were passed to the Liberal Democrat Group):
In the first paragraph, for “stands” substitute “remains”, and, between “and” (the second time that word occurs) and “provide” insert “to continue to”.
In the second paragraph, replace all before “Norfolk” with “To this end, the Council will continue to work with” and, after “Council” add the following:“, the seven Norfolk second-tier authorities, the five Clinical Commissioning Groups in the County and all other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies to deliver the County’s agreed contribution to tackling this situation.”

Cllr Bendle explained that whilst South Norfolk would do everything it could to assist refugees, (referring in particular to the Early Help Hub), a holistic approach was required to ensure a proper re-settlement programme for all refugees entering the area, involving all relevant agencies. Members noted that Norfolk County Council was leading the formation of a common policy across the whole county, involving all the district councils and the five Clinical Commissioning Groups. There was to be a further meeting at the end of the week between the relevant organisations, after which the County Council would communicate the agreed policy to central government.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr C Kemp.

Cllr T Lewis expressed his disappointment that his Group had not had sight of the amendment at an earlier stage, however, he felt the amendments were consistent with what was proposed.

The amendment was then unanimously carried.

Cllr M Gray then proposed a further amendment, “that the last paragraph of the original motion “The Chief Executive is accordingly instructed to notify this to Central Government, the District's MPs and Norfolk County Council” be reinstated at the end of the new substantive motion.” This amendment was seconded by Cllr T Lewis.

Cllr C Kemp informed Council that he could not support this amendment; the sentence in question had been taken out as part of the first amendment as it was deemed unnecessary. All relevant parties would already be aware of the Council’s sentiments and its willingness to support refugees in to the District. Norfolk County Council would be communicating the agreed policy to central government.

Cllr Lewis could not think of any reason as to why members would object to the Council advertising itself as a willing participant; he hoped members would support the amendment.

With 8 votes for, 24 against, and 5 abstentions, the amendment was lost.

It was then unanimously
RESOLVED: That this Council supports the Government’s decision to admit to the United Kingdom refugees who have fled from Syria into neighbouring countries, and remains ready to welcome, and to continue to provide its share of support to, any that come to South Norfolk.

To this end, the Council will continue to work with Norfolk County Council, the seven Norfolk second-tier authorities, the five Clinical Commissioning Groups in the County and all other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies to deliver the County’s agreed contribution to tackling this situation.

3307 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1 2015/16

Cllr M Edney presented the recommendations from the Council and it was unanimously

RESOLVED: To:

a) Approve the 2015/16 prudential indicators for the quarter

b) Note the treasury activity in quarter one and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

3308 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Cllr J Fuller presented the report to members, which outlined the process for the Review of Members’ Allowances and Expenses, to be undertaken in May 2016. Cllr Fuller explained that there was now a need to appoint new members to the Independent Panel, and he paid tribute to Peter Franzen’s contributions to the work of the Panel over the years.

Cllr T Lewis queried whether the Independent Panel would be considering the issue of Members’ tax liability for journeys between their home and the Council offices. Cllr Fuller explained that this would not be necessary; the Chancellor had stated in the July budget that this liability would be lifted come April 2016.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To endorse the proposals for the recruitment and appointment of the Independent Panel on Member Remuneration.
(a) CABINET – REPORT OF THE LEADER

Members noted the report of the Leader of the Council.

In response to a query from Cllr L Dale, Cllr Fuller explained that following a planning appeal for a single dwelling in Caistor St Edmund, the Planning Inspector had indicated that the Council should be using the Sedgefield method of calculating its housing five year land supply, as opposed to the Liverpool method currently used. Members noted that to change the method of calculation, could have far reaching implications for the both the Council and for the Greater Norwich Area, with unachievable targets for the building of new homes. However, following legal advice, the Council had decided not to automatically use all of the Inspector’s reasoning in its future decisions. The Council was awaiting the Inspector’s report on the Council’s Local Plan, and if found sound, the current method of calculation would be deemed satisfactory. He reminded members that a member training event on the Housing Five Year Land Supply was to take place at 5.30pm on 6 October.

