COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Tuesday 23 February 2016 at 7.30 pm


Apologies: Councillors, Amis, Blundell, Dewsbury, Fulcher Gould, Gray, Hardy and Kiddie.

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

3323 URGENT ITEM
DEVOLUTION - UPDATE

The Chairman referred to the report (electronically circulated to members), which provided an update on the current Devolution proposals, and further clarity with regard to issues discussed at the Council meeting held 2 November 2015.

The Chairman confirmed that due to the recent announcement that a three county deal could be progressed, with a possible 2017 Mayoral election, he considered that the report could not wait until the next scheduled meeting of the Council, and should be considered as an urgent item.

Cllr J Fuller presented the report to members, explaining that the recommendations would permit officers to progress discussions, and enable the bid to move to the next stage. This would ensure that the Council remained part of the process and that any of its concerns could be shared with potential partner authorities, and taken in to account as deal documents were resolved. He
stressed that there would be further opportunities to debate the context of the bid and the detailed proposals at a future meeting of the Council. In response to a query, he confirmed that double devolution would be an integral part of the bid.

Cllr T Lewis explained that he agreed in principle to the recommendations of the report, but suggested that some members might not be comfortable with a model to include an elected mayor. Cllr C Kemp advised Council that the Government had made it clear that a directly elected Mayor was a requirement, not an option, and he reminded members that this was simply a different form of democracy.

RESOLVED:

1. To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the authority to continue to progress the devolution bid, and to confirm that South Norfolk Council is supportive in principle to the devolution bid for Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with an elected Mayor, to enable the bid to move to the next stage.
2. That any matters that would result in a significant (key) decision being required from the Council, or the Council making a formal and binding commitment, will be referred to Full Council for consideration.

3324 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 14 December were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3325 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred members to his list of engagements since the last meeting of the Council.

He explained that the Council would be celebrating the Queen’s 90th birthday, on 21 April, with the lighting of a beacon at South Norfolk House. More details of this would follow shortly, and other celebrations would be taking place across the District.
3326  RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

i)  PROPOSED CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Cllr K Mason Billig introduced the recommendations from Cabinet, with sought approval for the Corporate Environment Policy. She explained that it was an overarching document and would sit above a more detailed Action Plan, which was to be discussed in more detail at the Environment and Regulation Policy Committee, on 14 March 2016.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the Corporate Environment Policy.

ii)  CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3 2015/16

Cllr M Edney introduced the recommendations from the Cabinet, with regard to the Capital and Treasury Management Report Quarter 3 2015/16. He explained that the report detailed the main variances between budgeted and actual expenditure, and that slippage would depend on the progress made on complex schemes before the end of the fourth quarter.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To:

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

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

iii)  REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2016/17

The Chairman proposed and the Council agreed that, in accordance with Standing Order D4.5, Group Leaders, the portfolio holder and the shadow portfolio holder for resources, be permitted to speak for 10 minutes each on the budget.
Cllr J Fuller began by explaining that this was the ninth time he had stood before Council to present a budget that sought to make South Norfolk one of the best places to live in the country. The Council had been recognised nationally in a number of areas and he felt that members should be proud of what had been achieved in recent years. The Council had been able to maintain services over the last 5 years despite a reduction in Government support of 32%. He made reference to the commercialisation agenda and gave mention to CNC, Big Sky, Build Insight and the Internal Audit Consortium, explaining that the Council had used its capital resources to generate income for the future. He also drew attention to the investments in leisure, which in turn would keep people healthier, the building of affordable homes, which helped families stay together, and the stimulation of growth which had generated New Homes Bonus.

Looking to the future, Cllr Fuller referred to the fundamental shift in the direction of local government finances and the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant. He would very much liked to have again frozen council tax, but he realised that there was a need to be realistic about the future and to recognise that circumstances had changed. The changes, he explained had left district councils as the hardest hit of all types of authority, and one of the core challenges of the Council would be to raise business rates faster than support was cut and this would take time. Turning to the offer for a four year settlement, he suggested that this would require careful consideration and would be subject to announcements on the New Homes Bonus. He did, however, consider the Council to be best placed to meet the challenges ahead.

Referring to the budget, Cllr Fuller was pleased and proud that all members had had a hand in its formation. He outlined the budget’s focus areas, and explained that the Council would raise its precept for a band D property by £4.32, to £135 exactly. This would keep the Council in the lowest quartile, the 26th lowest council tax of any district council out of 201.

Summing up, he explained that the Council would continue to grow the economy with ambitious investment plans, looking after people and recognising that prevention was better than cure. It would continue to strive to build services and improve the quality of life, but the freezing of council tax was no longer an option if it was to be true to its core mission, to be recognised as a respected and ambitious local authority. He then commended the budget to members.

Cllr E Edney referred to the planned increases in council tax over the next 5 years, which he felt to be inevitable following the announcement that the Revenue Support Grant would reduce to nil in 2020. He supported the budget wholeheartedly, and congratulated officers for continuing to deliver high quality services, whilst continuing to find efficiency savings.

