

South Norfolk Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 9 May 2024 at 10.00 am

Supplementary Items

Agenda No.	Item	Page
4.	Minutes To confirm the minutes from the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 1 February 2024 and 15 February 2024	(Pages 2 - 18)

Lucy Palmer, tel 01603 430643

Email: committee.snc@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/>

Agenda Item 4



SOUTH NORFOLK SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the South Norfolk Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk Council, held on Thursday, 1 February 2024 at 9.31 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Rowe (Chairman), T Laidlaw (Vice-Chair), B Bernard, K Cross, T Graham, J Overton and S Ridley

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: J Cork and D Thompson

Substitute: Councillors: K Murphy (In place of D Thompson)

Officers in Attendance: P Courtier (Director of Place), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer), L Chant (Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager), A Sommazzi (Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager) and J Hammond (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance: Councillors: D Sacks and J Webber

1356. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Cork and Cllr D Thompson, with Cllr K Murphy substituting.

1357. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr K Cross advised the Committee that she was a Director of Big Sky Ventures Ltd and would not vote on Minute Item 1359.

1358. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2023 and 12 December 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

1359. ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE

Members considered the report, which sought to provide an update on the Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan.

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager reminded members that the Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan were adopted by Cabinet in March

2023. The Strategy and Delivery Plan outlined the ambitions and activities for delivery between 2023 and 2025 as well as the near-term actions the Council would focus on to drive forward the environmental agenda.

The adoption of the Strategy and Delivery Plan in 2023 corresponded with the declaration of a net-zero 2030 target across the Council's scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions. In response to a request to clarify the three scopes, the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager explained that:

- **Scope 1** related to Direct Emissions which arose from the activities of an organisation and included fuel combustion on site, such as gas boilers and fleet vehicles.
- **Scope 2** related to Indirect Emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation.
- **Scope 3** related to all other Indirect Emissions from activities of the organisation, occurring from sources that the organisation did not own or control. Such as emissions associated with business travel by employees.

Discussion turned to the key activities which had occurred following the adoption of the Strategic and Delivery Plan. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager advised the Committee that:

- The decarbonisation and retrofit of three Council owned buildings.

A grant had been secured from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero for the delivery of a Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) work programme. The PSDS work programme was estimated to reduce the Council's carbon footprint by 288 tons per annum.

- Net-Zero Innovation Programme funding for the development of a biodiversity toolkit.

A pilot toolkit for assessing the biodiversity value and carbon sequestration potential of Council owned land had been developed and was being piloted by the Ground Maintenance Team and Community Asset Officers,

- The development of a Clean Hydrogen Strategy

Funding had been secured for the creation of a Clean Hydrogen Strategy. South Norfolk Council would act as the lead partner in the creation of the Strategy.

In response to a concern that members had not previously been made aware of the development of a Clean Hydrogen Strategy. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager informed the Committee that officers were in the process of developing a Prior Notification Document, which would be presented to members once completed.

- Carbon emission reporting and reduction

Emission reports were updated annually and published on the Councils Website. Since 2018 the Council's emissions had reduced by over 30%. By 2025 it was expected that emissions would reduce by a further 7% as a result of the activities currently underway within the Environmental Strategy.

Some members queried why the carbon emissions of Big Sky were not included within the Council's carbon emissions report. Members felt that as Big Sky was wholly owned by the Council, the figures should be included. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager explained that the Council followed the Governments Greenhouse Gas Protocol for reporting emissions. Big Sky and its activities did not fall into any of the three scopes of emissions. The Committee considered inviting Directors of Big Sky to a future meeting to discuss reporting their carbon emissions in the future.

Other members highlighted that Big Sky was a commercial enterprise and the Council needed to ensure it did not encroach on the duties of the Directors in running the business. After further discussion the Committee proposed to recommend that officers explored including information on Big Sky within the Council Carbon Footprint report in the future.

It was noted that Diss Leisure Centre was the second largest contributor to emissions, Members queried what action was being taken to reduce carbon emissions. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager advised the Committee that the heating of the swimming pool and the showering provision were the main contributors to the emissions. The temporary closure of Diss Leisure Centre would lower emission levels in the short-term whilst the installations of air source heat pumps, which formed part of the refurbishment, would lower carbon emissions once the leisure centre reopened.

