SCRUTINITY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 17 April 2014 at 9.30 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors M Dewsbury (Chairman), L Hornby, T Lewis, B McClenning, A Pond, S Thomson, K Weeks, J Wilby

Apologies: Councillor V Bell and K Tilcock

Substitutes: Councillor G Watt (for V Bell)

Cabinet Members in Attendance: Councillor K Kiddie

Non Appointed: Councillor F Ellis

Officers in Attendance: The Deputy Chief Executive (A Radford), the Director of Environment and Housing (A Jarvis), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Head of Environmental Services (B Wade), the Communities and Active Life Manager (I Lambert) and the Scrutiny Officer (E Nangle)

1106 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared “other” interests in the matters listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Declaration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B McClenning</td>
<td>1109</td>
<td>Son is employee at Ketteringham Depot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Thomson</td>
<td>1109</td>
<td>Daughter was employed as a traffic examiner</td>
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1107 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held 22 January and 12 February 2014, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
1108  REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING

Members considered the report of the Communities and Active Life Manager, which outlined proposals to improve neighbourhood working, helping to progress the Localism agenda in South Norfolk.

Cllr M Wilby explained the background to the report, advising that the Growth and Localism Committee had recommended the proposal before Scrutiny Committee as the preferred option moving forward. Referring to the LGA Peer Review, Cllr Wilby was proud of the Council’s bold and ambitious approach to localism. The new way of working would define a clear role for members ensuring that all played a part in delivering the localism agenda.

The Director of Growth and Localism explained that there had been some successes under Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice (YNYC), but evidence had suggested that there had been a lack of understanding from the public and that the Council had failed to engage with the community to the desired extent. He believed the new proposals delivered an enhanced and refined scheme, developing and engaging communities, whilst involving all members of the Council.

The Communities and Active Life Manager then explained in more detail the proposals. He stressed that this process would involve limited officer involvement, placing the emphasis firmly on members to work with their communities. Officers would be ensuring that recipients of funding met the required criteria, but would not be making judgements on the merits of each project. He further explained that projects could attract funding from both the Community Action Fund and the Members’ Ward Budget. Pots could be amalgamated and pooled across ward boundaries if desired. This was welcomed by some members who felt that a £1000 budget would achieve much better outcomes if pooled with other resources.

In response to queries regarding processes elsewhere, the Director of Growth and Localism explained that the devolution of budgets to members was becoming a more common approach amongst local authorities. Officers had looked at a number of schemes in Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk, where the levels of budget involved varied considerably. Members were assured that the levels of budgets proposed at South Norfolk were considerably modest in comparison with other councils. Members also noted that the LGA Peer Review had suggested that the Council’s approach to grants was too bureaucratic and needed to be relaxed in order to engage and deliver desired outcomes. Officers believed that the proposed way of working was a step closer to achieving this.

Members generally welcomed the proposals, and it was noted that the Committee had previously suggested that all members needed to be more involved in the YNYC project. Some members expressed their disappointment that not all members had embraced YNYC; some members had felt disengaged with the project, but had failed to attend meetings of their local Neighbourhood Board.

Discussion followed with regard to retaining “Chairmen” in each Neighbourhood area, with some members suggesting that this might cause confusion with the public, as the Neighbourhood Boards were being disbanded and no meetings would take place. Cllr Wilby felt that the public connected with their local “Chairman”, and it would be unwise to
change this term; however he would be receptive to alternative suggestions. Members noted that these “Chairmen” would be appointed by Council, although some members suggested that it would be more appropriate for members to elect their own Chairman within Neighbourhood areas.

Members required assurances that the “Chairman” would not be working in isolation and their attention was drawn to the defined Roles and Responsibilities within the Ground Rules. One member suggested that members in Neighbourhood Areas could meet regularly with the relevant Chairman so that collective decisions could be made.

Concern was expressed over the loss of community representatives, some of which had provided a valuable contribution to the work of the Neighbourhood Boards. Cllr Wilby confirmed that the Council would continue to work with community representatives wherever possible, and would be writing to them all to thank them for their contributions. It was suggested that the new way of working needed to effectively engage the public, attracting new volunteers to work within communities.

With regard to the Neighbourhood Fund, members were pleased to note that over the last year, each £1 of Neighbourhood Funding had attracted a £6.43 return, however members sought further analysis on how these figures had been calculated. Some concern was expressed that the three strands of funding might cause confusion with some members. Cllr Wilby explained that all members should be able to familiarise themselves with the process, and that details would be forwarded to all members after the AGM in May, via an edition of the Members’ Bulletin.

