

## **BROADLAND CABINET**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Cabinet of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday, 19 March 2024 at 6.00 pm.**

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

**Also in Attendance:** Councillors: J Copplestone, L Douglass, J Emsell, N Starling and F Whymark

**Officers in Attendance:** T Holden (Managing Director), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), M Burrell (Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), D Slowther (Senior Finance Business Partner) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

### **91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs N Harpley and S Holland both declared other registerable interests as directors of Broadland Living Ltd. They confirmed that they would not take part in discussion or the vote in respect of recommendation 4 of the Strategic Performance, Risk and Finance Report for Quarter 3 2023/24, which recommended the purchase of additional shares in Broadland Living Ltd.

### **92. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

### **93. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised members that the Committee had welcomed the Strategic Performance, Risk and Finance Report for Quarter 3 2023/24 although it had been noted that the direction of travel for some of the indicators was declining, it had also been noted that staff turnover could be evidence of how well the Council trained its staff. Several members had asked why they had received paper Council Tax bills when they had signed up for electronic bills, which might have been due to the migration to a new IT system migration. The Greater Norwich Local Plan had been welcomed

by members, as had the schemes and governance proposals for the Norfolk Nutrient Mitigation Fund and the Strategic Asset Management Framework.

#### **94. REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON-CABINET MEMBERS**

Cllr J Copplestone advised the meeting that she was disappointed to see in the Strategic Performance, Risk and Finance Report for Quarter 3 2023/24 that core services were £341,000 over budget. She noted that the Council had said it was implementing full cost recovery for services but that an additional £100,000 had been spent on car parking improvements and she asked when the Council's Car Parking Policy would be brought to members. She also noted that the Council's external funding to support growth was down which was disappointing and that the name of Carrowbreck House had been renamed the Business Support Centre and that Cobb Lodge was to replace Carrowbreck as an IT Disaster Recovery site at a cost of £27,000. Also, in the Strategic Asset Management Framework the Food Innovation Centre was listed as an office when they were in fact commercial units.

In response, the Director for Resources confirmed the Carrowbreck listing was a classification in the final accounts and that there had been no change of name of the property, similarly the listing of the Food Innovation Centre as offices was just for classification for the final accounts.

#### **95. STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 2023/24**

Members considered the report, which provided an overview of the performance of the Council against the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2022/24. This Quarterly Report covered Quarter 3.

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the finance section of the report, which explained that as of 31 December 2023 Council was facing inflationary and demand pressures totalling £341,000 on the cost of core services. However, this had been offset by buoyant investment income, due to higher cash balances and interest rates than expected.

As of 31 December 2023, the Council had spent £9.6m on capital schemes in 2023/24, with an expected forecast outturn of £13.6m.

Members were advised that an additional recommendation in the report proposed the purchase of a further £49,900 £1 shares in Broadland Living to bring the total equity investment to £50,000.

Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder Finance, noted the inflationary pressures that had caused the £341,000 increase in costs on core services and that much work had been undertaken to bring this figure down and that work would also be ongoing to address the pressure on the Capital Programme. He also noted that the recommendation to purchase additional shares in Broadland Living Ltd was to ensure that the balance of loan and equity was appropriate, and that Broadland Living Ltd had sufficient cash to function as a trading entity.

The Leader noted that the higher costs faced by the Council were balanced out

by the increased return received in investment income.

The Director for Resources informed the meeting that the performance against the 26 delivery measures used to assess the Council was positive, with 18 measures green, five amber and three red.

The off-target red measures that would be subject to close monitoring were, demand on housing, external funding to support growth and staff retention.

Cabinet was reminded that housing demand was a national issue that was being exacerbated by the economic downturn and that work on the prevention of homelessness continued in the face of increasing demand.

Members were also informed that funding for Norfolk Environmental Credits had recently been received and it was anticipated that the external funding to support growth measure would be rated green in Quarter 4.

In respect of the Staff retention, members were advised that this was influenced by the overall labour market and a lot of work was being undertaken on exit feedback and making improvements going forwards.

Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, noted that the staff turnover figure of ten percent was a challenging target, and that 15 percent was not an unhealthy figure in the current jobs market.

The Chief of Staff added that the 10 percent target was historic, and it was probably time to review this figure and she agreed that 15 percent appeared to be a more appropriate target. Members were also informed that younger people appeared more ready to move between employers for career progression, rather than seeking to progress through one organisation. The Council might also lack the opportunities at a senior level that were available in larger organisations. Members were also informed that the One Team was one of the few local authorities that published its staff turnover data, so it was difficult to benchmark how the Council was performing in this respect.

In regard to exit interviews, members were informed that these had increased from a 35 percent response rate a few years ago to 85 percent now, and this was producing some very valuable data.

The Leader agreed that the staff turnover target needed to be reviewed.

In respect of this issue the Managing Director informed the meeting that in a difficult jobs market the Council was in the enviable position of having recently recruited four senior planners, as well as senior staff in Economic Development. He also noted the high participation rate for the Staff Survey, which had produced some very useful feedback about the organisation.

