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

Cabinet Members in Attendance: Councillors: Y Bendle, M Edney, L Hornby and C Hudson

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: D Bills, F Ellis, C Foulger, T Palmer and V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Business Development (D Lorimer), The Director of Growth & Localism (T Horspole), The Governance and Business Manager (L Mickleborough), the Senior Planning Officer (S Marjoram) and the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard)

Also in Attendance: Sheila Moss King – Programme Manager at Diss Heritage Triangle and Diss Corn Hall Project
David Case – Chairman – Diss Corn Hall Trust
Deborah Sarson – Town Clerk, Diss Town Council
1180 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>G Minshull</td>
<td>1182</td>
<td>Leader of Diss Town Council and Member of Diss Heritage Trust. Member stood down from the Committee for the duration of the item.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K Kiddie</td>
<td>1182</td>
<td>Member of Diss Town Council and previously Mayor of Diss.</td>
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<tr>
<td>T Palmer</td>
<td>1182</td>
<td>Member of Diss Town Council and Trustee of Diss Museum.</td>
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1181 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 28 September 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1182 DISS HERITAGE TRIANGLE

The Governance and Business Manager presented her report which detailed how the funding package totalling £400,000, provided by the Council towards the Diss Heritage Triangle Project, was being delivered and how monies had been spent.

Members were provided with a summary of the progress of the work regarding the public toilets, the tourist information centre and the considerations around 9 Park Road, as detailed in the report. In response to a member’s question, the Director of Business Development clarified that refurbishments to the public toilets were being funded through South Norfolk Council’s capital programme and did not form part of the £400,000 funding package and that, once refurbished, the on-going running and maintenance of the toilets would be passed onto Diss Town Council.
The Chairman welcomed Sheila Moss King (Programme Manager at Diss Heritage Triangle and Diss Corn Hall Project), David Case (Chairman of Diss Corn Hall Trust) and Deborah Sarson (Town Clerk of Diss) to the meeting and invited them to provide a presentation to members regarding the progress achieved so far by the Diss Heritage Triangle Project.

Sheila Moss King provided the Committee with an overview of the project, which sought to regenerate the heart of Diss and to enhance public awareness and tourism in the market town. She explained the five elements of the programme which were:

- the restoration and extension of the Diss Corn Hall;
- the design and improvements to the streetscape around the “Triangle” including pedestrian priority and traffic calming;
- a new wildlife friendly garden for public use and a boardwalk on the Mere;
- the interpretation to explain the history of Diss’ commercial heart; and
- the setting up of the Heritage Triangle Trust for the on-going management and governance of the programme.

Members were advised of some of the problems encountered during the restoration of the Corn Hall, and of difficulties when making improvements to the highway due to the location of services and utilities in the road. It was noted that these issues had resulted in extended timescales and increased costs to parts of the project.

The Committee was given details of the total funding for the project and it was noted that, without the Council’s funding package of £400,000, it would have been unlikely that the programme would have been successful in achieving funding from other streams, including the Heritage Lottery Fund which accounted for 55% of the total funding. Members were pleased to note that, although there was a shortfall in funding, this would be realised through additional funds from other streams and from further local sponsorship.

Some concerns were raised regarding the area of the town between the Heritage Triangle and the supermarkets at the other end of Mere Street. The Town Clerk advised that she hoped that many businesses in the town centre would experience an increase in footfall due to the improvements. However, it was noted that national chain stores occupied many of the Mere Street units, and it was sometimes more challenging to engage with them to support improvements to the Town Centre. Mr Case stated that, although it was not possible to control which tenants were accepted by landlords in Mere Street, it was hoped that more independently owned shops would start to move down and occupy the units, which would help local business to flourish.
The Committee discussed car parking and specifically the removal of spaces on Market Hill. It was noted that intensive research had been undertaken in Diss, which concluded that visitors would generally park where it was convenient rather than base their choice on cost alone.

Members were pleased to note that the project had received much help and support from South Norfolk Council members and officers and, as they were keen to view the ongoing improvements for themselves, it was suggested that all members be invited to an open day at the Corn Hall.

Members commended the Project Team and their volunteers on their hard work and dedication and thanked them for their commitment to improving the future of Diss for residents and visitors.

After a short discussion, it was:

RESOLVED: To note the current progress in the delivery of the Diss Heritage Triangle Project and to commend the work of the Project Team, its volunteers, and the Council’s members and officers for their dedication and commitment to the ongoing work.

1183 REVIEW OF THE FIVE-YEAR LAND SUPPLY METHODOLOGY

Following a short introduction by Cllr Foulger, the Director of Growth and Localism presented his report which sought to review the methodology for calculating the Five-Year Housing Land Supply to allow any proposed changes to be considered in the 2015/16 Annual Monitoring Report, subject to the agreement of Broadland District and Norwich City Councils.

