Growth & Localism Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Growth & Localism Committee of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Tuesday 23 September 2014 at 2.00 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors F Ellis (Chairman), D Bills, M Edney, B Riches and B Spratt

Apologies: Councillor P Allen, J Overton

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors T Lewis, T Palmer, G Walden, K Weeks and M Wilby

Also in Attendance: Two members of the public

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Growth & Localism (T Horspole), the Compliance and Risk Manager (L Mickleborough), the Housing and Public Health Manager (M Swann), the Early Help Development Manager (L Downes) and the Funding Manager (N Cunningham)

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Nature of Interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T Palmer</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Member of Diss &amp; Thetford CAB</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Edney</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Other interest – Member is a Trustee of Homestart</td>
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21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Localism Committee held on 15 April 2014 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22 UPDATE ON HUB

The Housing and Public Health Manager introduced the item and gave an overview of the history of the Early Help Hub, updating members on the current position. He confirmed that 21 staff from five organisations were currently based at the hub including officers from South Norfolk Council, Children’s Services, Police and the voluntary sector. He advised that staff had been building relationships and gaining a deeper understanding of each other’s roles and as a result staff had already seen an improvement in their ability to work jointly on cases.
Officers had been working on a business process for the hub with the aim that each agency would shortly be looking at how they could align their services and processes to incorporate early help. The Housing and Public Health Manager confirmed that a number of cases had already passed through the hub with the new approach demonstrating that a more coordinated approach was successful in helping families earlier. A key part of this work was to develop a more generic approach to working with families. The aim was to develop confidence and skills amongst staff to enable them to offer initial support to families beyond their core business, developing a ‘no wrong door’ approach to service delivery.

With this approach in mind, members were advised that officers were looking at a number of options around joint delivery to improve families’ access to services and coordination of services. Both a Housing Options Officer and a Revenues and Benefits Officer from South Norfolk Council were due to start working in the Job Centre from November 2014. It was also hoped that regular surgeries around employment, drugs/alcohol, mental health, and domestic abuse would be established shortly.

Members were informed that the hub was a DCLG funded programme which the Council had successfully bid for, focusing on the community element of the programme. Although a comparatively small amount of funding, the programme demonstrated that what the hub was achieving in South Norfolk was in line with the Government’s agenda.

Focusing on the future, the Housing and Public Health Manager advised the Committee that an expression of interest had been successfully submitted for the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) 2015/16. The full bid was due to be submitted on 1 October 2014 with South Norfolk Council taking a leading role. The bid (for £963,000) was focused on continuing the work of the pathfinder in South Norfolk and starting the collaboration and delivery of hubs in Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn in 2015/16. Bids had also been submitted for money to support community development in the other four district areas to support community capacity building in preparation for roll out of collaboration and delivery hubs in 2016/17.

Members discussed the TCA bid and expressed a wish to get involved. The Early Help Development Manager confirmed that officers would keep members informed and would be seeking members’ involvement in the process. She confirmed that South Norfolk Council was acting as a pathfinder at this time and that the intention was to roll this model for early help out across the country in due course.

The Chairman reminded members that the Early Help Hub was not solely about children in trouble, but had a far wider scope, helping individuals, young and old, and families throughout the District by intervening earlier, and thus preventing more serious issues from developing. The Director of Growth and Localism confirmed that this approach enabled officers to ‘work smarter’, preventing more serious problems from occurring, and the need for more drastic intervention by the organisations represented at the hub. This approach would also save money in the longer term. The Early Help Development Manager supported this comment, confirming that officers would be preparing an in depth cost benefit analysis to present as part of the bid, producing clear evidence that the new approach would provide real cost benefits.

Responding to members’ questions, the Early Help Development Manager confirmed that some of the voluntary groups already working as part of the hub were: Stonham Services, (voluntary) Youth Services, DC3 (Diss), Number 7 Diss, Citizens Advice Bureaux, and Homestart. Cllr M Edney expressed his support for the work of Homestart and confirmed he hoped they would continue to receive support through the work of the hub.

