Localism Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Localism Committee of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Tuesday 19 March 2013 at 2.00 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors M Wilby (Chairman), P Allen, D Bills, M Edney (for agenda items 1 to 8), and B Spratt

Apologies: Councillors B Riches and J Overton

Substitutes: Councillors G Walden (for B Riches) and L Neal (for J Overton)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Y Bendle, D Goldson, M Gray and K Weeks

Officers in Attendance: For parts of the meeting; the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Funding Manager (N Cunningham), the Housing and Public Health Manager (M Swann), the Communities Officer – Sport and Wellbeing (M Heazle) and the Communities Officer – Safety (M Pursehouse). The Communities Officer – People (O Hill) and the Scrutiny Officer (E Nangle)

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following member declared an ‘other’ interest in the matter listed below.

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<th>Minute No.</th>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Reason for Declaration</th>
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<td>13</td>
<td>P Allen</td>
<td>Chair on SNYA Executive Board</td>
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10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Localism Committee held on 15 October 2012 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from minute number 6, Cllr Allen asked for clarification of the quorum for Neighbourhood Board meetings. The Chairman stated that he would confirm this after checking Cabinet papers.

Arising from minute number 7, Cllr Allen queried the latest position regarding the proposed Town and Parish conference to be arranged by the Neighbourhood Boards. The Chairman agreed to look into the matter and update the Committee accordingly.
11 YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, YOUR CHOICE – YEAR TWO

The Communities Officer (People) presented his report which detailed the Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice (YNYC) pilot of 2011/12, and recommended how outcomes of the pilot could influence proposals for YNYC as the scheme continued into 2012/13.

The Committee was informed of proposals to include eight service areas in the consultation which residents would be asked to score on a scale of 1-8, based on priority. Members were asked to comment on the style of the plan, the timescale involved, and the areas of consultation.

During discussion, it was suggested and agreed that tourism should specifically be included as an area of consultation.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential duplication of services particularly the area of debt advice where work was already undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Communities Officer assured members that they would be working with existing organisations to enhance services rather than to duplicate work.

The Committee agreed that the proposed timescale for consultation was acceptable and welcomed the development of a Marketing Plan.

Members agreed that, to ensure a high level of participation from residents, help should be sought from parish and town councils as well as other partners. It was also agreed that where residents were being asked to score services, a clear knowledge of what that service provided should be included in the consultation papers. It was:

RESOLVED:
1. To endorse the proposed timeline for the delivery of YNYC 2.
2. To endorse the Marketing Plan, once developed.
3. To endorse the consultation process subject to the above additions.

12 APPOINTMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

The Communities Officer (People) summarised the salient points of his report and invited members to comment regarding the process for the election of Neighbourhood Board Community Representatives.

Members discussed the requirements for the job description and suggested that it be worded in a manner which would both stress the importance of the role and appeal to applicants.

During discussion it was suggested that the decision-making process for Community Representatives be simplified and that where few members were able to attend the meeting, the others could be consulted by email.

In response to a member’s suggestion, the Communities Officer (People) agreed that he would be writing to existing Community Representatives to inform them of the process, thank them for their work, and to invite them to stand again for the Neighbourhood Board Community Representative roles.
The Funding Manager presented her report which detailed the findings and recommendations of the Grants Review Group.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Cunningham, the newly appointed Funding Manager, to South Norfolk Council and suggested that the Committee be given a clear steer regarding the requirements of a Social Action Project. The Funding Manager agreed that she would define the details and present this to the next meeting of the Localism Committee.

The Chairman suggested that the individual grant funds should be discussed in turn and asked the Committee for their comments.

**Neighbourhood Grants**

Cllr Edney suggested that the Neighbourhood Grant monies be kept in a ‘central pot’ within South Norfolk Council rather than the £62,000 being split between the Neighbourhood Boards, and that funding applications should be considered on a ‘first come - first served’ basis. He further suggested that once considered by the Funding Manager to ensure they met the required criteria, the applications should be dealt with by the relevant Neighbourhood Board Chairman.

