

BROADLAND COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Council of Broadland District Council, held on Thursday, 22 February 2024 at 7.00 pm.

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: J Bailey, J Davis, L Hempsall, T Mancini-Boyle, R Potter, J Royal and K Vincent

Officers in Attendance: T Holden (Managing Director), P Courtier (Director of Place), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), C Lawrie (Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation), H Mellors (Assistant Director of Planning), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), L Mockford (Governance Manager), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer), J Pyle (PR Manager) and C White (Democratic Services Manager)

One member of the public was also in attendance.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from the following members:

Minute Item	Councillor	Declaration
76.2 - Approval and Adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal for Halvergate and Tunstall Conservation Area	G Nurden	Other registerable interest, as ward member.
	F Whymark	Other registerable interest, as

		member of the Broads Authority.
76.5 - Local Authority Housing Fund: Purchase of Further Properties	N Harpley S Holland	Other registerable interest, Directors of Broadland Living Ltd.

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs: J Bailey, J Davis, L Hemsall, T Mancini-Boyle, R Potter, J Royal, and K Vincent.

74. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

75. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed members that she was sad to report the passing of former Councillor, John Starling.

John was the member for the Horsford ward from 1991-2015 (which became the Horsford and Felthorpe ward from June 2004). He sat on numerous committees and was Group Leader for the Liberal Democrat Group from 1995 – 1997.

The Chairman asked members to join her in a minute's silence in memory of John.

Cllr Nich Starling thanked members for their mark of respect to his father and he noted that although they had had their political differences his father had considered Cllr Stuart Clancy and former Cllr Tony Adams to be his friends.

Cllr Clancy advised the meeting that he fondly remembered John Starling as a thoroughly decent man with a great deal of common sense.

Former Cllr Tony Adams endorsed the sentiments expressed for John Starling, who was a man that greatly admired.

Members noted the civic engagements undertaken by the Chairman of the Council since the last meeting.

The Chairman informed members that she was hosting a Bingo and Pizza fund raising event for the Chairman's charities on Friday 22 March 2024.

The Leader wished to record her congratulations to Cllr John Fuller, the Leader of

South Norfolk Council, on his recent elevation to the House of Lords.

The Leader also noted that this meeting was one of the most important of the municipal year, as it was where the Council agreed the budget for the forthcoming year, which would provide support and services to residents across the district.

She added that local authorities across the country were united in their highlighting the issues they faced following sustained reductions in funding over the past decade. The Local Government Association response to the Government's funding proposals had demonstrated the difficulties and challenges that all councils were facing. Today's meeting also included the Council's four-year Plan, underpinned by the two-year Delivery Plan, which was designed to meet the Council's new objectives as well as its business-as-usual activities. The Budget and the Council Plan had been developed in tandem to reassure residents and Council Taxpayers of the robustness and care that had been taken to ensure that the Council's financial needs could be met. She requested that members consider these matters carefully in order to achieve the best that could be achieved for Broadland.

The Managing Director drew members' attention to International Women's Day on Friday 8 March 2024, and he noted that the career of Helen Mellors, who was shortly retiring was a great example of a case study for this celebration. Helen had started as a planning receptionist and had progressed to the Assistant Director Planning, in a career spanning 40 years. Helen was a highly respected senior officers who acted with integrity, both in her planning work and as part of her wider role as part of the Corporate Leadership Team. Members joined the Managing Director in wishing Helen the very best for her retirement following her long and distinguished career in local government.

76. GREATER NORWICH 5 YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN 2024/2029 AND ANNUAL GROWTH PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Leader reminded members that the Investment Plan arose from the arrangement between Norwich, South Norfolk and Broadland Councils to pool its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts to deliver infrastructure across Greater Norwich.

For 2024/25 in Broadland there were schemes at The Nest, and the Aylsham Gym and Fitness Hub, which totalled just over £1m.

Members were also requested to agree a new programme management fee in order to provide additional resource for the delivery of the annual growth programme, which had increased in size significantly.

The Leader commended the report and proposed that it be approved.

Cllr Whymark added his support for the approval of the report.