Cllr T Lewis expressed thanks to the officers at the hub for the informative drop-in session for members held recently which had been very informative. He asked officers where they
anticipated future funding for the hub would come from. Members were advised that the hub was not entirely reliant on central government for funding, and that there was an ongoing funding commitment from Norfolk County Council. There were various other funding streams available to the hub, including monies from DCLG (Family Focus). There was also funding available from existing budgets for staff already employed. It was stressed to members that in the longer term, the hub was expected to save the Council (and other organisations) money. It was expected that the Early Help Hub would become self-sustaining from 2017.

Members requested that updates be given to members from time to time through the Members’ Bulletin, and that they be provided with a contact number for any referrals to the hub.

Members were supportive of the approach being taken at the hub and asked officers to report back to the Growth and Localism Committee with progress in due course.

23 COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEMES UPDATE – INCLUDING MEMBERS’ BUDGETS FEEDBACK FROM CHAIRMEN

The Compliance and Risk Manager introduced the item, confirming that due to a recent directorate realignment, this area of work would be overseen by her, under the direction of the Director of Environment and Housing. Members were advised that the report updated members on the overall position with regard to the Council’s funding schemes, and sought a steer from the Committee regarding the way forward.

Each of the Chairmen of the Neighbourhood Areas updated the Committee on the latest position with regard to grants and funding.

Cllr D Bills, Chairman of the Northern River Valleys Area, confirmed that a number of organisations had been helped by Council funding including Hethersett Scouts (acquisition of a new minibus), Mulbarton allotments, Costessey Farmers’ Market and play equipment at Marlingford. He advised members that there were a number of projects/initiatives coming up in the area for which funding applications may be successful including the setting up of a historical apple orchard at Queens Hills in Costessey, Hethersett archives and Ducklings Pre-School Playgroup.

Cllr B Spratt, Chairman of the Tas Valley Neighbourhood Area, advised the Committee that funding had been provided for a number of organisations including Long Stratton Netball Club and Long Stratton Football Club (purchasing of equipment for both), and the Big History Group in Forncett. He confirmed that he was pleased with the level of support his funding had been able to provide to local organisations.

Cllr B Riches, Chairman of the Waveney Valley Neighbourhood Area confirmed that there had been a number of successful applications which included provision of funding for a composting toilet at the local church in Brockdish and a projector in Alburgh as well as other worthwhile causes. He further confirmed that there were other applications being looked at with funding likely to be given in the near future to Pulham Players and Denton Village Hall.

Cllr M Edney, Chairman of the Tiffey Valley Neighbourhood Area advised members that there had been many successes in his area including funding for Appleseed Social Enterprise (funding by the Council secured significant additional funding from other sources). Funding was also provided for Wymondham Allotment Association and being
considered for Deopham Sports Hut, Welborne Arts Festival, Barford Village Hall, and play equipment at Morley.

Cllr J Overton, Chairman of Eastern River Valleys Neighbourhood Area sent his apologies to the meeting but confirmed to the Committee in writing that funding had been made available to Shotesham Parish Council (acquisition of a defibrillator), Waveney Valley River Project, Seething Control Tower (for the archiving of local documents relating to World War 2), and Yelverton Football Club. There were a significant number of applications under consideration at the current time.

The Chairman confirmed that she was pleased with the way the Members’ Ward Budget was working, with members able to allocate monies with the minimum of bureaucracy and delay. She suggested that the Neighbourhood Fund, which was proving less successful, should cease to operate with immediate effect and sought the views of the Committee in this regard.

Members of the Committee were generally in agreement with this approach, with the portfolio holder, Cllr M Wilby confirming his approval to the proposals. He concurred with the Chairman with regard to the success of the Ward Budgets.

Members were advised that application forms were available to complete online, and any members that had queries using the forms were encouraged to speak to the communities officers.

Cllr K Weeks confirmed he was happy with the Members’ Ward Budget Scheme but expressed concern that some organisations may be inclined to come straight to their local member for funding rather than seeking other alternative sources of funding which may be available to them. The Chairman reassured the Committee that applicants were being redirected to other charities/organisations where alternative sources of funding were more appropriate.

