COUNCIL

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

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

Apologies: Councillors, J Hornby, C Kemp, Larner, Lewis and Pond

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

Others in Attendance: Mr P Gorman (Member of the Independent Remuneration Panel)

(4 members of the public were also in attendance)

3332 CHAIRMAN’S ENGAGEMENTS

The Chairman explained that it had been both an honour and a privilege to have represented the Council at the numerous engagements he had attended throughout the year. He had thoroughly enjoyed representing the Council at all his engagements, and he gave special mention to the Edith Cavell Memorial Service held at Norwich Cathedral back in October, and the Queen’s 90th Birthday celebrations, recently held at the Council offices in Long Stratton. He expressed his thanks to Tracy Brady, and the Events and Marketing Teams, for their assistance throughout the year.
3333 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2016/17

Cllr D Bills proposed, seconded by Cllr K Kiddie, that Cllr G Wheatley be appointed Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

In the absence of other nominations, it was RESOLVED that Cllr G Wheatley be elected Chairman of the Council for 2016/17. Cllr Wheatley took the Chair and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Wheatley thanked the Council for the honour bestowed upon him. He looked forward to representing the Council throughout the year ahead.

3334 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2016/17

Cllr G Wheatley proposed, seconded by Cllr C Foulger, that Cllr B Duffin be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

In the absence of other nominations, it was RESOLVED that Cllr B Duffin be elected Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2016/17.

Cllr Duffin thanked the Council for the trust bestowed upon him, explaining that he felt it to be a great honour to have been appointed as Vice-Chairman.

3335 ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2016/17

Cllr M Edney proposed, seconded by Cllr M Wilby, that Cllr J Fuller be appointed Leader of the Council for the ensuing municipal year. In the absence of other nominations, it was RESOLVED that Cllr J Fuller be elected Leader of the Council for 2016/17.

Cllr Fuller then announced his Cabinet members and portfolios, and Cllr M Gray, (as deputy leader of the opposition and in the absence of Cllr Lewis) announced the shadow portfolio holders (as detailed below):
Cllr Fuller explained that Cllr Wilby had stood down from his position as cabinet member, to concentrate on his new position on the Norfolk County Council. He thanked Cllr Wilby for his loyalty and friendship whilst serving as his deputy and he also expressed his thanks to his wife, Cllr J Wilby for her continued support. Cllr M Wilby explained that he had worked with Cllr Fuller since their election in 2003, and on the Cabinet since 2007. He thanked cabinet members, both current and past, for all their contributions and he referred to the hard work and commitment of officers of the Council.

Referring to the new appointment to the Cabinet, Cllr Fuller explained that he looked forward to working with Cllr Hudson.

3336 VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING CHAIRMAN

Cllr F Ellis proposed, seconded by Cllr M Gray, that the Council recorded its thanks for the way in which Cllr Bills had performed his duties as Chairman of the Council during 2015/16.

Cllr Ellis referred to Cllr Bills’ witty approach, referring to him as an excellent advocate for the Council. Cllr Gray agreed that Cllr Bills had chaired the Council with skill, and had always demonstrated a fair and consistent approach to both political groups.
3337 MINUTES

With reference to the minutes of the last meeting, members noted that Cllr J Larner had been omitted from the list of attendees, in error.

Subject to the above change, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 February 2016, were agreed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

3338 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that his theme for the year was “An inclusive Council”. He referred to the inclusive nature of the Council and how it aimed to ensure that no sectors of the community were excluded, in all areas. He explained that he would announce his choice of charity at a later date.

The Chairman explained that it had been brought to his attention that both Cllrs M Gray and J Mooney had served on the Council for 25 municipal years, and were both the longest serving members on the current Council. Council applauded this achievement.

3339 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Cllr Fuller presented the report of the Monitoring Officer, which sought approval to make amendments to the Council’s committee structure and proposals for the re-formation of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership.

Referring members to the revised Appendix 2 (tabled at the meeting), Cllr Fuller drew attention to the changes to the Policy Committee structure. These alignments, he explained, would ensure that the structure was reflective of the Corporate Plan approach and themes. With regard to the changes to the portfolios, he explained that planning policy would remain under his portfolio, and would not transfer to a Planning Policy and Regulation portfolio, as had been suggested in the report.

Cllr Fuller went on to announce his appointments of chairmen and vice-chairmen, and he paid tribute to Cllr J Mooney, who had stood down as the Chairman of the Development Management Committee. With a meeting of the Development Management Committee the following Wednesday, Cllr Fuller announced the membership of the Committee as follows:
Cllr V Thomson (Chairman)
Cllr L Neal (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P Broome
Cllr C Gould
Cllr C Kemp
Cllr G Minshull
Cllr F Ellis
Cllr B Stone
Cllr A Thomas
Cllr J Mooney

Cllr M Gray advised that he would remain as the Liberal Democrat appointment on the Committee.