The Leader informed the meeting that of greater concern to her was the housing issue, which was a huge problem for the whole country that all local authorities faced. She added that overall, the report was very positive especially the funding received for Norfolk Environmental Credits to deliver nutrient neutrality mitigation.

It was unanimously,

## **RESOLVED**

1. To endorse the revenue and capital position for quarter 3 (variance details in Appendix 1).
2. To endorse the Quarter 3 2023/24 performance (detailed in Appendix 2).
3. To endorse the current position with respect to risks and agree the actions to support risk mitigation (detailed in Appendix 3).

A separate vote was held for recommendation 4 and the remaining five members of Cabinet unanimously,

## **RESOLVED**

4. To agree to purchase a further £49,900 £1 shares in Broadland Living to bring the total equity investment to £50,000.

### **Reasons for Decision**

The report was a factual account.

## **96. ADOPTION OF THE GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN**

The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager presented the report, which set out a summary of the development and content of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) and of the Independent Inspectors' examination conclusions. It proposed that, subject to Cabinet's recommendation, that the Council adopt the GNLP.

Members attention was drawn to paragraph 7.9 in the report which stated that. 'Having received a highly positive Inspectors' Report endorsing the strategy and site allocations set out in our plan.... the case for adoption is overwhelming.'

It was emphasised that the Plan could only be successfully adopted with the main modifications recommended by the Inspectors.

Members were reminded that all local planning authorities were required to produce up-to-date Local Plans and with the existing Joint Core Strategy due to run out in 2026, the Council needed to replace it.

Members were advised that the three greater Norwich Councils, together with the County Council and the Broads Authority had done an excellent job of bringing the Local Plan to the point of adoption and that the GNLP was notable as one of only two in the Country that covered a sub-regional area.

It was also emphasised that Plan led joint working provided greater certainty for economic investment in the area, not only from the private sector, but also when accessing national funding streams.

Cabinet was reminded that the Plan also represented continuity, as the Greater

Norwich councils had worked together for over 20 years on joint planning and a joint strategic approach fitted with the functional geography and linked economies of each area, whilst supporting strategic growth, thriving communities and the enhancement of infrastructure and services. Moreover, in a recent change to National Planning Policy Framework on adoption the Plan would secure a fixed five-year land supply until 2029.

In summary, members' attention was drawn to the significant time and money and effort spent on drafting the Plan over nearly eight years, which was a critical document for setting the development framework for the area and it was recommended that Cabinet recommended its adoption by Council.

The Leader acknowledged the huge amount of work put into drafting the Plan and paid tribute to everybody who had been involved in it. She also underlined the importance of the Greater Norwich councils working together, as so many elements crossed district boundaries.

Cllr S Beadle, the Portfolio Holder for Planning, informed the meeting that it was likely that there would be new legislation in the autumn that would speed up the plan making process in future.

Cllr J Davis, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence noted the challenges ahead in respect of housing and homelessness and meeting affordable housing targets, as well as the energy efficiency of homes and water supply, which was likely to be an increasing issue in the east of England.

Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, noted that the stage where individual sites in the Plan were considered had been passed, as the Plan had gone through extensive consultation and examination and now was the time to adopt it and secure a five-year land supply.

It was unanimously,

## **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

To

1. Note the inspectors' report (at Appendix A) and the required main modifications in appendices 1 to 5;
2. Adopt the modified GNLP (documents J2.1 to J2.11 inclusive); and
3. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning to publish the Adoption Statement and accompanying documents, making the GNLP part of the Adopted Local Plan for Broadland.

## **Reasons for Decision**

To meet the Council's legislative obligation as a Planning Authority to produce and adopt a Local Plan.

## 97. NORFOLK NUTRIENT MITIGATION FUND - SCHEMES AND GOVERNANCE

The Assistant Director for Finance introduced the report, which proposed a delivery mechanism for administering the Nutrient Mitigation Fund (NMF), and associated governance model, for allocating the funding moving forwards.

Members were reminded that the Council had received £9.6m of capital funding and £622,610 of Revenue funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on behalf of the Norfolk Local Planning Authorities to help address nutrient neutrality issues.

The proposal in the report was to seek expressions of interest from any interested parties to deliver nutrient mitigation interventions in the catchment area.

Consequently, the Council was aiming to develop the following two schemes:

1. Nutrient Mitigation Feasibility Scheme (for feasibility work).
2. Nutrient Mitigation Capital Scheme (to deliver mitigation projects).

The first was to assist with putting together the evidence to progress a scheme through grant funding and the second was to invest capital funding in the scheme, which would be repaid once the scheme was delivered.

The Government had emphasised that the scheme should be progressed as soon as possible, so it was intended to be ready to commence with the fund in April 2024, with a formal launch in May 2024.

The report proposed establishing two Working Groups, the first was an officer Group that would assess proposed projects and the second was at a member level, which would make recommendations on the allocation of funding to Broadland District Council, as the accountable body.