With regard to the Ketteringham Depot, the largest contributor of emissions, members queried whether the Council would look to replacing the diesel fleet with electric refuse vehicles. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager explained that there were a number of interim measures that the Council was considering. One opportunity was for the Council to use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel (HVO) instead of diesel. HVO fuel could be used without the need to adapt the currently owned vehicles, the fuel was however more expensive than diesel. She added that longer-term the Council would look to have a mixed fleet consisting of electric and non-electric vehicles. The Director of Place advised members that were the Council to purchase new vehicles, it would need to ensure that the depot itself could accommodate the new fleet.

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager assured members that the Strategy and Delivery Plan would continue as a 'living' document and would be updated to ensure that it continued to address local priorities and opportunities.

It was then,

RESOLVED

1. To receive the report on the effectiveness of the Council's Environmental Strategy and Delivery Plan.

2. To recommend that officers explored including information on Big Sky within the Council Carbon Footprint report in the future.

1360. REVIEW OF EARLY INTERVENTION ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OFFICER PILOT SERVICE - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Assistant Director for Regulatory presented the report which outlined the progress of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service following its introduction in April 2022 and the future options for this service.

The Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot was designed to offer an inexpensive and beneficial extension to the existing Community Protection Service which dealt with neighbour nuisance, anti-social behaviour and environmental offending.

In order to monitor and evaluate the success of the pilot, five success measures had been pursued:

1. Volume of case work that can be resolved quickly and efficiently through early intervention methods

Approximately 50% of service requests had been pursued taking an early intervention service approach.

Despite the pressures caused by only having one early intervention officer in 2023/24, compared to two in 2022/23, the Council achieved a 57% resolution rate on the first visit.

2. Average time to first meaningful action

During the first seven months of the pilot, 76% of responses were made within three working days, with the most common response time being two working days. 95% of first responses were achieved within ten working days.

3. Average time to conclude each case

This year to date, 75% of early intervention cases had been concluded within five working days and 92% within twenty working days.

4. Customer satisfaction ratings and feedback

The early intervention approach had achieved strong satisfaction ratings. A short survey of customer satisfaction produced an average satisfaction rating of 9.4 out of 10.

Strong support had also been expressed from working partner agencies.

5. Service Impact

The early intervention approach had achieved remarkably positive impact ratings. The average customer reported service impact rating measured in

2022/23 was 2.1 out of 3.

Members praised the positive statistics which arose from the success measures and queried whether the statistics met initial targets. The Assistant Director for Regulatory explained that the decision was taken not to set targets prior to the pilot commencing, but to aspire to achieve the shortest timescales possible.

It was anticipated that over a longer-term period, the outcomes of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officers pilot service would be:

- Reduction in the prevalence and visibility of anti-social behaviour.
- Improvement in levels of safety and protection perceived and enjoyed by residents.
- Reduced service demand for serious anti-social behaviour concerns across Council services and partner agency services.
- Increase in community wellbeing and confidence.

Discussion turned to the routes available to raise anti-social behaviour complaints. In response to a question the Assistant Director for Regulatory advised the Committee that over 80% of cases were reported to the Council via its online form, which was designed to obtain detailed information regarding the complaint. This allowed officers to triage cases before contact was made. Members highlighted that not all residents were IT literate and suggested that a dedicated phonenumber be set up to allow residents to raise complaints by telephone. The Assistant Director for Regulatory was unsure whether the phonenumber was on the telephone switchboard already but advised that there had been no complaints regarding a difficulty in contacting the team. He agreed to explore whether improvements were needed in the contact routes provided.

With regard to future funding of the service, the Assistant Director for Regulatory explained that the Pilot had been funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, until the end of March 2024. Officers were investigating the scope to further the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer service beyond the current pilot. If alternative funding could not be found, officers would look to reabsorb the lessons learnt from the pilot within existing teams. The Assistant Director for Regulatory further explained that approximately 30% of anti-social behaviour complaints related to individuals/premises under the responsibility of Housing Associations, it was therefore expected that those cases would be referred to Housing Association Officers to mediate and resolve.