Members agreed that the member appointments to the other committees would be delegated to Group Leaders, and advised at a later date.

In response to queries from Cllr M Gray, Cllr Fuller confirmed that the re-formed Greater Norwich Development Partnership would meet in public, unless items were of an exempt nature. With regard to the current Task and Finish Groups, he explained that it was a constitutional requirement that Cabinet formally agree to their disbandment.

It was then unanimously RESOLVED:

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<td>1. Agree the modification to the delegation of responsibilities, cabinet portfolios and cabinet policy committees as outlined in Section 2 and Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the changes to planning policy, as detailed above;</td>
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<td>2. Agree to the allocation of seats on Council Committees in accordance with the revised Appendix 2 of the report (as tabled), the final appointments to be delegated to Group Leaders (and appended to these minutes).</td>
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<td>3. Appoint Chairman and Vice-Chairman as set out in the revised Appendix 2 of the report (as tabled);</td>
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<td>4. Support the re-formation of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.</td>
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3340 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr J Fuller introduced the report and referred members to the list of appointments required for 2016/17. He anticipated minor changes to member appointments, explaining that the appointment to the North East Suffolk CAB, was now to be a conservative member.

Members agreed that the final appointments should be delegated to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

It was unanimously

| RESOLVED: | To make appointments to outside organisations for 2016/17, as listed in Appendix 2 of the report, the member appointments to be delegated to Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition Group (and appended to these minutes). |

3341 NINTH REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL TO REVIEW THE SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES FOR SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed Mr P Gorman, a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel, to the meeting.

Members noted that the Independent Panel had been appointed to review the Scheme of Members’ Allowances and make recommendations to Council with regard to the level of expenses and allowances members received for undertaking their role.

Cllr J Fuller began by thanking the Panel for what he felt to be a fair review, with the recommendations resulting in only a small increase in costs. He did however wish to propose three amendments to the Panel’s recommendations (amendments shown in bold below):

“To adopt the revised Scheme of Members’ allowances outlined at Appendix A of the report, subject to the following changes:

a) That increases in the basic level of members’ allowances are aligned to the increase in the general local government pay settlement, with the special responsibility allowances increasing accordingly; and

b) That each year the rate of overnight subsistence allowance for London and the LGA Conference be multiplied by the annual increase in the Retail Price Index at 31 March and;
c) That paragraph 6.2(a) of the Scheme be replaced with “The overnight subsistence allowance should be seen as an expected maximum allowance claimable and the amount claimed should have actually been spent. In exceptional circumstances where, as a result of the season, timing, location or period of notice it is not possible to obtain accommodation at the overnight subsistence rate, the member shall be allowed to claim the amount incurred on their accommodation. However, members should always seek to obtain the best available rate and be prepared to justify any claims made above the overnight subsistence value.”

This amendment was seconded by Cllr M Edney.

Cllr M Gray suggested that there may be scope for the Local Government Association to negotiate discount rates for hotels used by members, and he queried whether or not the subsistence allowance should be increased annually by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), as opposed to the Retail Price Index (RPI), as suggested by Cllr Fuller.

In response, Cllr Fuller explained that he still felt the increase by RPI to be appropriate, but had no objection to future increases being CPI linked. He agreed that the LGA might be able to negotiate discount rates, but he believed that cheaper rates would still be obtained, when booking at short notice and using comparison websites.

The amendment was then unanimously carried.

It was then unanimously

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<td>b) That each year the rate of overnight subsistence allowance for London and the LGA Conference be multiplied by the annual increase in the Retail Price Index at 31 March and;</td>
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<td>c) That paragraph 6.2(a) of the Scheme be replaced with “The overnight subsistence allowance should be seen as an expected maximum allowance claimable and the amount claimed should have actually been spent. In exceptional circumstances where, as a result of the season, timing, location or period of notice it is not possible to obtain accommodation at the overnight subsistence rate, the member shall be allowed to claim the amount incurred on their accommodation. However, members should always seek to obtain the best available rate and be prepared to justify any claims made above the overnight subsistence value.”</td>
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2. To thank the Independent Panel for their work in reviewing the Scheme of Allowances.

3342 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

(i) South Norfolk Local Plan
   Adoption of Long Stratton Area Action Plan

Cllr Fuller introduced the recommendations from the Cabinet regarding the Long Stratton Area Action Plan (tabled at the meeting). Members were pleased to note that subject to the main modifications being made (outlined in Appendix A of the report) the Long Stratton Area Action Plan had been found to be sound and legally compliant by the Inspector. Cllr Fuller hoped that this would allow Long Stratton to achieve its vision and was a step closer to the delivery of a bypass.

