

BROADLAND COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Council of Broadland District Council, held on Thursday, 5 October 2023 at 7.00 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: C Karimi-Ghovanlou (Chair), A Tipple (Vice-Chair), P Auber, B Baby, J Bailey, S Beadle, P Berry, M Booth, F Bowe, N Brennan, S Catchpole, J Davis, L Douglass, C Eden, J Emsell, M Goodman, S Gurney, N Harpley, J Harvey, S Holland, B Johnson, S Jones, E Laming, K Leggett, A Miah, M Murrell, P Newstead, G Nurden, R Potter, S Riley, D Roper, J Royal, N Starling, D Thomas, E Tovell, K Vincent, S Ward, F Whymark and T Yousefian

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: P Bulman, S Clancy, J Coplestone, A Crotch, L Hemsall, K Kelly, T Mancini-Boyle and L Starling

Officers in Attendance: T Holden (Managing Director), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), L Mockford (Governance Manager) and C White (Democratic Services Manager)

Also in Attendance: One member of the public

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Bulman, S Clancy, J Coplestone, A Crotch, L Hemsall, K Kelly, T Mancini-Boyle and L Starling

40. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July were confirmed as a correct record.

41. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairwoman

The Chairwoman drew members' attention to her civic engagements for the period 28 July to 5 October 2023.

She highlighted the Chair's Harvest Civic Service held at St Edmund's Church, Taverham, which she had thoroughly enjoyed. She had been pleased to see former Councillor Mike Snowling, in attendance at the service.

The Leader

The Leader welcomed Cllr Peter Berry, the newly elected member for Thorpe St Andrew North West, to the meeting.

She advised the first board meeting of Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd, the Joint Venture Company that had been established to address nutrient neutrality, would take place next week. Cllr Jan Davis would be the Broadland member lead and the shareholder representative.

In respect of the Norfolk Devolution Deal, a response had been received from the Office of the Secretary of State to the letter that had been sent raising a number of concerns about the Deal, in particular how the Deal related to the role of district councils and governance matters. Unfortunately, the response failed to address these concerns and a further letter to the Secretary of State would be sent reiterating these concerns.

The final visit of the Peer Review Team would take place on 13 October 2023, to assess what progress had been made since their review last year.

The Town and Parish Summit would take place on Thursday 9 November 2023. The meeting was primarily for parish clerks and aimed to build closer working relationships with the towns and parishes in the District. This would be the first in-person meeting with the towns and parishes for quite some time, and members were urged to encourage their town and parish councils to attend.

The seven houses acquired by the Council at Harvard Court for temporary accommodation were fully occupied and providing much needed support for residents in great need.

Members of Cabinet

Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development informed the meeting that the new telephony contract would commence on 1 November 2023. A briefing note would be sent out to members shortly, which would set out the capabilities and functionality of the new system.

42. QUESTIONS

There were no questions received from the public.

43. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no requests from the public to speak at the meeting.

44. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

To consider the recommendations from the Cabinet arising from the meetings held on 5 September 2023. The Chairman advised the meeting that those recommendations that had arisen from exempt reports would be considered later in the meeting following the exclusion of the public and the press.

45. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY - REFRESH

The Leader advised the meeting that the Risk Management Policy had been revised and updated and was a robust Policy, which she commended to the Council.

The recommendations were seconded by Cllr S Riley, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To adopt the refreshed Risk Management Policy, as amended.

46. COUNCIL AND REGISTERED PROVIDER STATUS

Cllr N Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing informed the meeting that the Social Housing (Regulation) Act required the Council to register with the Regulator for Social Housing.

The recommendations were seconded by Cllr S Riley, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To register Broadland District Council with the Regulator for Social Housing as a Registered Provider of social housing.

47. ANTI-FRAUD AND ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

Cllr T Yousefian, the Chairman of the Audit Committee advised the meeting that the Committee had considered the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy at its meeting on the 21 September 2023 and had recommended it to Council for adoption.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr P Auber and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To adopt the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy

48. AUDIT COMMITTEE - INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Cllr T Yousefian, the Chairman of the Audit Committee informed members that the report had been discussed in detail at the 21 September 2023 meeting and it had been recommended unanimously that the appointment of an independent person to the Audit Committee be progressed.

The recommendation to Council was seconded by Cllr P Auber.

In answer to a suggestion that the Interview Panel should include the shadow Portfolio Holder for Finance, the Chairman of the Audit Committee informed the meeting that it was not considered appropriate to enlarge the Panel beyond himself and the Portfolio Holder for Finance. He also emphasised that the post would be apolitical.

The Monitoring Officer added that the Interviewing Panel would be assisted by the Head of Internal Audit to help determine their choice.

In response to a suggestion that it was best practice to have three members on a Panel the Leader reminded the meeting that the Independent Person would be a volunteer and a non-voting member, and it was important not to deter people from coming forward, by having a larger Panel than necessary. She added that it was important to find a person with the right qualities to support the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the appointment of an independent person to the Audit Committee is progressed.

49. MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

The Leader introduced the report, which covered the allocation of seats on Committee and Panels as a result of the Thorpe St Andrew Northwest by-election and an update to the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee to include member development.

Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development informed the meeting that merging the role of the Member Development Panel into the Standards Committee would streamline the committee structure and better serve the Council.

RESOLVED

To agree

1. The appointment of Members to Committee seats, as set out in section 2 of the report.
2. The amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee, as set out in section 3 of the report.
3. The consequential changes to the Constitution to be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.

50. OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Council noted the report from Cllr Catchpole on the AGM of the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel held on 1 September 2023.

51. QUESTIONS FROM CLLR N BRENNAN

Would the Leader tell us what progress has been made in letting the annexe and other vacant space at the Horizon Centre?