In summing up, the Leader added that the Growth Programme also included an educational contribution of £2.5million to support the development of Norfolk County Council's capital programme within Greater Norwich.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To

1. Approve the Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2024-29 and the proposed 2024/25 Annual Growth Programme as set out in Appendix A;
2. Include the Aylsham Gym and Fitness Hub (totalling £400,000) and the Nest multi-sport indoor community hub (totalling £650,000) into the Council's Capital Programme commencing in 2024/25;
3. Approve a new programme management fee within the draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan and delegates authority to the Director for Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Policy (Leader) to agree the final fee. This fee will supplement the cost of the Greater Norwich Project Team and the fee for 2024/25 will be in the region of £115,000. The amount for future years will be confirmed within each subsequent version of this Plan. Details related to this recommendation are set out as Appendix B to this report; and
4. Agree that the Deed of Variation to the agreement entitled 'Partner Draw down and Borrowing Authorisations', that was originally signed by all partners on 21st October 2015, can be signed. This is required to progress the establishment of the already agreed City Deal Borrowing Loans Fund. Details related to this recommendation, including the Deed of Variation

77. CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL FOR THE CONSERVATION AREA OF HALVERGATE AND TUNSTALL

The Leader advised the meeting that the Appraisal had been extremely well carried out and she recommended it for approval.

Cllr Nurden, the Ward member for Marshes noted that the Conservation area status was very important for local residents, and he fully supported the adoption of the area appraisal.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To approve and adopt the conservation area appraisal for Halvergate and Tunstall Conservation Area (Appendix C).

78. CHARGING POLICY

In introducing the report Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, drew members' attention to the three key principles in the Charging Policy that would

ensure a consistent and fair approach to setting fees and charges. These were:

1. All fees and charges should aim to cover the full cost of the service.
2. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to establishing a pricing structure that catered for people on low incomes.
3. Where possible charges should be collected in advance of service delivery.

He proposed that the Charging Policy be approved.

Cllr Copplestone informed the meeting that she was pleased to see that the Charging Policy would recover costs of services.

In seconding the proposal, the Leader noted that the Policy was fair and reasonable and followed Government guidelines and that the cost would fall onto those that used the services, rather than to the general Council Taxpayer.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To approve the Charging Policy as outlined at Appendix A of the report

79. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - PRE-APPLICATION CHARGES

Cllr S Beadle, the Portfolio Holder for Planning, advised the meeting that the revised charging structure would adhere to the principle of full cost recovery for pre-application charges.

However, some categories would continue to be provided free of charge, these included listed building, tree works and compliance with conditions advice. Increased fees were proposed in areas that reflected the complexity and level of work required to provide advice and it was considered that the revised charging structure would better meet demand and improve the service offered.

Cllr Riley seconded the proposal.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To agree the revised charging structure, as set out in Appendix 3, from 1 April 2024, with the fees being rounded up to the nearest £5.

80. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND: PURCHASE OF FURTHER PROPERTIES

Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented the report, which would present an opportunity to acquire three additional temporary accommodation properties to meet housing demand in the district, whilst at the same time making

revenue savings of up to £180,000 in the first year. He proposed the report for approval.

In seconding the proposal Cllr Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, informed the meeting that this was a tremendous opportunity to increase much needed service provision, whilst saving money.

Cllr N Starling noted how quickly the Council had reacted to take advantage of this opportunity and confirmed that he fully supported the proposal.

It was,

RESOLVED

Should an allocation of further LAHF Round 2 funding be made available to the Council:

To delegate to the s151 officer the addition of up to £235,000 to the LAHF capital budget to enable the provision of matched funding, to be funded via Broadland Growth general reserves monies.

81. REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2024/25

The Chairman advised the meeting that following normal practice the budget items (Revenue Budget and Council Tax (7.6), Capital Strategy and Capital Programme (7.7), the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (7.8) would be debated together. However, votes would then be taken separately on each item. It was confirmed that the Portfolio Holder for Finance would be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes. All other members should speak for no more than nine minutes and would only be allowed to speak once.

Members were also informed that it was a statutory requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on the following items, including any amendments.

- Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2024/25
- Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29
- Council Tax Resolution 2024/25

Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the budget proposals, which he informed the meeting were robust and prudent and would deliver on the priorities of the administration and also begin to address the deficit in the Capital Programme.

In respect of the Revenue Budget the Council was in a challenging position with inflationary pressures and increasing demand on services, in particular support for families and homelessness. Government support had only been increased by four percent and an annual grant settlement hindered long term financial planning and the Council would continue to lobby on this issue.