The Chairman agreed that the Committee should consider Cllr Edney’s proposal, clarifying the suggested process would entail the applications being checked for criteria compliance by the Funding Manager, then forwarded to the relevant Neighbourhood Board Chairman and Local Member for consideration.

Cllr Allen raised concerns that moving the Neighbourhood Grant monies from the Grants Panel to the Neighbourhood Boards might affect the transparency of the process, and Cllr Goldson agreed, adding that the discussion was premature as the initial findings of the review panel had not yet been implemented.

Members agreed that strict criteria for assessing funding applications should be put in place to ensure transparency.

The Chairman suggested that the Localism Committee vote on the proposal put forward by Cllr Edney and clarified by the Chairman, and with 5 votes in favour and 2 against this was carried.

**Capital Fund**

The Funding Officer advised the Localism Committee of the current procedures for managing Capital Fund Grants.

Concerns were raised that the criteria for Capital Grant applications was unclear, and it was suggested and agreed, by a vote of 6 in favour and 1 against, that the Funding Manager prepare a paper to set strict Capital Grant criteria for review by Cabinet in May 2013.
Service Level Agreements

The Funding Officer presented her report and requested feedback from the Localism Committee regarding Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

Cllr Weeks stressed the importance of SLAs being reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee, due to the high monetary value of funding involved. He also expressed concerns regarding the involvement of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, stating that this should be kept separate to other funds.

The Chairman requested that the Communities Officer (People) and the Funding Manager prepare a paper for the next meeting of the Localism Committee.

Affordable Housing Grant

Members considered the management of the Affordable Housing Grant and were advised by the Housing and Public Health Manager that funding was received from a variety of sources to enable affordable housing developments. They were further advised that the process of allocating grant monies should be efficient, accountable, flexible and responsive. It was sometimes critical in terms of a competitive market that an urgent council steer be given to partners on the likelihood of capital funding being authorised, and he advised that this context should be considered in terms of decision making.

Members discussed options for managing the Affordable Housing Grant and it was suggested that applications could be considered by Cabinet together with the leader of the opposition and the local member.

In summary, it was:

RESOLVED:

1. To Recommend to Cabinet that the management of the Neighbourhood Grants be transferred from the Grants Panel to be considered for approval by the Director of Growth and Localism, as the delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Neighbourhood Board Chairman and Local Member.

2. That the Funding Manager prepare a paper to set a strict Capital Grant criteria to be determined by Cabinet in May 2013.

3. That the Communities Officer (People) and the Funding Manager prepare a paper regarding Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for the next meeting of the Localism Committee.

4. To Recommend to Cabinet that applications for the Affordable Housing Grant be delegated to the officer in consultation with Cabinet, the leader of the opposition and the local member.
14 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN

The Communities Officer (Safety) presented his report which introduced the proposed priorities for the 2013 South Norfolk Community Safety Partnership Plan.

Members passed on their thanks to Tracey Little, South Norfolk Police District Commander for two years of excellent service, and after a brief discussion regarding road safety in South Norfolk thanked the officer for his report.

15 PERFORMANCE REPORTS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARDS

The Communities Officer (Sport and Wellbeing) summarised the salient points of his report and invited members to comment on the performance of service enhancements commissioned by the Neighbourhood Boards.

Members discussed the Kickstart Moped Hire Scheme and agreed that advertising should be widened to increase membership of the scheme.

In response to a member’s question regarding the Kids’ Club, the officer confirmed that an application had been submitted for OFSTED registration which would allow the expansion of the Kids’ Club and for a third venue to be secured near to Loddon.

Concerns were raised regarding a discrepancy in figures included in the report when compared with those in Cabinet papers. The Communities Officer (Sport and Wellbeing) advised members that some of the services were reported within different dates and were included as pro-rata figures. In response to requests from the Committee, officers agreed to provide reports, which would indicate spending against allocation, at the next meeting of the Localism Committee and at future Neighbourhood Board meetings.

It was:

RESOLVED: That officers provide reports detailing spending against allocation to the next meeting of the Localism Committee and to future Neighbourhood Board meetings.

16 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the work programme.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

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Chairman