COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 19 September 2016 at 7.30 pm

Members Present: Councillors, Wheatley (Chairman), Duffin (Vice-Chairman), Amis, Bell, Bendle, Blundell, Broome, Dale, Dewsbury, Easton, Ellis, Foulger, Fuller, Fulcher, Goldson, Gould, Gray, L Hornby, Hudson, C Kemp, W Kemp, Larner, Legg, Lewis, Mason-Billig, Mooney, Neal, Overton, Palmer, Pond, Riches, R Savage, J Savage, Thomas, J Wilby, M Wilby and Worsley

Apologies: Councillors, Bernard, Bills, Edney, Hardy, J Hornby, Kiddie, Minshull, Stone, and Thomson.

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

Also in Attendance: Mrs J Gooch and Mrs R Joy (in support of the Petition)

3350 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held Thursday 30 June were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3351 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded members that the Chairman’s Reception was to be held on Friday 30 September at Easton College. He was pleased to announce that the reception was to be held in the Jubilee Building, one of the most environmentally advanced buildings in the region.
3352 PETITIONS RECEIVED

The Chairman referred to the petition received:

“Stand Against Hate (Amnesty International Diss Group)

We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our country. Our Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate crimes to become acceptable. We will work to ensure that local bodies and programmes have the support and the resources they need to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia. We reassure all people living in the area that they are valued members of our community”

The petition organiser, Mrs J Gooch, (secretary to the Amnesty International Diss Branch) presented the petition, drawing attention to its purpose; that members discuss and make clear what steps the Council is taking to tackle racist, xenophobic and criminal behaviour. She referred to the rise in hate crime in the country following the referendum in June, and sought the Council to publically condemn such behaviour. She acknowledged that the Council opposed hate crime and supported all members of its community, but suggested that this could be more prominently presented on the Council’s website. She further suggested a more informal approach through, for example, the Council’s Link Magazine.

In support of the petition, Mrs R Joy added that there was a diverse community in South Norfolk, with various different races having worked and lived in the area for several years. Respect and understanding of others was so important, and she was interested in knowing how the Council proposed to promote this.

Cllr J Fuller moved that the petition be accepted and this was seconded by Cllr Y Bendle. Cllr Fuller thanked the petitioners for their presentation, assuring them that the Council did take hate crime extremely seriously. Of course the Council was proud of its diverse society and supported the sentiments of the petition; it was not only common sense, but a statement of the law. He was proud of the fact that South Norfolk was an “inclusive” council, and he referred to the Link magazine, the Council’s services and many events whereby the Council sought to engage with all its residents. He also made reference to the Council’s decision to sign up to the Norfolk wide approach to housing Syrian refugees. He added that all members took responsibility for supporting the sentiments of the petition through their day to day ward work. Referring to the Council’s website, he explained that this was currently being redesigned and he hoped that the Council’s stance on such behaviour would be communicated more effectively on the new site.
Cllr Y Bendle supported the sentiments of the petition and she was confident that the Council already adhered to its principles. She referred to the multi-agency team working within the Council’s “Help Hub” and how this approach meant that any incidents could be responded to quickly. She explained that the Council had adopted a number of policies regarding equal opportunities and anti-social behaviour, and she was satisfied that staff and members alike were fully conversant with these policies, which would result in any such incidents being “nipped in the bud”.

Cllr T Lewis expressed his support for the sentiments of the petition, and urged fellow members to publically endorse it. He referred back to a motion proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group back in September 2015 regarding Syrian refugees, which was very much in line with the sentiments of the current petition.

The Chairman thanked the petitioners and wished them well in their stance against racist, xenophobic and criminal behaviour.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED:  To accept the Petition

3353 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

The Chairman confirmed that there were no recommendations from the Cabinet requiring approval from full Council.

3354 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

Members considered the report of the Audit Consortium Manager, which proposed a preferred route with regard to the appointment of the Council’s External Auditor.

Cllr J Fuller presented the report and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:  1. To agree that the Council joins a national collective scheme for the appointment of the Auditors, led by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA);
             2. That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer to communicate the willingness of the Council to join the scheme to the PSAA and to enter in to the scheme after satisfactory examination / negotiation of the proposed terms and conditions is concluded.
3355 ANNUAL REPORT ON STANDARDS ACTIVITY

Cllr K Mason Billig introduced the Annual report on Standards Activity. She explained that the regime was continuing to work well, and that there had been no cause for a meeting of the full Standards Committee during the last year.

In response to queries, Cllr Mason Billig advised that the majority of complaints received were with regard to parish councillors, and members’ attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report, which detailed the number of complaints made at both parish and district level. Members noted that officers continued to offer training to parish councils, in an effort to avoid future complaints.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To endorse the Annual Report of the Standards Committee

3356 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

a) Cabinet

Cllr T Lewis referred to the problem with flooding under the bridge at Wymondham and the drainage works carried out to alleviate the problem. The road had recently flooded again, and Cllr Lewis queried recent reports that the works carried out may have exasperated the problem.

In response, Cllr L Hornby explained that he believed the works carried out had prevented flooding, with only two cases since December 2015. Last week’s flooding had been caused by the exceptionally high level of rain, falling within such a short timescale. In this case the waters had been able to drain away very quickly, due to the drainage works that had been carried out. Cllr K Mason Billig added that although a Norfolk County Council function, it was important that the District and the County worked in partnership to resolve such issues.

b) Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee

Cllr L Neal confirmed that there had been no meetings of the Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting of the Council.
c) Chairman of the Licensing Committee

Cllr D Goldson explained that the Licensing Committee had recently met on two occasions, to consider an application for a new premises licence and an application for a private hire vehicle licence.

d) Development Management Committee

There were no questions with regard to the Development Management Committee.

e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

Members referred to the report regarding the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee (EARC), and the recent Council submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) concerning future warding patterns.

The Chairman of the EARC, Cllr C Kemp, explained that since writing the report, it had come to light that due to discrepancies in the numerical data used when compiling the Council’s submission to the LGBC, there was a need to consider amended proposals for Costessey and Wymondham. The LGBC had granted an extended deadline for submission and a meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Sub Committee had therefore been arranged for Friday 23 September at 10.00 am. Cllr Kemp explained that all members were welcome to attend, but stressed that the meeting would consider new proposals for the Costessey and Wymondham wards only, and the consideration of other ward patterns would not be reopened.

Members noted that once the LGBC had published its own proposals, these would be subject to a two month consultation period, and that the EARC might need to meet again to consider a response to these proposals.

3357 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

In response to a query regarding the Police and Crime Panel for Norfolk, Cllr C Kemp confirmed that the new Commissioner had settled in well. He agreed that in future, he would provide brief written reports to Council, updating members on the work of the Panel.
(The meeting concluded at 8.10 p.m.)

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Chairman