However, the Council had been able to identify efficiencies and income, whilst still investing to improve service provision and support the community. The administration had been in place for nine months and during this time he was

pleased to confirm that existing funds had been repurposed to pay for an improved Customer Experience Programme, which would generate revenue savings when complete. Similarly, acquiring additional temporary accommodation would bring significant savings to the revenue budget. The Member Ward Grant had also been increased to return more Council Tax money back to residents.

The proposed Budget was balanced with no cuts to services, and a low inflation increase in Council Tax of £5 and in areas where special expenses for streetlighting was levied it was proposed to reduce the Band D charge by £6 compared to 2023/24. No borrowing would be required to balance the budget which he commended to Council.

In respect of the Capital Programme, members were informed that this had been reviewed to ensure that the Council was getting value for money, and it was affordable and sustainable both in the short and long-term. It was, therefore, proposed that £250,000 would be taken from the Revenue Budget towards financing the Capital Programme and it was intended to repeat this in following years, if it proved affordable.

The Capital Programme would also be subject to an ongoing review during the forthcoming financial year and moving forward, to ensure that the Council obtained value for money from every penny of its expenditure, and that the programme was affordable. In particular, effort would continue to be directed to reducing the potential draw on the General Revenue Reserve.

In respect of the Treasury Management Strategy it was confirmed that appropriate restrictions on the types of investments that the Council would utilise would be in place and no borrowing was proposed.

The Council Tax Resolution included the precepts of parishes and Norfolk County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner and the parishes precepts over which the Council had no control, however the Broadland element of the Council Tax was the lowest percentage in increase and amount being levied.

Cllr Riley added that the Council Tax charge of £134.91 or £2.60 a week, represented excellent value for money, was prudent and robust and would put the Council on a sure footing to deliver its priorities. He, therefore, commended the budget to Council.

The Leader seconded the proposal.

Cllr J Copplestone proposed the following amendments to item 7.6 Revenue Budget and Council Tax.

3. That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2024/25 for General Expenditure shall be £6,400,000, and for Special Expenditure shall be £98,000.
4. That the Band D level of Council Tax be increased by £1.50 to £131.41 for General Expenditure.

It was also proposed that recommendation 1.3 be amended to reduce the Band D

level of Council Tax increase to £1.50.

Cllr Copplestone advised the meeting that the section 151 officer had confirmed that the proposal would deliver a robust and balanced budget and ensure that the level of reserves remained adequate. This would be achieved by deleting the Broadland Availability Fund of £100,000 and removing the £500 increase to Members Grants and the £50,000 Community Grant Fund this would save a total of £174,000.

It was suggested that the Broadland Availability Fund was an unnecessary contingency given a likely upturn in the economy and the Member Grants and the Community Grants Fund were an unnecessary cost to Council Taxpayers, especially as most of those councils in receipt of the Community Grants Fund were larger councils with sufficient resources of their own. It was also noted that many Member Grants had been unspent.

Cllr Whymark seconded the amendment.

The meeting adjourned at 7.52pm and reconvened at 8.02pm when all the members above remained present.

In response to the proposed amendment, Cllr Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing reminded the meeting that the Community Grant Fund was a points-based system to ensure it was completely transparent and one of the criteria was to give extra priority if a project was to be match funded by the council applying for funding, which was the case for the majority of councils in receipt of the grant.

In respect of Member Grants, she was aware of a number of members who were waiting to see if Community Grant applications had been successful before committing their funding to projects and this was likely to be spent over the next few weeks.

Cllr Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development noted that the Community Grant Fund had been doubly oversubscribed, so he failed to see how it could be seen as unnecessary. On the contrary, he considered it to be a very important support for local councils. Neither did he consider the Broadland Availability Fund to be an unnecessary contingency, given the current difficult economic situation. He, therefore, recommended that the amendment be rejected, and the original recommendation endorsed.

Cllr T Yousefian advised the meeting that Taverham Village Hall now had a new central heating system thanks to the Community Grant, which would have been extremely difficult to deliver without this support. He hoped that the Community Grant Fund would continue to provide much needed assistance for all parishes for many years to come.

Cllr N Starling suggested that four years ago the Conservative administration had opted for the maximum permitted increase in Council Tax, largely to fund an increase in members allowances, not to fund grants for voluntary organisations, which seemed to suggest double standards.

Cllr M Booth, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, noted that the Community Grants and Member Grants were much needed by deserving voluntary bodies and that any unused Member Grant money was now carried over to the Community Grant Fund, instead of being lost as it had been under the previous administration.