Cllr T Lewis explained that the Liberal Democrat Group supported much of what had been said. He would look with interest at future developments in the capital programme and the increase in the number of investment properties purchased; a strategy that had been adopted by the Liberal Democrat Group some years back. However, he did wish to suggest a minor amendment that would result in a marginal change to the budget proposals. He suggested that the additional Rural Services Delivery Grant, received after the budget papers had been received, be used to offset the need for a sharp rise in council tax in 2016/17, and to even out future increases. He then moved the following amendment:
1. The Council’s additional Rural Services Delivery Grant is partly applied to reduce the increased Council Tax in 16/17 from £135.00 (+ 3.31%) to £133.55 (+ 2.2%)
2. That the Medium Term Plan will assume that annual increases thereafter will also be 2.2% p.a up to and including 2020/21

This amendment was duly seconded by Cllr B Bernard.

Cllr M Wilby explained that he was opposing the amendment. The original budget proposals and profile for council tax increases was, he felt, a sensible approach, and was not disadvantageous to the council tax payer.

Cllr Fuller felt that, with the uncertainty over the future of the New Homes Bonus, it would be reckless to depart from the original planned profile of increases. He considered the rounded up pricing year on year for a Band D property (£135.00 for 2016/17), to be an honest approach, and easy for residents to understand. He was therefore, opposed to the amendment.

The vote on the amendment was then conducted as a roll call vote as follows:

Cllrs Bell, Bernard and Lewis voted in favour of the amendment.


The amendment was lost by 3 votes to 35.

Cllr L Neal, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, advised Council that the Committee had considered the budget proposals at its meeting on 17 February, and members had voted to endorse the proposals.

Cllr M Wilby advised the Council that he was pleased to support a budget that continued to support local communities across the District. He referred to the success of the Member Grants, and the Community Action Fund (CAF), which had made a real difference in the delivery of those projects important to residents, and he explained that for every £1.00 awarded through the CAF, an extra £6.00 of outside funding was brought in. He stressed that the health, wellbeing and quality of life of all residents was a priority for the Council, and he gave mention to the recent investment in the leisure centres and the swim school programme which had recently been extended to 50 weeks per year. He referred to the continued success of the Big Litter Pick, and the Community Awards and the nationally recognised Pub of the Year competition, and he gave special mention to the Waveney Valley Trust and
the Otter Trust which were excellent examples of how groups had worked hard to improve the environment for both residents and visitors to enjoy.

Cllr C Kemp in commending the budget to members, referring to it as an example of open and honest politics which was in stark contrast to the recent budget proposals from the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner.

The vote was then conducted as a roll call vote as follows:


Cllrs Bell, Bernard and Lewis abstained from the vote.

With 35 votes for and 3 abstentions, it was

**RESOLVED:**

i) To approve the base budget; as shown in para 7.1 of the report, subject to final confirmation of the finalised Local Government finance settlement figures which may, if significant, necessitate an adjustment through the General Revenue Reserve to maintain a balanced budget;

ii) To approve the use of the revenue reserves as set out in para 8.2 and 8.3 of the report;

iii) To agree that the Council’s demand on the Collection Fund for 2016/17 for General Expenditure shall be £6,122,655 and for Special Expenditure be £73,925;

iv) To agree that the Band D level of Council Tax be £135.00 for General Expenditure and £1.63 for Special Expenditure.

iv) **CAPITAL PROGRAMME APRIL 2016 TO MARCH 2021**

Cllr M Edney introduced the recommendations from the Cabinet relating to the Council’s Capital Programme for the period April 2016 to March 2021.
It was unanimously

RESOLVED:  1. To agree that the assumptions on which the funding of the capital programme is based are prudent.

2. To approve the capital programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21, noting that both the funding and capital programme for Disabled Facilities Grants has increased and is now £715,645.

v)  TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2019

Cllr M Edney briefly outlined the recommendations and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:  To agree


b) The Prudential Indicators and Limits for the next 3 years contained within Appendix A of the report, including the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator.

c) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (section 8 of the report) setting out the Council’s policy on MRP.

d) The Annual Investment Strategy 2016/17 (section 5 of the report) contained in the Treasury Management Strategy, including the delegation of certain tasks to the Director of Business Development.


3326  COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2016/17

The vote was conducted as a roll call vote as follows:

Cllrs Bendle, Bills, Broome, Dale, Duffin, Easton, Edney, Ellis, Foulger, Fuller, Goldson J Hornby, L Hornby, Hudson, C Kemp,

Cllrs Bell, Bernard and Lewis abstained from the vote.

With 35 votes for and 3 abstentions, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the recommendations of the Cabinet meeting held 15 February 2016 relating to the Council Tax Base for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relates as in the attached Appendix B of the report;

2. To approve the recommendations of the Cabinet meeting 15 February 2016 relating to the Revenue and Capital Estimates 2016/17;

3. That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2016/17 (excluding Parish precepts and special expenses) be calculated as £6,122,655.00.

4. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2016/17 in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Act.
   a) £66,001,968.00 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.
   b) £56,781,387.86 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
   c) £9,220,580.14 being the amount by which the aggregate at 5(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 5(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the 1992 Act).
   d) £203.31 being the amount at 5(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts and special expenses).
   e) £3,097,925.14 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts and special expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per attached Appendix B).
f) £135.00 being the amount at 5(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 5(e) above by Item T (1 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the 1992 Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept or special expense relates.

5) To note that Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Act for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below.

6) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Act, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2016/17 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precepting Authority</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Norfolk Council</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>105.00</td>
<td>120.00</td>
<td>135.00</td>
<td>165.00</td>
<td>195.00</td>
<td>225.00</td>
<td>270.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk County Council</td>
<td>793.86</td>
<td>926.17</td>
<td>1,058.48</td>
<td>1,190.79</td>
<td>1,455.41</td>
<td>1,720.03</td>
<td>1,984.65</td>
<td>2,381.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner</td>
<td>141.96</td>
<td>165.62</td>
<td>189.28</td>
<td>212.94</td>
<td>260.26</td>
<td>307.58</td>
<td>354.90</td>
<td>425.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate of Council Tax Requirements (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses)</td>
<td>1,025.82</td>
<td>1,196.79</td>
<td>1,367.76</td>
<td>1,538.73</td>
<td>1,880.67</td>
<td>2,222.61</td>
<td>2,564.55</td>
<td>3,077.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2016/17, which reflects an increase of £4.32, is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Act.

As the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2016/17 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK of the Act.

3327 MULBARTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: CONSIDERATION WHETHER THE PLAN SHOULD BE MADE PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Cllr J Fuller introduced the report to Council, which presented members with the Mulbarton Neighbourhood Plan for approval.
Cllr N Legg, local member for Mulbarton, commended the report to members, explaining that 90% of the votes in the public referendum had been in favour of the Plan. He thanked Adam Nicholls, the Planning Policy Manager, for his support throughout the process. Cllr C Foulger, also local member for the village, echoed the comments of Cllr Legg, adding that he had been very impressed by the work and dedication of the local Parish Council, with regard to the Plan’s formation.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To “make” the Mulbarton Neighbourhood Plan with immediate effect, and to delegate to the Director of Growth and Localism authority to publish and publicise the Decision Statement as soon as possible afterwards, in line with the legislative requirements.

3328 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016/17

Cllr M Edney presented the report to members, which sought Cabinet approval for the Council’s 2016/17 Pay Policy Statement. Cllr Edney explained that the production of a Pay Policy Statement was a requirement of the Localism Act, introduced in 2012, and added that the Pay Policy Statement had already been endorsed by the Joint Consultative Committee, at its meeting held 16 December 2016.

RESOLVED: To approve South Norfolk Council’s Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17.

3329 MAKING DECISIONS ON PLANNING POLICIES THAT FALL OUTSIDE THE LOCAL PLAN

Cllr J Fuller introduced the report to members, explaining that the Cabinet had requested this report to Council, following its consideration regarding an Article 4 Direction, with respect to the Cringleford Business Centre.

Referring to paragraph 4.1.3, Cllr Fuller suggested that the consent of the Chairman of the Cabinet should also be required for those decisions taken urgently by the Chief Executive, or relevant Director, in addition to the consent required from the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and Development Management Committee, and this was subsequently agreed by Council.

Cllr C Kemp, commenting on the same paragraph, explained that the consent of both the Chairmen of Scrutiny and Development Management Committee was also required for those decisions made by the Cabinet.
RESOLVED: To agree the decision making approach for non-local plan planning policies as outlined in paragraphs 4.1 (as amended) and 4.2 of the report.

3330 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND CABINET MEMBERS

(a) CABINET

Cllr T Lewis referred to the referendum to be held 23 June 2016, regarding whether or not to remain in the European Union, and he asked Cllr J Fuller whether he could say at this stage, what result would be in the best interest of residents of South Norfolk. In response, Cllr Fuller explained that the proximity of Europe was very important to the economy of South Norfolk, and he referred to the energy industry and the links with Europe regarding health and the environment. He felt that the pros and cons of both options required detailed consideration, but he stressed that Europe was an important customer to the region.

In response to a query from Cllr Lewis regarding the Council’s Community Coordinators, Cllr Y Bendle explained that two coordinators had been appointed in Diss a year ago, to support the people and their community in establishing the links needed to help themselves, and to access any support they might need. Their aim was to connect with people which might not otherwise contact the Council or be brought to the attention of the Early Help Hub. The posts had proved very successful and the Council had recently obtained a grant which provided funding for additional Community Connectors in both Wymondham and Costessey.

(b) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

(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

There were no questions to the Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Committee.

(The meeting concluded at 8.50 pm)

________________________________________
Chairman