After further discussion it was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To receive the report of Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer Pilot Service progress to date.

The Committee adjourned at 10.50am and reconvened at 11.00am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.

1361. REVIEW OF BUSINESS REGULATORY SUPPORT HUB PILOT SERVICE - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Members considered the report of the Food, Safety and Licensing Manager, which presented members with a review of the progress of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service following its introduction in January 2022.

The Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service was introduced with the purpose of promoting accessibility, delivery and uptake by local businesses of good, well-received and influential regulatory information and advice. It was expected that the service would be a 'one-stop-shop' for specialist information relating to functions within Regulatory and Economic Growth, such as:

- Licensing
- Planning
- Commercial Waste
- Training (Carrowbreck)
- Economic Development
- Business Rates
- Food and Safety

One member queried how advice was circulated to businesses before the Hub pilot. The Food, Safety and Licensing Manager explained that each service area held its own expertise and would provide advice independently. The Hub allowed for a coordinated, single point of access for businesses to obtain support.

The Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot had a temporary break in operation between October 2022 and June 2023, as the initial Business Regulatory Support Hub Coordinator secured an alternative role within the Council. The new Coordinator was employed in June 2023 and additional funding was obtained from Economic Growth's UK Shared Prosperity Fund which extended the pilot by 12 months up to the end of May 2024. In response to a member's query, officers advised that a condition of the funding was that the Hub had a 2-day presence at Carrowbreck House each week. Members were further advised that, were additional longer-term funding to be secured, the presence at Carrowbreck would be reconsidered.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Manager explained that the pilot service corresponded with the Council's strategic aim of 'Protecting our natural and built environment'. As the Hub aimed to support the creation of new businesses it also linked with a second strategic aim 'Growing our Economy'.

In order to monitor and evaluate the success of the pilot, nine success measures had been pursued:

1) Carrying out service remodelling to offer a high-quality pilot service

The single point of contact hub with a dedicated coordinator was set up to offer a single, highly responsive contact point. Which freed up the Council's teams from the provision of standardised information and advice, to enable

them to provide more specialist advice and support where it was needed.

2) Gathering repackaged regulatory compliance information and advice in one place and efficiently offering it to businesses, both reactively and proactively

The first task of the Coordinator was to gather, organise and, where necessary, repackage the Regulatory services written information and advice designed for delivery to businesses.

3) Connecting up the various points of contact that business have with the Council and reaching out to offer the full range of support available

The Coordinator worked at length to explore, fully understand and develop connections between the different Council services involved with businesses.

1,000 letters were sent to businesses to cultivate awareness of their responsibilities regarding commercial waste. The letters led to 12 inbound calls to discuss current waste arrangements, as well as 2 offers of assistance to provide intelligence of suspected non-compliant businesses. The proactive approach helped to lessen the adverse impact of fly-tipping.

4) Maximising local business awareness and uptake of enquiry service

Marketing was delivered using Facebook advertisements, LinkedIn and other social media accounts as well as 'Nextdoor'. The engagement rate in South Norfolk ranged from 0.5% to 7%.

The Hub was also promoted at a number of local business groups and events, including:

- Business Breakfasts
- Local Flavours event
- The Royal Norfolk Show
- The Council's Business Awards
- The Federation of Small Business
- Norfolk and Waveney Wellbeing Service

5) Number of businesses in South Norfolk / Broadland reached during the pilot

It was not possible to count the number of businesses actively reached during the pilot. However, support and advice provided over social media and direct messaging had benefited well over 1,000 businesses.

The number of engagements per month had grown since June 2023, with a further 133 engagements receiving bespoke advice.

6) Numbers of businesses making use of the pilot service and information and advice

By the end of November 2023, the Hub had offered information, support and

advice to 320 businesses across South Norfolk and Broadland.

80 businesses in South Norfolk made contact and received tailored support and advice between June and November 2023.

7) Business customer satisfaction ratings and feedback

A telephone survey method was used to measure satisfaction ratings with the service provided by the Hub. The Hub achieved a 10 out of 10 rating across all surveyed businesses.

8) Businesses reporting positive benefit derived from using the pilot service

The telephone survey was also used to measure how much difference using the service had made. Responses were most commonly that the Hub had made 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of positive difference.