Cllr A Thomas, a resident of Long Stratton, explained that she had moved in to the village in 1995, and residents had been fighting for a bypass long before that. She was delighted that the Area Action Plan had been approved by the Inspector and thanked officers and the Council for their commitment in producing a document that would no doubt make Long Stratton a more attractive place to live, work and visit. She also welcomed Norfolk County Council’s decision to place a roundabout at the Hempnall crossroads junction, as part of the improvements and infrastructure requirements that would go hand in hand with a bypass.

Cllr K Worsley, local member for the Long Stratton ward, thanked officers on behalf of the residents of Long Stratton. He fully supported the Plan and hoped that plans for the production of a Neighbourhood Plan would take the village a step closer in securing the much needed bypass.

Cllr D Fulcher, also local member for Long Stratton, spoke of the impact the Plan would have not only on Long Stratton, but its surrounding villages, and the difference a bypass would make to the people living in the village. He fully supported the recommendations of the report and thanked officers for their commitment and enthusiasm in ensuring that the Plan reached this stage.

Cllr M Gray agreed that he Plan would have a wider impact on surrounding villages, and he explained that residents in his ward needed to access the A140 via the Hempnall crossroads. He was delighted that the County Council had decided that a roundabout was the preferred option.
**(ii) Norwich Research Park Enterprise Zone**

Cllr Fuller referred members to the recommendations from the Cabinet (tabled at the meeting), regarding the Norwich Research Park Enterprise Zone.

Cllr Fuller began by reminding members of the increasing need for Local Authorities to be self-sufficient, explaining that the retention of business rates had meant that councils were reliant on local business rate income in their budgets. The growth of the local economy was therefore very important and the Enterprise Zone status for Norwich Business Park created an opportunity to generate significant economic and financial benefits through the acceleration of business growth and attraction of inward investment. Members noted that the speedy development of infrastructure was paramount to unlocking the future development of the site, and funding from the Council was required to allow this to happen. This proposal would mean that the Council would need to borrow externally and in order to do so, it was required to set aside revenue in its budget to fund the costs of its borrowing. This was known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), and required approval by Council.

Members’ attention was drawn to the proposed MRP Policy Statement, detailed at Appendix 2 of the report. Cllr Fuller accepted that there were risks involved but felt that these were sufficiently mitigated, explaining that the s151 officer considered the proposals and MRP Policy Statement to be both prudent and affordable.

It was then unanimously

| RESOLVED: | To adopt the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, detailed at Appendix 2 of the report. |

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**CHAIRMEN’S REPORTS**

**a) Cabinet**

In response to a query from Cllr M Gray, Cllr Fuller provided a brief update to members regarding devolution. He referred to Cambridgeshire’s recent proposal for an alternative “brother and sister” deal, which would involve Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire working more closely together in areas such as infrastructure, but instead of one combined authority with one mayor, there would be two, one covering Norfolk and Suffolk, and the other covering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Cllr Fuller believed however that a three county was still on the table. He advised members that it was likely that a special meeting of either the Cabinet or Council (yet to be decided) would take place on Monday 27 June, to debate the next steps. Members would be advised of these arrangements shortly.

Cllr M Gray asked Cllr M Edney whether he felt that remaining in the European Union was in the best interests of the residents of South Norfolk. Cllr Edney did not feel that it was appropriate to advise Council of his personal views on the matter, noting that the purdah period for the EU Referendum would commence shortly.

Cllr V Bell asked Cllr C Hudson with regard to the current status of the South Norfolk Alliance. Both Cllrs M Wilby and J Fuller explained that the work of the Early Help Hub had superseded the Alliance. Whilst the Alliance still existed constitutionally, future plans might lead to it being officially dissolved.

**b) Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee**

Members noted the annual report of the Scrutiny Committee.

**c) Annual Report of the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee**

Members noted the annual report of the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance (FRAG) Committee.

The Chairman (the outgoing Chairman of the FRAG Committee) commented on the impressive level of knowledge of both officers and those members serving on the Committee. The performance of the Consortium had been excellent, and he wished Cllr P Hardy, the newly appointed Chairman, every success in his new role.
d) Licensing Appeals and Complaints Committee /Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee

Members noted the report of the Licensing Committee.

Cllr D Goldson reminded members that although there had been no recent meetings of the Committee, the licensing team continued with a busy workload, and he wished to record his thanks to all officers involved.

e) Development Management Committee

Cllr M Gray thanked the outgoing Chairman of the Development Management Committee, Cllr J Mooney, for his excellent chairmanship, explaining that he was sorry that he had decided to step down. Cllr Mooney thanked Cllr Gray for his kind words, and explained that he had thoroughly enjoyed his period as Chairman. He felt the Committee had worked well as a team, and he thanked relevant officers for their support.

3243 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

There was no feedback to report with regard to the Council’s outside bodies.

(The meeting concluded at 8.45 pm)

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Chairman