Members discussed their experiences commenting that it was often the case that a successful application for funding by the Council led to the applicant securing additional, and often significant, funding from other sources.

There was some concern from members that the Council’s support, and potential contribution to the funding of events for the forthcoming ‘Silver Sunday’ had not been well publicised to members. It was suggested that details would be included in the next edition of the ‘Members’ Bulletin’

It was RESOLVED:

That officers would draft proposals for future South Norfolk Council funding schemes for the approval of the portfolio holder and thereafter for presentation to the Cabinet

24 MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE – PHASE 2 UPDATE

The Director of Growth and Localism introduced the report which gave members an update on the Market Towns Initiative as well as proposals for the development of the next stage of the initiative.

Members were advised that there had already been a number of notable successes as detailed in the report. Subsequent detailed assessment of the approach had resulted in a
revision of the objectives which broadened the initiative to encompass wider aspects of economic growth for the towns, rather than primarily focusing on retail aspects. Making each market town ‘relevant’ and promoting each with its clear identity and distinctive functions would also be very important. Cllr M Edney commented on the success of the ‘Retail Academy’ training provided to local retailers.

With regard to investment, the Committee was informed that, as detailed in the report, this approach had remained as originally proposed with the Council committed to investing a proportion of its New Homes Bonus monies to the market towns.

The Director of Growth and Localism confirmed that he was currently recruiting to a new post of Market Towns Co-ordinator, which would take the lead on the initiative and drive it forward. Members welcomed this future appointment which would provide members of the public and members of the Council with one primary contact co-ordinating the whole initiative.

Members were generally pleased with the reported position and looked forward to a further update on the matter in due course.

A11 GROWTH CORRIDOR PROPOSAL

The Funding Manager delivered a presentation to the Committee giving an oversight of the necessity of the project, the ‘Growth Area’ status of the A11 (Norwich to Newmarket), the way in which the project would work, and the anticipated benefits and risks to SNC. The Funding Manager stated that given the scope of the project SNC would need to work with a range of partners to deliver the project and that given the geographical area of the A11 in question (Thetford to Cringleford) combined with the strong track record in managing EU funding, Breckland Council was the obvious key partner for SNC to work with to deliver the project. She also stated that given the scale of the ambition, it would be necessary to secure external funding from a range of sources, including the New Anglia LEP, EU funding, pooled business rates and SNC, to pump prime the delivery of the new businesses and jobs.

The Funding Manager confirmed that no additional employment land or housing allocations would be needed to deliver the project as it was based on the proposed allocations set out within the SNC’s emerging Local Plan. The Director of Growth and Localism reminded the Committee that funding had already been committed to by SNC and Breckland Council to undertake a feasibility study which would be used to confirm the economic opportunity and to provide delivery options to take the project forward. He also confirmed that the issues of ‘new housing’ and ‘employment land’ could be looked at jointly as accelerating the uptake of employment land would stimulate greater market demand for delivering SNC’s housing growth.

Cllr Keith Weeks raised a concern regarding the impact of the project on existing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arrangements which the Council had in place. The Director of Growth and Localism acknowledged that this was an important point to clarify and reassured the Committee that although there would be a cost to the Council to establish and deliver this project, funding secured would be in addition to the CIL arrangements that South Norfolk Council had in place with the Greater Norwich Growth Board for delivery of the Greater Norwich City Deal.
Cllr G Walden raised a concern that there may not be enough housing within South Norfolk to satisfy the need that would be created by this project, and was also concerned that the percentage of people within the District over the age of 60 could be disproportionately high. The Director of Growth and Localism advised members that this was not likely to be a significant problem within South Norfolk, and the emphasis on increasing employment would help to alleviate these concerns.

Cllr M Wilby thanked officers for the positive message received from this item, and suggested that the Committee support the proposals contained within the presentation.

It was RESOLVED:

To recommend to the Cabinet

1. To support the A11 Growth Corridor project proposal including the delivery approach and timelines

2. To support the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between South Norfolk Council and Breckland Council.

26 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee acknowledged the date of the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.38 pm

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Chairman