9) Promoting uptake of Council services, including enhanced compliance services such as business start-up support and pre-inspection support

The Hub service had connected Council services together in ways which helped to ensure a seamless experience for businesses using the service. The pilot had also been used to carry out limited promotion and testing of enhanced services.

Discussion turned to the estimated yearly cost of providing the Business Regulatory Support Hub service. The Food, Safety and Licensing Manager explained that the combined cost of the Coordinator's salary alongside service costs was approximately £45,000 per year.

Members recognised the important work of the Business Regulatory Support Hub Coordinator in supporting both new and established businesses within the district and expressed their support for the continuation of the service. The Committee suggested that officers reviewed the funding opportunities available for the Business Regulatory Support Hub post, in consultation with Broadland District Council.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To receive the report on the business regulatory support hub pilot service progress review.
2. To recommend that officers review the funding opportunities for the Business Regulatory Support Hub post in consultation with Broadland District Council and to then take a report through to Cabinet should funding be secured.

1362. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Forward Plan.

The Chairman confirmed that more TOPIC forms had been submitted by members. The forms would be reviewed, and where relevant added to the Work Programme.

Members were advised that the Task and Finish Panel had been set up. The Task and Finish Panel would review the strategic Key Performance Indicators detailed in the draft Strategic Plan for 2024-2028.

(The meeting concluded at 11.35 am)

Chairman

SOUTH NORFOLK SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the South Norfolk Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk Council, held on Thursday, 15 February 2024 at 10.10 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Rowe (Chairman), T Laidlaw (Vice-Chair), J Cork, K Cross, T Graham, J Overton and S Ridley

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: B Bernard and D Thompson

Cabinet Member in Attendance: Councillors: R Elliott, J Fuller and L Overton-Neal

Officers in Attendance: P Courtier (Director of Place), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), H Mellors (Assistant Director of Planning), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and J Hammond (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance: Councillors: M Rosen and J Webber

1363. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman congratulated Cllr J Fuller on his elevation to the House of Lords.

1364. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr B Bernard.

1365. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr K Cross declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Minute Items: 1366(1) Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2024/25, and 1366 (2) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29, as she was a Director of the Big Sky Group Ltd. She advised that she would not vote on the items nor take part in discussions relating to Big Sky.

1366. 2024/25 BUDGET

1) Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and the Assistant Director of Finance introduced the report, which presented a summary of the Council's draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget and contained details of the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25.

The main area to highlight in the report was that Cabinet was recommending that Council raise its Council Tax for a Band D property by £5.00 for 2024/25, which meant that a Band D property charge would increase to £170. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources informed the Committee that 76% of responders to the budget consultation were in favour of an increase in Council Tax.

One member noted that only 116 responses were received to the Councils budget consultation, which was disappointing. They suggested that officers looked to increase engagement in future years. Another member was disappointed that members were not specifically advised of the consultation as they felt they could have widened engagement through their work with Parish Councils and residents. The Assistant Director of Finance advised the Committee that the response rate for the budget consultation had always been low, he added that the Council did publicise the consultation through its website and via social media. He agreed to look into methods of increasing the response rate in the future.

The report showed the draft revenue budget requirement for each area, which had been reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Portfolio Holders to ensure they were sufficient to deliver services. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources highlighted the additional costs associated with providing the Council's statutory services. He further confirmed that the revenue budget was in accordance with the Council's Delivery Plan, which sought to advance the Council's priority areas, including:

- Growing the Economy
- Supporting individuals and empowering communities
- Protecting and improving the natural and built environment, whilst maximising quality of life
- Moving with the times, working smartly and collaboratively.

In terms of the Local Government Financial Settlement, members were advised that the Council was guaranteed a 4% increase in its core spending power. In response to a query the Assistant Director of Finance explained that the 4% increase was better than previously expected, however, it did not meet the increased rate of inflation. The Committee was advised that, as the Final Local Government Financial Settlement had been received there was no longer a requirement to delegate to the Assistant Director of Finance.

Discussion turned to the maintenance of streetlights. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources explained that the maintenance of streetlights in Council owned carparks was paid for by the Council out of its budgets. The

Council was also responsible for streetlighting in Costessey and Gillingham, the costs for these were recouped through special expenses.

