COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 14 December 2015 at 7.30 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors, Blundell, Overton, Pond, and J Wilby

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

3316 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on the 21 September, 19 October and 2 November 2015 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

3317 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred members to his list of engagements since the last meeting of the Council. He explained that he had been proud to represent the Council on the various events held during this period.
3318 PETITIONS

The Chairman referred to the following petition received:

“To support the re-opening of a vital local community asset, we the undersigned petition South Norfolk Council to investigate the compulsory purchase of the King's Head Inn, The Street, Pulham St Mary, Diss, IP21 4RD (Land Registry Freehold Title NK154166) to buy that estate outright, with the understanding that any compulsory purchase would be subject to an agreement, to be formed between South Norfolk Council and the residents of Pulham St Mary, to allow the transfer of the site to the residents of Pulham St Mary to re-open the premises under community ownership and to compensate South Norfolk Council for the costs of undertaking the purchase.”

The Chairman then moved that the petition be received and this was seconded by Cllr G Wheatley.

Speaking as local member, Cllr C Hudson explained that the petition had been delivered and presented to the Chairman of the Council on 23 October by Richard Bacon MP. It had been signed by 550 residents which was a clear majority of those residing in the village (with 420 properties, and 720 electors). The planning application to demolish the public house and build new homes had prompted considerable local debate and Cllr Hudson advised Council that local residents were keen to see the property reopen as a community asset. He then drew attention to the proposals of the petition, that the Council purchase the property through a compulsory purchase order. He continued to explain that he had been informed that a “reverse compulsory order” had recently been received by the Council from the owner of the property, and he understood that it was sensible to pursue that request, to avoid any unnecessary costs, before any compulsory purchase order was progressed.

Cllr L Hornby confirmed that a Purchase Notice (also known as a “reverse compulsory order”) had been received by the Council from the owner of the property, and that it would not be logical to pursue a compulsory purchase order at this stage. He explained that the Purchase Notice required the Council to look at the possibility of purchasing the property direct from the owner. He proposed that the Council agree to investigate the Compulsory Purchase Order of the property, but only subject to prior consideration of the Purchase Notice and any valuations that would need to be obtained. There was also a need for further discussions with the Parish Council regarding the details of any back to back agreement and other implications that may arise from the Purchase Notice.

This proposal was seconded by Cllr M Wilby, who explained that he fully supported the reopening of the property as a community asset. He referred to Pulham St Mary’s strong track record in successfully delivering projects of scale, for example the Pennoyers Centre, and he stressed the importance of supporting local public houses across the District.
In response to questions, Cllr C Hudson confirmed that the current intention was that the property be reopened as a community public house. The Chief Executive explained that the next step for the Council was to seek an independent valuation from the District Valuer, with any decision on how to proceed being considered at Cabinet.

It was then unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To agree to investigate the compulsory purchase of the Kings Head Inn, Pulham St Mary, subject to prior consideration of the Purchase Notice submitted to the Council and any valuations received, and further discussion with the Parish Council regarding the potential implications that may arise from the Purchase Notice.

### 3319 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

#### ii) CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 2 2015/16

Cllr M Edney presented the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held 2 November 2015. He explained that he felt it sensible to increase the upper limit on exposure to variable rate investments to £30 million, following temporary breaches of the current upper limit, during July, August and September.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:**

a) Approve the 2015/16 prudential indicators for the quarter and note the breaches of one indicator.
b) Increase the prudential indicator for the upper limit on exposure to variable rate investments to £30 million.
c) Note the treasury activity in quarter two and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

#### ii) CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020

Cllr J Fuller explained that he was proud to present the Corporate Plan 2016-20, for approval, and he thanked officers for the production of a professional and more modern document than in previous years. Members noted that the document was an interactive web based document which encouraged people to view it on line.
Cllr Fuller also paid tribute to Cllr Wheatley who had been instrumental in opening up the budget setting process to all members, and thanked Cllr L Neal for chairing the Scrutiny Business Planning workshop.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To approve the Corporate Plan 2016-2020, subject to minor amendments.

### iii) COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17

Cllr Fuller presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, with regard to the Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17. He explained that the proposed changes provided more of an emphasis on making work pay, and was more aligned to the forthcoming rules for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. He made reference to the discretionary fund, which was available to those claimants requiring additional support.

In response to questions, Cllr Y Bendle explained that officers had adopted a proactive approach, and informed all claimants of additional support streams, including the Discretionary Fund and the Early Help Hub. With regard to the Syrian refugee crisis, she explained that a Task Group to include all Norfolk Leaders had been set up to lead on the resettlement of 50 refugees in the county. The Group was currently putting together a proposed joint package to ensure that the refugees received the right equipment and support, and the Group was preparing a joint estimate of costs to present to the Government. In response to a query, Cllr Bendle explained that she did not think it relevant at this stage for there to be any mention of the position of the refugees, within the Council Tax scheme.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To:

1. Agree the proposals outlined at paragraph 4 of the report;
2. Approve the detailed Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17 outlined at Appendix 2 of the report.

