SCUTINITY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 10 April 2013 at 9.30 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors M Dewsbury (Chairman), C Gould, L Hornby, T Lewis, S Thomson, G Watt and J Wilby and for parts of the meeting K Weeks and V Bell

Apologies: Councillor A Pond

Substitutes: Councillor N Legg (for A Pond)

Cabinet Members in attendance: Councillors M Wilby and for parts of the meeting Y Bendle, D Bills and G Wheatley

Other Members in attendance: Councillor M Gray

Officers in Attendance: The Deputy Chief Executive (A Radford), the Scrutiny Officer (E Nangle) and, for parts of the meeting, the Communities and Active Life Manager (I Lambert), the Funding Manager (N Cunningham) and the Communities Officer – Safety (M Pursehouse)

1069 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2013 and 6 February 2013 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1070 REVIEW OF SOUTH NORFOLK QUEEN’S DIAMOND JUBILEE COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARDS

The Communities Officer (Safety) presented the report which reviewed the previous year’s South Norfolk Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Community Champion Awards. Members were advised that, since the success of the awards, much positive feedback had been received and that the newly appointed Community Volunteer Coordinator had already succeeded in identifying, directing and assisting volunteers in the area.

The Committee noted that care should be taken at the 2013 Community Champion Awards for officers to engage with key attendees in such a way that recognised the valuable contribution they had made to the event, and further added that members should be briefed so that they could also identify and interact with sponsors.

Members discussed the cost of the event and while agreeing that the 2013 awards ceremony should be cost effective, this should not detract from the quality of the event. The Communities Officer (Safety) advised the Committee that officers would consider alternative venues and speakers, and would also review the processes and categories for
award nominations. It was requested that a member of the opposition be included in the panel and the officer agreed that this would be considered. Members were invited to put forward suggestions regarding categories for awards.

The Committee agreed that the South Norfolk Community Champion Awards were an excellent way of recognising the work of volunteers and it was:

RESOLVED To endorse

1. The plans to run the South Norfolk Community Champion Awards 2013 as detailed in the report, which will replace last year’s awards.

2. That the process of short-listing nominations and deciding winners remains the same as last year.

1071 PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL FUNDING SCHEMES

The Funding Manager presented her report which sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee regarding the proposed changes to the Council’s Grants function.

During discussion, Cllr M Wilby clarified that the decisions made regarding Neighbourhood Fund grant approval or refusal would be made initially by an assessment of criteria by the Funding Manager. Successful applications would then be forwarded to the relevant Neighbourhood Board Chairman and Local Member to be considered in consultation with the delegated officer. Once all three parties were in agreement, the final decision would be taken by the delegated officer – the Director of Growth and Localism.

Considerable discussion followed regarding the various funding streams available for applicants, and members agreed that more guidance should be available for those wishing to apply for funding. The Funding Manager advised that any enquiries should still be directed to the relevant Locality Officer who would be able to advise applicants on whether funding was available from South Norfolk Council, assist where matched funding was sought, or advise whether there was a more suitable funding stream for their needs elsewhere. It was suggested and agreed that the Funding Manager produce clear guidelines of the eligibility criteria and details of the processes to follow for grant applicants, and that district and parish councillors would be briefed on the structure, channels of communication and contacts within the Council, once the funding schemes were implemented.

Members discussed the proposal that the Neighbourhood Fund monies would be awarded on a first come, first served basis. Concerns were raised that all grant monies might be allocated to just a few areas but Cllr M Wilby reassured members that as the maximum Neighbourhood Fund grant available was £2,000 and the total funding for the year was £62,000, there should be sufficient monies to enable a fair spread. He added that it was the responsibility of all 46 members that they make their residents aware of the funding available.

Cllr Gray proposed that where grant applications were being assessed, a member of the opposition should be consulted in addition to the relevant Neighbourhood Board Chairman,
Local Member and delegated officer, but this proposal was not supported by the Committee.

The Committee discussed the different funding schemes available and some members suggested that the split between revenue and capital funding added unnecessary barriers to the system. Cllr Wilby confirmed that there were clear distinctions between revenue funding, capital funding and Social Action Projects (SAPs).

In response to a query regarding Service Level Agreements (SLAs), the Funding Manager confirmed to members that there was still work to be done on the processes and that a paper would be presented to the Localism Committee in July 2013. She further stated that she was preparing a paper which would clarify the criteria and aims of the funding available for SAPs. Cllr Lewis proposed that the Capital Grant element be suspended until further work was carried out with regard to SAPs but, after discussion, this proposal was not supported by members. The Committee requested that the outcome of the work which would be undertaken regarding SLAs and SAPs be presented to the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in December as part of the Council Funding Review.

After considerable discussion, the Committee agreed that, should the new structure of the management of the funding schemes be approved at Cabinet, it would again be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months.

Members voted on the proposals put forward, and with 6 votes for and 0 against (1 abstention) it was:

RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet that

1. The proposals on the future of the funding streams as set out in the report are adopted.

2. The Grants Panel be discontinued and that no further funding awards are made through this group.

3. Good practice is captured from the Grants Panel and where appropriate incorporated within the new processes going forward.

4. Further work is undertaken to determine the baseline of current and proposed South Norfolk Council Service Level Agreements and that additional work is undertaken and initial considerations presented to the Localism Committee in July 2013.

5. A discreet piece of work is undertaken with the Localism Committee to clearly define and provide guidance on Social Action Projects.

6. The outcome of the work to be undertaken regarding SLAs and SAPs is presented to the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 December 2013 as part of the Council Funding Review.
7. The Scrutiny Committee reviews the new structure for the management of South Norfolk Council’s Funding Schemes in March 2014.

8. District and parish councillors are briefed once funding schemes are implemented to advise of the structure, channels of communication and contacts within the Council.

1072 THE EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MAY 2012 – APRIL 2013

The Committee noted the contents of the report of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and commended it to Council.

1073 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND THE CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the Scrutiny Committee work programme with the addition of the review of South Norfolk Council’s Funding Schemes after one year.

(The meeting concluded at 11.26 am)

__________________________
Chairman