With regard to the new development at Poringland, Cllr Fuller explained that he had, that very morning, attended a small ceremony to mark the opening of the first show house, and that the first 5 houses to have been released had already been sold. The quality of the build of all tenures, and commercial properties, was extremely high, and he encouraged all members to go and view the development for themselves. He was particularly proud that only local tradesmen, builders and architects had been used, and he paid tribute to the Director of Business Improvement and the Property Team for their management of the scheme.

In response to a query from Cllr Lewis regarding the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Document, Cllr Fuller explained that the implications of the Government’s new Planning Policy for Traveller sites, was still being considered, so as to ensure that the emerging Local Plan had appropriate regard for the new Policy. He welcomed the change that Gypsies and Travellers who had ceased to travel permanently would no longer be classed as Gypsies and Travellers for planning purposes, but explained that there were questions over the burden of proof needed to satisfy the planning definition. He added that the current pitch requirement in the Local Plan might require revisiting, following these changes.

Cllr M Gray asked Cllr Y Bendle, what her views were on Government proposals to extend the Right to Buy to properties owned by housing associations, and possibly to those properties on rural exception sites. Cllr Bendle agreed that the Council had worked hard on preserving affordable housing for local communities; however, she felt it appropriate to reserve her judgement until further details from the Government had emerged. Cllr Gray was disappointed that the Council was not adopting a more proactive approach through lobbying and in response, Cllr Fuller agreed that he could raise concerns with regard to exception sites, through the District Councils’ Network.
Cllr A Thomas asked Cllr Bendle what her view was on a recent report in the Eastern Daily Press (EDP), which indicated that South Norfolk Council did not contribute to the building of new affordable homes. Cllr Bendle explained that she had been bemused by the report which was totally misleading; South Norfolk had in fact delivered more affordable homes than any other district in both Norfolk and Suffolk. The confusion appeared to be in that the article only included those affordable homes built by those councils with their own housing stock. In response to further queries about the article, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council had not been contacted prior to its publication, but that the EDP had agreed to publish a new story, clarifying the situation.

Cllr V Bell referred to her recent problems installing Apple updates on her iPad and the associated problems with Good Work. She hoped that a review of members’ IT would be held shortly, with all members working from the same platform, and devices purchased by the Council. In response, Cllr M Edney explained that alternatives to Good Work were already being considered. He could not promise that the Council would be providing devices for all members, with members only having recently purchased their own devices, but this would be a consideration for the future.

Cllr G Minshull asked Cllr K Mason Billig for an update regarding recent Reuse Events. Cllr Mason Billig explained that two more events had recently been held in Cringleford and Diss. The Diss event had been extremely successful, with 419 electrical items being recycled, 229 of which had been taken away for re-use by residents. She was pleased to announce that the events had attracted a nomination for a Waste Minimisation Award, the winner to be announced next month at the LARAC conference in Nottingham.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT ON STANDARDS ACTIVITY

Cllr K Mason Billig, the Chairman of the Standards Committee, presented the report on the Council’s standards activity throughout 2014/15. She expressed her thanks to the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person, who had helped to resolve a number of complaints at an early stage.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To adopt the Annual Report of the Standards Committee
(c) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

(d) LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members noted the report of the Chairman of the Licensing Committee

(e) DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Members noted the report of the Acting Chairman of the Development Management Committee.

Cllr J Mooney thanked all those who had sent him good wishes whilst he was recovering from his accident. He provided an update to members with regard to the Development Management Committee meeting held 16 September

3310 OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr J Savage advised members that he had recently attended the SPARSE conference held at Cheltenham, and that he had listened to a number of interesting presentations, including one regarding a Village SOS scheme in Gloucestershire. Papers relating to this, and other issues raised such as broadband in rural areas and the Rural Economic Growth Strategy, were available from Cllr Savage.

Cllr B Duffin advised that ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) was overseeing the Village SOS schemes, and that locally, Village SOS Norfolk was being dealt with by Community Action Norfolk.

(The meeting concluded at 8.48 pm)

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Chairman