How many times has the Council received revenue for letting vacant rooms since moving into the Horizon Centre?

Will meeting rooms be made available 'free of charge' to charitable trusts (as NCC and the Broads Authority do) on an occasional basis?

Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development informed the meeting that the annexe had been marketed since mid-June through Roache at £64,800 per annum. Interested parties had viewed the annexe three times, however the property still remained on the market. Officers were in contact with the agent on a regular basis and the feedback was that the market was a bit slower than usual at present. However, they had advised that the Council was taking the correct approach in terms of making the annexe attractive for potential renters.

No rooms had been hired out since moving into the Horizon Centre and it was noted that the only rooms available would be the Upper and Lower Yare and the Starston Room as the others were in frequent use. The marketing of these rooms began in September through social media and the Council's website. Businesses on the Broadland Business Park were also going to be contacted shortly.

One business who was interested in hiring rooms had visited the Horizon Centre and two public sector organisations had also shown an interest. It was also intended to promote this facility through business breakfasts and through other avenues such as the Parish and Town Council Summit on 9 November 2023. It would also be advertised in *Broadland News*.

To make the Conference Centre as attractive as possible plans had been brought forward to complete work to update the toilet facilities and this would begin in November.

Within the main office space, desks were currently being let to the Police and Children's Services. There had also been an inquiry from another public sector organisation.

Work was also being undertaken to bring the mezzanine floor to a position where it could be marketed in the New Year through the One Public Estate.

A decision on letting meeting rooms free of charge was still to be made, and a joint approach would need to be taken with South Norfolk Council. Members were reminded that it was intended to maximise income and if organisations used the rooms for free this came at a cost to the Council. However, it was acknowledged that some charities were doing work which supported the delivery of Broadland's business objectives.

Cllr Brennan clarified that he was referring to charitable trusts, not charities.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development confirmed that discussions would take place with his counterpart at South Norfolk on this matter.

52. QUESTION FROM CLLR P NEWSTEAD

Broadland District Council has always focused upon the development of business investment and the economic success of our market towns.

One of the major constraints that we and the businesses face is the provision and optimisation of parking for visitors and workers.

As this is one of the areas where Broadland District Council has direct influence, will the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development tell Members when a revised parking strategy for Broadland will come forward for debate?

Cllr M Booth, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development advised the meeting that as already stated by Cllr Riley at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 29 August 2023 a comprehensive car parking policy would be brought to members in the near future. It was a complex piece of work, so no exact date could be given at present.

53. MOTIONS

Members noted that no motions had been submitted.

54. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee passed a resolution under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that the consideration of the items is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of

Schedule 12A of the Act.

55. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND: PURCHASE OF PROPERTIES

Cllr N Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing, introduced the recommendations from Cabinet which sought agreement to purchase properties in the District using the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). She explained that the LAHF was a Government initiative, which provided a percentage of capital funding for local authorities to purchase homes for long-term settled housing for families currently living in hotels.

Cllr N Harpley stressed that this was a fantastic opportunity to purchase properties and meet the needs of residents. The recommendations were duly seconded by Cllr S Riley.

During discussion, Cllr M Murrell explained that he supported the principle of proposals, however, he voiced concerns regarding the wording of recommendations and was worried that it left the Council at risk, should the grant monies not be received.

Members noted Cllr Murrell's concerns, but following advice from the Director of People and Communities, were satisfied that there would be no fundamental risk to the Council, should for any reason, grant monies not be received.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED:

1. To accept the Local Authority Housing Fund grant offer to help fund the purchase of the 9 properties.
2. To create a new Capital Budget to fund the purchase of 9 properties (subject to the approval of recommendation 1).
3. That the Broadland District Council matched funding contribution be funded by the utilisation of reserve monies (option B in the report subject to the approval of recommendation 1)

56. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT REVIEW - PHASE 1

Cllr N Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing, introduced the recommendations from Cabinet, which set out proposals for property and asset management arrangements for the Council's current and growing owned and leased housing portfolio.

The recommendations were duly seconded by Cllr S Riley, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

To agree the proposals in the report, as amended.

57. REVIEW OF CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES - FOLLOW UP

Cllr T Yousefian, the Chairman of the Audit Committee informed members that the report had been discussed in detail at the 21 September 2023 meeting and the amended Contract Procedure Rules had been recommended to Council by a majority vote.

The recommendations to Council were seconded by Cllr P Auber.

In response to a query about the criteria in the contract rules to protect the environment and reduce carbon emissions, Cllr S Riley advised the meeting that setting out a written criteria for this had been avoided, as this could hinder the procurement process. Instead, environmental principles would be adapted for each procurement on a case-by-case basis.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee added that this was a pragmatic approach to incorporate environmentally friendly policies into the Council's contract procedures without being too formulaic or prescriptive.

In response, to a question about environmental principles having greater weight than costs when awarding contracts, Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development informed the meeting that it was misleading to assume that environmental considerations would outweigh all other criteria when undertaking procurement. The only real material difference with the new wording in the Contract Procedure Rules was to explicitly include reducing carbon emissions, which recognised that the environment was a global issue that required a commitment from everyone. He reiterated that all contracts would continue to be awarded using a set of criteria and weightings to ensure good value alongside environmental principles.

RESOLVED

To agree the amended Contract Procedure Rules.

58. CAR PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Cllr M Booth, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, introduced the recommendations from Cabinet, regarding the operational timeline and requirements for the award of a contract for car park resurfacing.

The recommendations were seconded by Cllr S Riley, who assured members that as explained earlier in the meeting, a separate document to look at the Council's overall parking policy, would be considered at a later date.

Members discussed the proposals and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

To agree the proposal as detailed in the exempt report.

(The meeting concluded at 8.15 pm)

Chairman