The Leader concurred with the comments for her colleagues and emphasised the importance in having a contingency fund in these uncertain times with no real signs of the economy picking up. Moreover, she considered it inappropriate to table at the meeting an amendment to an item as important as the budget consisting of four pages supplied by the officer team, as members would not have sufficient time to fully consider it.

Cllr P Bulman suggested that the budget was giving with one hand and taking with the other and that the majority of residents would prefer lower Council Tax than Community Grants. He also suggested that not enough work had been done on efficiencies to maintain services without increasing Council Tax.

Cllr F Whymark noted that the financial position inherited by the current administration was a very strong one and he felt that the comments made by Cllr Coplestone had been misrepresented. He suggested that the Council should have reserves that were clearly designated, rather than a contingency fund. He also suggested that increasing Membership Grants was an uncoded vanity project to level up with South Norfolk Council.

Cllr Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance recommended rejecting the amendment and he noted the previous administration had also had a contingency reserve of £100,000. He also advised the meeting that hard work had reduced a £200,000 budget set aside for consultants to £125,000, so that the £75,000 in savings could be used for Community projects. He also added that the previous administration had unwisely committed all of the General Reserves to the Capital Programme.

Cllr Coplestone emphasised that she was only proposing to reduce Member Grants, not to delete them completely and she reiterated the point made by Cllr Bulman that residents would prefer a reduction in Council Tax than an increase in Member Grants.

A recorded vote was conducted on the proposed amendment as follows:

Cllrs Auber, Baby, Beadle, Booth, Catchpole, Eden, Goodman, Harpley, Harvey, Holland, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Laming, Miah, Riley, Roper, L Starling, N Starling, Thomas, Tipple, Tovell, Ward, and Yousefian, voted against the amendment.

Cllrs Berry, Bowe, Brennan Bulman, Clancy, Coplestone, Crotch, Douglass, Emsell, Gurney, Johnson, Jones, Kelly, Leggett, Murrell, Newstead, Nurden, and Whymark voted for the amendment.

With 18 in favour and 22 against the amendment was lost.

Cllr Murrell reminded members that the Council would make revenue savings of

up to £180,000 by the purchase of further properties via the Local Authority Housing Fund: Purchase of Further Properties and asked if this saving could be used to ease the burden on Council Taxpayers.

Cllr Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development drew members' attention to table 7.2 in the Revenue Budget and Council Tax report, which showed a funding gap of c£200,000; down from the £1m reported in the Medium-Term Financial Plan considered by Cabinet in October 2023. This illustrated the hard work that had been undertaken by the administration to achieve efficiencies within the budget process.

He emphasised that one thing to be particularly welcomed in this budget was the movement of reserves to the Capital Programme, which would reduce costs in the future, such as the investment in housing as agreed in the Local Authority Housing Fund: Purchase of Further Properties item earlier in this meeting.

He also looked forward to Community Grants being awarded for the benefit of residents, as well as the investment in improving the Council's Customer Experience, which would not only improve services but would reduce costs. He commended the budget to Council.

Cllr N Starling noted that members had had ample opportunity to raise questions and concerns about the budget earlier in the budget setting process but had not chosen to do so. He suggested that opposition to the budget at this meeting was intended to produce headlines in the local press.

Cllr Bulman advised the meeting that there had been opposition to the budget and the proposed increase in Council Tax at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that it had only been recommended to Cabinet through the Chairman's casting vote.

Cllr Whymark emphasised that the opposition had a right to challenge proposals by the administration and it was only right and reasonable that they do so. He highlighted the aim of increasing the number of garden waste collection customers by 500 but noted that the bills of those paying by direct debit, was being increased by 7.92 percent, which was a disincentive.

Cllr Catchpole noted that had there been an increase in Government Grant commensurate with inflation there would have been no need to increase Council Tax.

Cllr Coplestone disagreed with this view and noted that the Government Grant was in line with inflation and with the introduction of the energy price cap inflation was set to fall. She also noted that the majority of consultation respondents did not support a £5 increase in Council Tax.

The Leader advised the meeting that the Government had set its funding with the assumption that local authorities would increase their Council Tax by the maximum allowed and nearly all councils had done so. She noted that the projected budget had shown a potential deficit of nearly £1m and the administration had identified numerous efficiencies to balance the budget. Inflation had also increased, so despite a recent reduction in inflation, prices were

still at a higher level. Staff pay increases would also increase Council expenditure. The Government was also refusing to provide capital funding for food waste collection, as Broadland had already rolled the scheme out which would lead to a loss of around £1m.