### iv) STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Cllr L Hornby presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, with regard to the Statement of Licensing Policy. He added that the Licensing Committee had commended the Policy, following a number of minor amendments.
It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To adopt the Statement of Licensing Policy, as set out in Appendix A of the report, and authorises the Director of Growth and Localism to carry out all regulatory processes to enable the policy to come in to effect on 7 January 2016.

v) **STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY**

Cllr L Hornby presented the recommendations from the Cabinet, regarding the Statement of Gambling Policy. Members noted that the Licensing Committee had recommended the Policy for approval.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To adopt the Statement of Gambling Policy as set out in Appendix A of the report, subject to minor amendments, and to authorise the Director of Growth and Localism to carry out all regulatory processes to enable the policy to come in to effect on 31 January 2016.

3320 **MONITORING OFFICER REPORT**

Cllr J Fuller presented the report of the Monitoring Officer, which proposed a number of changes to the constitution.

Cllr Fuller outlined the recommendations of the report to Council and further explained that Cllr C Easton would be replacing Cllr A Thomas on the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** To:

1. Approve the change to the Scheme of Delegation, set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report, and the changes to licensing delegations as set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 of the report.
2. Note the change in membership of the Electoral Arrangements Committee.
3321 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND CABINET MEMBERS

(a) CABINET

Cllr V Bell referred to a recent pre-consultation event held by developers wanting to build 80 homes outside of the adopted development boundary, as defined in the recently adopted Local Plan. Cllr Bell reminded Cllr Fuller that he had previously assured members that following the adoption of the Local Plan, there was now "certainty where new development will be built". However, with the lack of the five year land supply, Cllr Bell asked Cllr Fuller whether policies were robust enough to rebuff such applications.

Cllr Fuller reminded members that all applications were determined within national planning policies and the Council’s own Local Plan. On occasions, departures from policies could be applied, for example for commercial applications. He made reference to previous appeals, where the Planning Inspector had referred to the five year land supply, but had balanced this against other factors. He suggested that residents should take comfort from the fact that material considerations were applied consistently.

Cllr T Lewis asked Cllr Fuller to provide an update on devolution, following the third reading of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, in the House of Commons, on 7 December. In response, Cllr Fuller explained that proposed amendments would allow districts and counties to join or form a combined authority in an area, even if not all the partners consented. Negotiations were still continuing on the shape and form of the bid for the area, and it was still possible that Cambridgeshire would part of that combined authority. This was, he explained, a fast moving environment and he stressed that any changes would need to demonstrate efficiencies.

Cllr M Gray referred to the self- cleaning toilets that had been installed at Harleston, and asked whether plans to install such toilets were still going ahead in Loddon. In response, Cllr M Wilby reminded members that the new toilets in Harleston were part of a pilot scheme. The Council was liaising with each market town individually, to ensure that proposals were appropriate for each town, and the details of each scheme were yet to be agreed.

With regard to a query regarding housing need, Cllr Y Bendle acknowledged that there were differing needs across the District. She referred to the various schemes to increase the number of affordable homes to buy, but she was also aware that there was a need to increase the number of affordable homes to rent. She stressed that the Council would do what it could to ensure the correct mix of homes to meet the need.

Cllr M Gray referred to the recent international agreement in Paris on Climate Change, and asked whether the forthcoming Environment Policy would include plans for climate change mitigation. Cllr K Mason Billig confirmed that the Council would support the international agreement and that once more details were known, the Council would react appropriately.
Cllr J Hornby asked what arrangements had been put in place for bin collections over the Christmas period. Cllr Mason Billig confirmed that there was a need to change some collection times due to the bank holiday, and that the changes had been well advertised, and leaflets detailing the changes had been delivered to all residents.

(b) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Cllr L Neal, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, explained that the Business Planning Member Workshop, held that afternoon had been a success and she hoped that members had found it useful.

(c) LICENSING, APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE / LICENSING AND GAMBLING ACTS COMMITTEE

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Licensing Committee.

(d) DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Development Management Committee.

(e) ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Cllr C Kemp, Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee, explained that the Committee would meet again on 21 January, to consider the responses of the second phase of consultation, undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review of the Queen’s Hill area of Costessey Parish Council. This second phase of consultation was proposing the creation of a separate Queen’s Hill Ward, within the town of Costessey, as this had been the agreed favoured option of the Committee at its meeting on 29 October.

Cllr Kemp further advised that the electoral arrangements for the South Norfolk Council area would be reviewed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England during 2016, and that the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee had delegated powers to deal with such matters. The review process would look at the overall size of the Council and ward arrangements, and the Committee would receive its first report on the matter on 21 January. Members noted that the Boundary Commission had set a deadline of 12 April 2016, for the Council to submit a draft submission on the Council size and the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee would be considering the matter at its meeting on 21 January. Members were informed that a workshop session regarding the review, would take place on 21 January, before the Committee meeting, and that all members were welcome to attend. It was noted that a review of parish boundaries would also take place later in the year.

In response to a query and in light of the significance of the above, Cllr Kemp agreed that Council would be kept well informed concerning the progress made regarding such matters.

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3322 OUTSIDE BODIES – NPLAW UPDATE

Cllr G Wheatley referred to his update with regard to Nplaw, at page 31 of the agenda.

Members were pleased to note that the net cost of the legal service this year was on track to be some 20% less than the costs during the final year that the legal service was provided in-house. Cllr Wheatley warned members not to be complacent, as one significant challenge could incur significant costs, however, he felt that it had clearly been the right decision to transfer the service. It was also pleasing to note that those staff who had transferred had made a significant contribution to the success of the nplaw service.

(The meeting concluded at 8.37 pm)

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Chairman