SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 6 February 2013 at 9.30 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors M Dewsbury (Chairman), C Gould, L Hornby, T Lewis
A Pond, S Thomson, G Watt and J Wilby

Apologies: Councillors V Bell, K Weeks and M Windridge

Substitutes: Councillor N Legg (for M Windridge)

Cabinet Members in attendance: Councillors D Bills and G Wheatley (both for part of the meeting)

Officers in Attendance: The Deputy Chief Executive (A Radford), the Scrutiny Officer (E Nangle) and, for parts of the meeting, the Head of Finance (D Lorimer) and the Commissioning Manager (V Hunt)

1064 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M Dewsbury declared an ‘other’ interest as her son was an employee of Norse Property Services Limited.

1065 BUDGET 2013/14
a) REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2013/14

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance, which detailed the Revenue Budget from which Council Tax levels would be determined by Full Council. The Head of Finance summarised the salient points contained in the report and members discussed the issues raised.

In response to a query, the Head of Finance reassured the committee that reserves had been set aside to allow for any deficit resulting from the introduction of Universal Credit and Council Tax Support. She advised that Universal Credit for existing claimants would be introduced in tranches over a four year transitional period and that Scrutiny would be reviewing the progress during the transition, and looking in particular at the Council Tax Support scheme.

Concerns were raised regarding whether parishes who undertook the running of any local services under the Localism Act would increase their precept to such an extent where a referendum would be required. The Head of Finance reassured members that the government had announced that such rises in precept would be monitored for the 2013/14 financial year and that the right was reserved by the Secretary of State to apply the referendum regulations to larger towns and villages in future years.
The Committee was informed that the Council had made significant savings and increased income from various areas including an increase in the usage of leisure centres, the high take up of garden waste collection, the introduction of the IDOX system, and the decrease in numbers of employees joining the pension scheme. Members were surprised that more staff were not joining the pension scheme and asked for reassurances that new employees were being informed of the important benefits of pension provision.

Members were informed that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had not been included in the Council’s revenue budget as it related to the funding for infrastructure. The Head of Finance advised that only Norfolk County Council was permitted to borrow monies to fund infrastructure and that any shortfall may have to be guaranteed by South Norfolk Council.

Members thanked officers for their presentation and clear explanations. The Committee voted 6-0, with 2 abstentions to endorse Cabinet’s recommendations.

RESOLVED To recommend to Council the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2013/14.

b) CAPITAL PROGRAMME APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2016

The Head of Finance introduced the report which focused on the use of capital resources to deliver all the Council’s priorities as well as revenue savings and additional income. Members were advised of the Council’s proposal to utilise revenue reserves as well as capital reserves to fund the ambitious three year programme.

Members discussed the issues raised in the report, including the development of Council owned land at Poringland and Cygnet House, the proposed leisure centre upgrades, and the investments in I.T.

In response to a member’s request, the Head of Finance agreed that she would clarify the amount outstanding for Decent Home Loans, adding that once repaid, these funds were repaid into the capital receipts ‘pot’. She further agreed that she would advise members of details of the grant given to Great Yarmouth Borough Council for a project undertaken on behalf of all districts.

Members discussed the funds allocated for Cygnet House and to build a spine road at Poringland and were reassured that as these projects would not be completed in 2013/14, the funding would be spread over a number of years. Further details would be fed back to the Committee when known.

The Committee discussed the possibility of using the revenue from investments such as Cygnet House as an alternative to borrowing and the Head of Finance agreed that although this was a possibility, any monies raised through the sale of investments, property or vehicles would be classed as capital receipts and could not be used to fund the revenue budget.

RESOLVED To recommend to Council the Capital Programme April 2013 to March 2016.
c) TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2016

The report was introduced by the Head of Finance who summarised the salient points of the Treasury Management Statement and Investment Strategy.

Members had no comments or questions and it was:

RESOLVED To recommend to Council to approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy April 2013 to March 2016

1066 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

1067 CNC BUILDING CONTROL UPDATE

The Council's Cabinet Member for Innovation and Efficiency presented the report and exempt appendices, and advised members that the transfer of CNC Building Control to South Norfolk Council was both challenging and exciting. He explained to members that the South Norfolk bid was strong and gained support from other partners based largely on the significant investment in a single Building Control IT system.

Members discussed various aspects of the transfer, including the effect of savings delivered so far, the impact of the investment in IT, how the risks would be monitored and mitigated, the standards of quality, and various approaches to delivering the service. It was suggested and agreed that the Scrutiny Committee would review the progress after one year.

RESOLVED 1. To recommend to Council the Business Plan for CNC Building Control 2013/14;

2. To review the progress of CNC Building Control after one year.
Members noted the Scrutiny Committee work programme with the addition of the review of CNC Building Control after one year.

(The meeting concluded at 11.55 am)

Chairman