

BROADLAND CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Cabinet of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Cabinet Members Present: Councillors: S Holland (Chairman), N Harpley (Vice-Chair), M Booth, J Davis, S Riley and D Roper

Apology for Absence: Councillor: S Beadle

Also in Attendance: Councillors: S Clancy, J Coplestone, L Douglass, J Emsell, K Kelly, M Murrell, N Starling and F Whymark.

Officers in Attendance: E Hodds (Chief of Staff), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), C Lawrie (Assistant Director of Transformation and ICT/Digital), L Chant (Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager), M Coates (Head ICT And Digital) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

18. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

In reference to agenda item 7 (Licensing Fees and Charges) the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed the meeting that the Committee had been in broad agreement with the proposals in the report. Members had welcomed the greater protection of animals and the phased introduction of the increase in fees and charges that would take into account the financial pressures on businesses, whilst also being fair to Council Taxpayers.

19. REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON-CABINET MEMBERS

In response to a query about the resurfacing of the Car Park in Aylsham, raised in respect of item 8 (Forward Plan), the Portfolio Holder for Finance advised the meeting that he would follow this up with the relevant member after the meeting. The Leader added that the Council's Car Parking Strategy had been deferred whilst further work was being undertaken.

20. LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES REVIEW

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence introduced the report, which set out the conclusions of a review of licensing fees and charges and the implications for budget years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Cabinet was advised that an extensive and very detailed review of the service had found that the current schedule of fees and charges did not recover the full costs of delivering Licensing Services. Currently, this meant that some licensing activities were being subsidised by Council Taxpayers. The proposed increases in fees and charges had been calculated to cover the full cost of service delivery.

Members were also advised that benchmarking against other councils' Licensing Services had demonstrated that the Council had a significantly lower resourcing level than other comparable local authorities in Norfolk.

The Assistant Director for Regulatory added that a new animal regulatory regime had been introduced by the Government in 2018, which had proven to be particularly complex, with a demanding new licensing technical system for licence holders and applicants that had occupied a great deal of time.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Manager informed Cabinet that he proposed amending recommendation 9.1 to include reference to Appendix 2, so that it read:

- 9.1 Consider the report content and the proposed fees and charges in Appendix 1 *and Appendix 2* and refer the agreed fees and charges Council with a recommendation for adoption subject to RPI.

Reference to the fees and charges in Appendix 2, as well as Appendix 1 would cover both discretionary and capped fees and charges and increase the charge for gambling premises up from 90 percent to 100 percent of the statutory maximum charge.

In response to a query, Cabinet was advised that the service had seen an increased demand during the pandemic, and this had continued and now appeared to be the new normal. The service had managed during this period with external contractors funded by emergency Covid money from the Government. This funding was now coming to an end, so it was considered timely to look at increasing fees and charges to recover costs for the service.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development commended the report and the aim to recover costs and eliminate subsidy for the service by Council Taxpayers. He also noted that the benchmarking exercise demonstrated the efficiency of the Licensing Service and that the proposals in the report would put the Service in an even better position.

Cabinet voted on the recommendations as amended, and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To note the content of the report and the proposed fees and charges in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2; and

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

1. To adopt the proposed fees and charges in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, subject to RPI.
2. To agree the reviewed Licensing fees and charges being applied to all new licence and renewal applications with effect from 1st April 2024, with a phased introduction (one-third of the increase applied in Year 1 from 1st April 2024 and remaining two-thirds increase applied in Year 2 from 1st April 2025).
3. To agree the fees and charges relating to Scrap Metal at Appendix 1.
4. To authorise the Food, Safety and Licensing Manager to publish the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing fees in accordance with the relevant legislative provisions, together with delegated authority to consider any objections received and only refer matters back to Cabinet if substantial comments, material to the implementation of the revised fees and charges, are received.

Reasons for Decision

To introduce a revised licensing fees and charges schedule to enable full cost recovery for the service.

21. FORWARD PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development advised members that the Customer Experience – Discovery Phase Business Case, which was scheduled for September, would be deferred to the 7 November 2023 meeting of Cabinet.

The Director for People and Communities informed the meeting that the Car Parking Strategy would be brought to Cabinet by the end of 2023.

22. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

23. LICENSING SERVICE REVIEW

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence introduced the exempt report, which presented the findings of a Licensing Service review and set out proposals for changes to the service structure to ensure the Council had a robust and sustainable Licensing Service.

The Assistant Director for Regulatory advised the meeting that the Licensing Team provided an exceptional service but were operating under strain due to high workloads relative to staffing capacity. To address this deficit and ensure that the licensing objectives (including the prevention of crime and the protection of public safety), continued to be met a review had been undertaken and growth in the Team structure and capacity was proposed.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Manager added that temporary contractors had been used for some time, funded by additional Government money to support services during the pandemic, however, this funding would end on 30 September 2023. The new proposed Team structure would address this deficit and allow for the flexibility to adapt to changes in both the volume of demand and legislation.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed members that the Committee, recognised the increased workload and need for increased capacity in the Team and supported bringing the service fully in-house.

Cabinet commended both the report and the Licensing Service, and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED

To agree the Licensing Service Review proposals detailed in this report (at paragraph 4.2 and Appendix 2), to be implemented with effect from 1 October 2023.

Reasons for decision

To ensure that the Council's Licensing Service had the capacity to deliver an efficient licensing service, for the benefit and protection of the local economy and public safety in the District.

24. TELEPHONY CONTRACT AWARD

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development introduced the report, which set out the background and rationale for the procurement of a replacement telephony solution for the Council. He advised the meeting that as the Council was in the final year of its telephony contract it was appropriate to procure a new system that would meet the needs of the Council going forwards.

The Head of ICT and Digital reminded members that the Council had a commitment to deliver a First-Class Customer Service and that this needed to be underpinned by the technology to support this aim. As the Council's telephony system handled 500,000 calls per year and was Broadland's highest demand contact channel, it was, therefore, timely to procure a resilient and future-proofed telephony system.

The deadline for tender submission had been due to close on the 6 July 2023. However, a request for an extension from a supplier to 13 July 2023 had been granted. This had resulted in the need to seek a delegation of contract award to

avoid any impact on the implementation timeline of November 2023.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed the meeting that the Committee had noted that the procurement process had been undertaken later than anticipated, due to a number of circumstances, such as the move to the Horizon Building, the district elections and the move to a new IT system and had recommended that the Portfolio Holder should progress procurement as a matter of urgency to avoid the risk of any punitive charges to the Council Taxpayer.

It had also been suggested that the award of contracts by the Council be placed on the Committee's Work Programme, to ensure they were being brought forward in a timely manner. The Leader concurred with this view and confirmed that she would look into developing a mechanism for monitoring the awards of contracts.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development informed the meeting that he had met with officers today and he anticipated that the award of the contract would be made shortly.

In response to a query about additional functionality, the Head of ICT and Digital advised the meeting that the new system would be 'omnichannel' meaning that it would open up more communications channels for the public including, chat, email, text, and social media. A significant amount of data would also be available through the new system for analysing customer satisfaction.

Members were advised that more detail about the new contract would be available when the delegated decision was published.

RESOLVED

To agree to delegate the award of the contract for the Telephony System to the Assistant Director of IT/Digital and Transformation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development.

Reasons for decision

To procure a resilient and future-proofed telephony system that would underpin the delivery of a First-Class Customer Service.

25. EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

(The meeting concluded at 6.59 pm)

Chairman