With regard to transparency of the scheme, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he was satisfied that processes were in place to protect the reputation of the Council. His biggest concern was that members might decide to spend their “member’s ward budget” soon before the elections.

Members noted that the Growth and Localism Committee would continuously review applications at each of its meetings, and that the Scrutiny Committee would receive monitoring reports twice yearly. It was suggested that a more robust review of the scheme should take place after the elections in May 2015.

The Committee thanked officers for the work undertaken in relation to “Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice”.

It was then

RESOLVED:

TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET
- The implementation of the new way of neighbourhood working; and
- The adoption of the revised Ground Rules.
1109 **BRIEFING ON TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT**

The portfolio holder, Cllr K Kiddie, began by outlining the current position with regard to the collection of waste across the District. He referred to plans to introduce an enhanced recycling service in October 2014, to include glass and plastic yoghurt pots explaining that a county-wide educational campaign would precede its launch. The year had also seen considerable investment in street sweepers and new waste collection vehicles, and growth in the brown bin garden waste scheme. Looking ahead, the Council was investigating options for collecting trade waste and the potential to create an income stream for the Council. He stressed that to ensure the Council took advantage of the efficiencies to be made, was fit for the future, and stayed ahead of the game, it needed to change focus, to become more commercial, and in order to achieve this, a new skills set at the Ketteringham Depot was required, along with investment in equipment and vehicles.

The Director of Environment and Housing added that South Norfolk was the fastest growing district in Norfolk and continual investment was needed to ensure standards stayed high. In response to questions, he explained that consideration was being given to the provision of a larger site to house the depot, and it was hopeful that expansion of the existing site would be able take place. Members noted that along with any expansion came the potential to create new income streams, such as HGV MOT testing for other organisations.

The Head of Environmental Services gave a brief presentation regarding the recent changes to the management structure at the depot. He outlined the new staffing structure, explaining that the new Transport Manager had been appointed. This post had been enhanced from its previous position, it now being a full time post with a higher profile in the organisation and more emphasis placed on commercial awareness. The District had been split into three areas which had also led to the creation of three team leader posts. All positions had been advertised nationally and it was important that those appointed were in tune with the Council’s future aspirations.

Members were advised that the restructuring of the depot also tied in with a visit from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). He stressed that the DVSA were working to extremely strict requirements, and as a result of the visit, the Council had been forced to review its staffing and systems, which had not only contributed to the appointment of a new Transport Manager, but had led to changes such as additional staff training, inspection sheets, more regular driver and vehicle checks, and driver briefings.

In response to questions, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that the recommendations from the DVSA had impacted financially on the Council, in that the Transport Manager’s role had become a full time position. However he stressed that these changes fitted in with the aspirations of the Council; the depot had never had such a strong management team, with a background in transport management and commercial experience. There had been a lot of change in relation to both systems and procedures, but he was now confident that building blocks were in place to ensure that the Council was fully compliant with legal requirements and good practice.

Discussion then turned to trade waste and members noted the potential to create a new income stream for the Council through this route. The Chairman referred to an
organisation, “Mini-Scrapbox” which collected unwanted materials from companies which could be re-used within the community such as by schools, clubs and playschools, for arts and crafts. Officers were currently looking at the potential for a similar provision in the South Norfolk district and members were reminded that the Council similarly encouraged the recycling of electrical equipment through its WEEE events.

Cllr T Lewis expressed concerns over recent news that Norfolk County Council would no longer accept paint tins at its recycling points. Cllr Kiddie explained that the Council had made representations to the County Council with regard to this matter, drawing its attention to the possible consequences. He understood that there would be only one date in September when paint tins would be accepted at recycling points.

Discussion then centred on the disposal of residual waste and the County Council’s plans for the future. Members were informed that the County Council’s contract with the site at Aldeby ended in July, although there was still two years of land-fill left on the site. Members noted that a change to this location could have an adverse impact on the Council’s logistics and costs.

The Chairman thanked officers for a comprehensive presentation and interesting discussion.

1110 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2013-2014

Members noted the Annual Review of the Scrutiny Committee 2013-14.

1111 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND THE CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a Review of the Whitlingham Trust Service Level Agreement would be considered at the Scrutiny meeting in May, and officers were working to ensure that a representative from the Trust was in attendance.

With regard to the Jobs Club Review, it was suggested that it would be helpful if a “mystery shopper” could provide feedback on the service. The Scrutiny Officer explained that a service user had been consulted and their feedback would be included within the report.

(The meeting concluded at 11.31 am)

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Chairman