Members were asked to note that repayable loans would be made to successful bidders, enabling the funding to be recycled until nutrient neutrality was no longer an issue. This funding would then be made available to the local planning authorities to fund schemes that aid habitat restoration.

In response to a query, members were informed that the interest accrued from the £9.6m of Government funding would go towards the costs of running the scheme and loans for mitigation projects would also generate an investment return.

Cllr J Davis, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence emphasised the need for the scheme to clean up watercourses.

The Leader noted how important it was to move forward with the scheme as quickly as possible and that the governance proposals in the report were robust.

She also highlighted that although the £9.6m was being added to the Council's Capital Programme this funding was for the administration of the scheme on behalf of the Norfolk Local Planning Authorities, with Broadland as the accountable body.

It was unanimously,

## **RESOLVED**

1. To seek Expressions of Interest for both capital and revenue funding from the NMF from interested parties to unlock nutrient neutrality mitigation, using the proposed Expressions of Interest Form detailed in Appendix A.
2. To agree the proposed evaluation methodology against which Expressions of Interest will be considered as detailed in Appendix B1 and B2.
3. To agree the Governance proposals for the administration of the NMF, as set out in the report and consequently agree:
  - i. To establish a Nutrient Mitigation Fund Member Working Group, with a Member from each Local Planning Authority. And approve the proposed Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendix C1.
  - ii. To establish a Nutrient Mitigation Fund Officer Working Group, with an officer from each Local Planning Authority. And approve the proposed Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendix C2.
  - iii. To delegate authority for the final decision on the allocation of funding to the s151 Officer, in consultation with the Assistant Director Planning (as LPA lead) and the Leader, taking due regard of the recommendations given by the Nutrient Mitigation Fund Member Working Group.
4. To agree to delegate authority to make changes to the Expressions of Interest Form, the Evaluation Methodology, and the Working Groups Terms of Reference to the s151 Officer, in consultation with the Assistant Director Planning (as LPA lead) and the Leader, taking due regard of the recommendations given by the Nutrient Mitigation Fund Officer Working Group.
5. To agree to the recruitment of a Nutrient Mitigation Fund Manager, and supporting administrative and technical support, in order to manage the Scheme, to be funded from the DLUHC revenue funding.

## **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

To add £9.6m to the BDC Capital Programme.

## **Reasons for Decision**

To establish a scheme utilising Government grant funding for the delivery of nutrient neutrality mitigation.

## **98. STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Director for Resources advised the meeting that the report proposed the adoption of a Strategic Asset Management Framework under which the Council would manage, dispose, and acquire property assets.

Members were informed that the Council had over £29m of property assets, but did not currently have a framework for how they were managed.

The proposed Asset Management Framework was appended to the report and was made up of the following three elements:

- An Asset Management Policy
- A Strategic Asset Management Strategy
- An Asset Management Working Action Plan

In answer to a question, members were informed that unless there was new guidance published for asset management it would be expected that the Framework would be brought back to members for review in four years' time. The Asset Management Working Action Plan, however, was a living document that would be updated as required.

It was unanimously,

### **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

To adopt the Strategic Asset Management Framework.

### **Reasons for Decision**

To establish a Strategic Asset Management Framework in accordance with best practice.

## **99. FORWARD PLAN**

Members noted the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan.

## **100. 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.



**101. SOCIAL PRESCRIBING: CONTRACTING WITH THE NHS IN SUBURBAN BROADLAND**

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families introduced the exempt report, which sought approval for the expansion of the One Team social prescribing services to cover all Broadland's GP practices.

Members were advised that the Council would be able to provide this discretionary service at no extra cost, as the funding would be drawn wholly from external partners.

Cabinet noted the benefits of social prescribing, which promoted the health and wellbeing of residents by effectively addressing the wider determinants of health.

It was,

**RESOLVED**

To delegate authority to the Director of People and Communities, in consultation with the S151 officer and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing, to agree terms and conditions and enter this contractual arrangement.

**Reasons for Decision**

To approve the expansion of the social prescribing service across all GP practices within the district.

**102. BUSINESS CASE FOR OPPORTUNITIES FUNDED POST**

The Assistant Director for Economic Growth introduced the exempt report, which proposed extending two temporary positions in the Economic Growth Team.

Members were advised that the need to extend these positions was underscored by ongoing and emerging challenges, initiatives, and projects requiring specialised expertise and focus to deliver the strategic environmental agenda across the Council.

Cllr J Davis, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence emphasised the value of the posts in delivering the Council's Environmental Strategy.

The Leader commended the outstanding work by the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager in securing over £2m from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Programme to support the Councils' net-zero ambitions.

It was unanimously,

**RESOLVED**

To agree to a 24-month extension to the positions outlined in the report.

**Reasons for Decision**

To allow a continuation of roles that helped facilitate the Council's environmental agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 7.08 pm)

---

Chairman