The Leader of the Council informed the Committee that there was due to be a surplus in the 2023/24 budget due to additional in-year investment income. He explained that Cabinet was working alongside the Leaders of the Opposition Parties to make a proposal to Council, at its meeting on 21 February 2024, on how the additional funds should be spent. A number of suggestions were made by the Committee and Portfolio Holders, including:

- Leisure Support Reserve
- Household Support Fund
- Help Hub
- Flood Prevention
- Enforcement of Planning Conditions
- Public Realm Improvements for Wymondham
- Community Action Fund

The advice of the S151 Officer in determining the Council's budget and Council Tax, as required by the Local Government Act 2003, was:

- "Overall, in my opinion the budget has been based on a reasonable set of assumptions with due regard to the risks and is therefore robust."
- "Assuming Cabinet and Council agree the revenue budget as set out in this report, then in my opinion the level of reserves is adequate for known and potential risks at this time."

With regard to South Norfolk Council's former offices, one member noted that the budget assumed the sale of the site would be completed by the end of March 2024 and queried whether this date was realistic. The Director of Resources assured members that the sale of the site was progressing, however, there was likely to be a delay. She could not give an exact date for completion but advised that it would be within the current calendar year. In response to further queries the Leader of the Council explained that there were holding costs associated with the delay, which were regrettable but not considered to be damaging to the budget.

It was then,

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

1. The approval of the 2024/25 base budget.
2. That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2024/25 for General Expenditure shall be £9,046,550, and for Special Expenditure shall be £7,511.
3. That the Band D level of Council Tax be increased by £5 to £170.00, for General Expenditure.

2) Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Finance, which presented the Capital Strategy and proposed Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29.

Members attention was drawn to the Capital Programme at Appendix B, which totalled £23.88M for 2024/25. The overall Capital Investment Programme over the five-year period to 2028/29 was £97.1M.

Schemes within the Capital Programme included:

- Enriching Our Communities
 - Big Sky
 - Housing
 - Health & Leisure
 - Public Realm
- Growing a Prosperous Economy
- Moving with the Times – Our Own Needs
 - Jointly with BDC
 - SNC Only Costs

Financing for the programme was through a mix of capital grants, capital receipts, borrowing and reserves.

Attention was drawn to the guidance from HM Treasury regarding Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing, which stated that PWLB borrowing could only be taken out to support service delivery, housing, economic regeneration, preventative action, and treasury management. Loans solely for financial gain or speculative investment were not permitted.

One member noted that the 2023/24 Capital Budget was due to end with slippages, where projects had been delayed and committed funds not spent. They requested that in future the budget and capital programme be split by:

- Projects with a high probability of being completed; and
- Aspirational projects.

The Assistant Director of Finance recognised that there were challenges in delivering the programme and slippages were common amongst all Councils as a result of areas outside of its control. He assured members that a thorough review of the programme had been completed. With regard to the layout of the of the Capital Programme, Members were advised that projects were grouped by each of the Council's corporate priorities. Other members expressed their support for the current layout of the programme.

Discussion turned to the Clean Hydrogen Programme project within the Capital Programme. The Leader of the Council explained that South Norfolk was in an excellent geographical position to benefit from clean energy, due to its close proximity to pipelines and offshore wind farms. He recognised that it was beyond the council's capital resources to take full advantage of this and that cooperation between the Government and private businesses was required. The initial purpose of the Clean Hydrogen Programme would be to

work collaboratively with partner organisations to undertake investigative research.

It was then,

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL the Capital Strategy and the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29.

The Committee adjourned at 11.00am and reconvened at 11.08am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.

3) Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and the Assistant Director of Finance introduced the report, which set out the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 and associated policies.

The Council had three key treasury management principles:

1. **Security** – To ensure monies were not placed at undue risk, by ensuring all monies were invested in appropriate counterparties or instruments commensurate with the organisation's risk appetite.
2. **Liquidity** – To ensure that cash flow was adequately planned, with cash being available when it was needed, and that sufficient funding was available to finance the organisation's capital investment plans.
3. **Yield** – To maximise investment returns (commensurate with risk) and minimise borrowing costs to minimise the costs to the organisation.