Members were given a brief overview of eight key areas of the methodology, as detailed in the report, and were advised that there was not one national method for calculating the land supply figures. The Committee was reminded one of the calculations was based on the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) so covered Norwich City Council and those parts of Broadland and South Norfolk that related most closely to the City.
Concerns were raised that, as calculations used ‘completed’ housing figures as well as planning permissions, builders could obtain permission for large developments without the intention to complete building works so that the land supply shortfall would be maintained, enabling further sites to be approved. Officers agreed that this form of ‘land banking’ was possible but felt that developers would generally want to complete sites so that they could sell properties. It was also considered that a shortage of skilled labour and a shortage of building supplies, due to the recession, were contributory factors in slow building. It was suggested that, where a sizeable development was granted planning permission due to the Council’s lack of land supply, the time limit condition should give no more than two years, to ensure the development would add to the five year supply. The Director of Growth and Localism advised that this could be put in place immediately.

Members discussed the 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and asked officers to explain why this was not yet used in the methodology for calculating the Five-Year Land Supply. The Senior Planning Officer advised that the calculation was currently based on the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which had been independently tested on two occasions. The SHMA had not yet been tested so it would be difficult to defend placing too much weight on its conclusions at a planning application appeal. At a recent appeal, the planning inspector stated that no weight would have been given to the SHMA. The Director of Growth and Localism explained that the SHMA would be fully tested as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan as it progressed and that it would not gain full weight until it had gone through that process. Although he understood and shared members’ frustration, he concurred with other officers that using the SHMA before it had been scrutinised and tested could heighten the risk of the Council being found liable for costs at subsequent appeals. It was suggested that land supply figures calculated by using the SHMA be run alongside those currently used, so that the Council would be able to ascertain whether this different methodology would improve or worsen the land supply situation.

In response to a question regarding the advantages for South Norfolk Council to have a joint plan, the Director of Growth and Localism advised that there was a statutory requirement for a duty to co-operate. He also explained the housing needs of the City could only realistically be met by development in neighbouring authorities as the boundaries of Norwich could not be expanded. He further explained that there were many advantages gained by partnership working, including securing the Greater Norwich City Deal, and that if the Council did not have a proven record in working in partnership with other authorities, it would be difficult for the Council to take part in wider devolution. It was also noted that, during the development of the Local Plan, South Norfolk Council had been required by Government to join with Broadland District and Norwich City Councils.
Members questioned the future usefulness of the NPA, and it was mentioned that the future of the NPA might be discussed at a meeting of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership Board the following week. Officers advised that, if the NPA remained, then it would be necessary for the boundaries to be reviewed.

In response to concerns that the lack of land supply might become a permanent problem, officers advised that the North-East Norwich area was set for growth due to the imminent opening of the Northern Distributor Road. It was felt that this would take some of the pressure away from South Norfolk, although it was not anticipated that this would have much effect during the next five years. It was noted that Broadland District Council had substantial development in the pipeline, which would have a positive impact on the land supply calculation in the future, but Norwich had little remaining land available for development so was unable to contribute further.

Members discussed whether student accommodation and care homes should be included in the calculations. Officers advised that these were not included in the calculation as part of the original JCS, but that care homes were covered separately in the Strategy. If these aspects were added to the completion figures, they would also need to be added to the figures required, which would mean the net difference would be zero. It was suggested that there were different types of care homes, ranging from rooms to houses with private doors and it was suggested that officers explore further to see whether the inclusion of care homes and student accommodation would be feasible. Members briefly discussed the use of the Council’s Council Tax records to ascertain when new properties became occupied, to allow the Council to be more proactive in identifying completions, rather than relying on the developer to feed the information back. Officers explained that this was already the practice and they would continue to explore how this information could best be used.

The Committee discussed how frequently officers calculated and reviewed the land supply figures and were advised that this was completed more than once a year and that, where there had been changes, these were noted in the quarterly out-turn report to Cabinet.
It was then:

**RESOLVED:**

1. To recommend that officers:
   
   a. explore whether student accommodation figures could be counted towards the delivery of the Five Year Housing Land Supply figure and, if so, seek the agreement of Broadland District and Norwich City Councils to use this when calculating the Five-Year Land Supply;
   
   b. explore whether different types of care homes could be counted towards the delivery of the Five Year Housing Land Supply figure and, if so, seek the agreement of Broadland District and Norwich City Councils to use this when calculating the Five-Year Land Supply;
   
   c. continue to use Council rates records to ascertain when new properties became occupied and explore how best to use this information;
   
   d. add a condition that building should commence within a set time, i.e two years, where development is granted planning permission as a result of the Council’s current lack of a Five-Year Housing Land Supply;
   
   e. use the SHMA figures alongside the current methodology to ascertain whether this will improve or worsen the land supply situation;
   
   f. continue to lobby the Government and relevant agencies (e.g. the District Councils’ Network and the Local Government Association) in relation to the continuation and relevance of the Five-Year Land Supply.

2. that the Committee notes that the future usefulness of the NPA is in question.
1184 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND TRACKER, AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda.

The Senior Governance Officer advised the Committee that there were items scheduled for the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 21 December 2016, so this meeting would not be cancelled.

(The meeting concluded at 12:35 am)

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Chairman