SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 30 September 2015 at 9.30 am.

Committee Members Present:
Councillors: L Neal (Chairman), T Lewis, B Duffin, D Fulcher, C Gould, K Kiddie, G Minshull and J Wilby

Apologies:
Councillor: B Bernard

Substitutes:
Councillor: M Gray (for B Bernard)

Cabinet Members in Attendance:
Councillors: K Mason Billig and L Hornby

Other Members In Attendance:
Councillor: N Legg

Others in Attendance:
Mr P Camamile (Chief Executive of Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board)
Mr G Brown (Flood and Water Manager, Norfolk County Council)
Ms K Lindsay (Environment Agency)

Officers in Attendance:
The Director of Community Services (P Boyce), the Head of Environmental Services (B Wade) and the Scrutiny Officer (E Goddard)
1146 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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<tr>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Declaration</th>
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| C Gould    | 1148   | SNC representative on the Waveney, Lower Yare & Lothingland IDB  
|            |        | Former member of the Norfolk Rivers IDB |
| T Lewis    | 1148   | Former member of the Norfolk Rivers IDB and the Waveney, Lower Yare & Lothingland IDB |
| M Gray     | 1148   | Member of the Broads Authority  
|            |        | Member of the Norfolk Water Management Partnership Strategic Forum |
| L Neal     | 1148   | Member of the Norfolk Water Management Partnership Strategic Forum |

1147 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 3 July 2015, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from Minute 1145, the Scrutiny Officer stated that although there had been a delay in arranging a meeting for Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and lead officers of the policy committees to discuss their work programmes, this would be done shortly, and that all had been advised that policy committees should not be reviewing their own policies as this was the role of the Scrutiny Committee.
REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE NORFOLK RIVERS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

Following brief introductions from the Head of Environmental Services and Cllr Mason Billig, Mr P Camamile, Chief Executive of Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board (NRIDB), provided members with a presentation which detailed the history, the ongoing work and the future plans of the Internal Drainage Board.

The Committee was advised of the changes in the management of water and drainage which had gradually taken place over the past 20 years, including the decrease in Government funding, rising public expectation and ageing infrastructure, which had all impacted on the level of spending available to the Environment Agency and diminished their resources to deliver work on anything other than high and medium consequence main river systems. Mr Camamile stressed that legislation was unlikely to be changed in the foreseeable future and, due to the rising need and cost of maintenance and the decreasing level of funding, a proactive approach was needed to ensure that low consequence main river systems could also be maintained and improved. Members were advised that, as the Environment Agency had been forced to withdraw resources from the maintenance of low consequence main rivers, much pressure had been put on them to ‘de-main’ several of these, so maintenance could instead be carried out by water management companies.

Members considered a proposal from the NRIDB which, it was intended, would enable the Council to achieve better value for money. Mr Camamile spoke of the benefits of the IDB extending the area of their hydraulic watershed catchment, without increasing the levy payable by SNC. The Committee was asked to consider a proposed pilot to trial this approach in two river catchment areas which largely fell within South Norfolk. The possible benefits of the proposal were presented to members, including the potential generation of income to pay for improved services including a more integrated local Flood and Coastal Eroding Risk Management (FCERM) service, the possible additional revenue generated from occupiers of agricultural land in the upland areas, and the potential income from additional financial contributions and commuted sums from developers for managing additional run-off (£74k per impermeable hectare) and advising on, adopting and thereafter maintaining Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the upland areas.

The Committee also considered the risks of the proposal, which included the possibility that the Special Levy might increase for the Council if existing resources were insufficient to deliver IDB inspirations and new income streams did not materialise. Mr Camamile reassured members that this risk was not highly significant as, should the situation arise, SNC would have the option to decline an increased levy and that work would be delayed until funding became available.

The Committee heard from Mr Brown, the Flood and Water Manager, Norfolk County Council, who advised members that Norfolk was a high flood-risk area. He explained how the County Council worked closely with the IDBs, and how it prioritised its approach and allocated funding to give the greatest benefit and to alleviate risk from existing structures and to ensure that new properties did not bring new risks.
Members discussed the Special Levy paid annually to the NRIDB and were advised that the calculation for this was based on rateable values in 1990 and that these were fixed in the Land Drainage Act. In response to a member’s question regarding the allocation of the special levy paid by South Norfolk Council to the NRIDB, Mr Camamile stated, although he did not have the figures readily available, all details of the Board’s spending could be found on the NRIDB’s website.

Ms Lindsay, Environment Agency (EA), addressed the Committee and spoke of the pressures on the EA to maintain the river systems. She confirmed that, as there was not sufficient funding to maintain lower risk main rivers, it would be preferable to demain a number of them to enable the IDBs to carry out works, as required. She advised that the pilot work would enable all parties to ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal.

In response to a member’s question regarding the first stages of the pilot, Mr Camamile explained that a working group would be set up and that the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee would be consulted for their opinions and to provide a steer for the project.

The Chairman thanked Mr Camamile, Mr Brown and Ms Lindsay for their input and, after discussion, it was:

RESOLVED

to note the work of the Norfolk Rivers IDB including its proposals for future working.

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND THE CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and the Cabinet Core Agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 11.20am)

Chairman