The Assistant Director of Finance explained that in order to ensure that the tax-payers money was not placed at an undue risk the Council would only use banks which were:

- UK banks; and/or
- Non-UK but domiciled in a country which had a minimum sovereign Long-Term rating of AA.

As at the end of December 2023, the Council had treasury investments of £62.1M, and loans of £20.2M in wholly owned Council companies. However, the application of resources (capital receipts, reserves etc) to finance capital expenditure was expected to reduce the level of investments over time.

The Bank Rate rose from 5.00% to 5.25% in August 2023, the fifth change in 12 months, however, there had been no changes to the Bank Rate since then. The Council's treasury advisors anticipated that that the rate would remain at 5.25% until September 2024, then decline to 5.00%. They anticipated a further decline to 3.00% by December 2025. As interest rates had been volatile in recent months it was assumed that investment earnings would achieve a rate of 4.5% for 2024/25. On that basis, the investment return for 2024/25 had

been calculated as £1,400,000.

South Norfolk Council currently had borrowings of £20M. The sources of borrowing considered by the Council were:

- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)
- Bank Overdraft
- Other Local Authorities
- Financial Institutions
- Municipal Bonds Agency

The Assistant Director of Finance assured members that the Authority would not borrow more than, or in advance of, its needs purely to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. He added that treasury management was never risk free, but the primary objective of the Council's treasury management function was to minimise risk to the principal amounts involved, whilst maintaining optimum liquidity and return.

One member highlighted the CIPFA recommendation that all Councillors received adequate training in treasury management. The Assistant Director of Finance confirmed that the necessary member training would be scheduled.

The Chairman thanked officers for their hard work in preparing the Council's budget.

It was then unanimously,

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- 1) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25
- 2) The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2024/25
- 3) The Annual Investment Strategy 2024/25
- 4) The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1)
- 5) The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation
- 6) The Prudential Indicators
- 7) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

1367. STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028 AND DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2026

Members considered the report of the Strategic Advisor & Deputy Monitoring Officer, which sought approval for the adoption of the new Strategic Plan 2024-2028 and Delivery Plan 2024/26.

The Strategic Advisor & Deputy Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that the Strategic Plan was an external facing document which set out the Council's vision and priorities for the coming four years. The main aims of the Strategic Plan were to:

- Set the overarching vision and priorities for the district and the organisation for the coming years.
- Showcase the Council's achievements from the past few years.

- Outline how the Council will change the way in which it will work to achieve the best outcomes for residents and businesses.

The Strategic Plan was broken down into four key priority areas:

- Enhancing the environment
- Growing a prosperous economy
- Enriching our communities
- Moving with the times

The Plan included detail on the current challenges, opportunities and actions the Council was planning on taking, for each of the four key priority areas.

The Delivery Plan set out the key activities to be delivered within the first two years and would be aligned to the four strategic priorities and broken down into business as usual and projects/programmes of work. The Delivery Plan also set out several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which would be reported into Cabinet three times a year. These KPIs would be reviewed by a Task and Finish Group.

In response to a query the Strategic Advisor & Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that small amendments had been made to the Strategic and Delivery Plans since they were brought before the Committee on 12 December 2023.

With regard to the priority “*Growing a prosperous economy*”, One member requested clarification on the energy infrastructure constraints. The Assistant Director of Economic Growth explained that whilst energy flowed through the district it could not always be used by businesses within the district. For example, the Food Enterprise Park required the establishment of a direct grid connection in order to facilitate growth.

Discussion turned to the priority “*Enriching our communities*”, one member highlighted the sought outcome to “*Ensure the recommendations from the Private Rented Bill are implemented if put into statute legislation*”. It was noted that there was cross-party support for the legislation. Some members wanted to see the legislation strengthened to ensure that private evictions could be avoided, whether or not the legislation was set by Government. The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families informed members that the Housing Team were seeing more households leaving private rentals due to the rent becoming unaffordable as opposed to households being faced with eviction by private rental landlords.

After further discussion it was unanimously,

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approve the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2024-2028 and Delivery Plan 2024-2026.

1368. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Forward Plan.

The Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Cost-of-Living review would be brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2024.

(The meeting concluded at 11.27 am)

Chairman