She added that failure to invest in opportunities for revenue income when interest rates were low had contributed to the current financial position of the Council. The Council was, therefore, striving to ensure that revenue matched the needs of the Council, and she thanked the officer team for their work in helping to produce a financially prudent and sustainable budget.

Cllr Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, concurred with the Leader's comment about the financial pressures faced by the Council and added that he had been shocked that the previous administration had committed all of the Council's reserves to the Capital Programme. Moreover Broadland, unlike South Norfolk, had failed to invest and borrow when interest rates were low and therefore did not have investment income to supplement its revenue income. The new administration had, therefore, needed to repurpose £1.1m of reserves to meet the Government requirement of a minimum of 10 percent in General Reserves. He added that to freeze Council Tax would be irresponsible and lead to further problems in the future. He therefore commended the budget to Council.

A recorded vote was held on the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2024/25

Cllrs Auber, Baby, Beadle, Booth, Catchpole, Eden, Goodman, Harpley, Harvey, Holland, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Laming, Miah, Riley, Roper, L Starling, N Starling, Thomas, Tipple, Tovell, Ward, and Yousefian, voted in favour of the recommendations.

Cllrs Berry, Bowe, Brennan Bulman, Clancy, Coppelstone, Crotch, Douglass, Emsell, Gurney, Johnson, Jones, Kelly, Leggett, Murrell, Newstead, Nurden, and Whymark voted against the recommendations.

With 22 in favour and 18 against, it was,

RESOLVED

To approve:

1. The 2024/25 base budget.
2. That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2024/25 for General Expenditure shall be £6,610,050, and for Special Expenditure shall be £98,931.
3. That the Band D level of Council Tax be increased by £5 to £134.91 for General Expenditure.
4. That the Band D level of Council Tax be £2.02 for Special Expenditure.
5. The changes to the proposed fees and charges as set out in section

82. CAPITAL STRATEGY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 TO 2028/29

A recorded vote was held on the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29

Cllrs Auber, Baby, Beadle, Berry, Booth, Bowe, Brennan, Bulman, Catchpole, Clancy, Crotch, Douglass, Eden, Emsell, Goodman, Gurney Harpley, Harvey, Holland, Johnson, Jones, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Kelly, Laming, Leggett, Miah, Murrell, Newstead Nurden Riley, Roper, L Starling, N Starling, Thomas, Tipple, Tovell, Ward, Whymark, and Yousefian, voted in favour of the recommendation.

Cllr Coplestone voted against the recommendation.

With 39 in favour and 1 against, it was,

RESOLVED

To approve the Capital Strategy (**Appendix A**) and the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29 (**Appendix B**).

83. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25

Following a show of hands it was,

RESOLVED

To approve:

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

84. COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2028 AND DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2026

The Leader introduced the report, which presented the new Council Plan and accompanying Delivery Plan for the period covering 2024-2028 for adoption.

She reminded members that a great deal of work had been undertaken in drafting the Plans and several member workshops had been held. The Plans sought to address the commitments made by the Groups that made up the Council's administration.

These included key priorities such as housing supply and protecting the environment, whilst the overarching objective was putting people first in a cleaner, greener Broadland. Some areas were concerned with the provision of statutory

services and some in areas where improvement was required.

Given the financial constraints of rising costs, inflationary pressures, and a possible reduction in income from investment, the Council Plan and the Delivery Plan represented the best approach that the Council could take. She recommended the Plans to Council.

Cllr N Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing, seconded the recommendation

Cllr Whymark informed the meeting that although he liked some of the content of the Plans, he did not feel that it was ambitious enough. For example, although the Council had declared a climate emergency, there was no funding for a Cleaner Greener Broadland and the Retrofit Accelerator was the Norfolk Warm Homes Fund, which was not a new scheme. He added that he would have liked to see bold, innovative, ideas which he thought were lacking in the Plans. He suggested that he would welcome the opportunity in future to work upon the Plans with the Leader to improve them.

Cllr Murrell concurred with the comments of Cllr Whymark and added that a number of initiatives had now been categorised as business as usual and were likely to fail unless they were ambitious and driven.

Cllr S Clancy noted that putting the right homes in the right places was a laudable aim, but with nutrient neutrality, habitat constraints, high interest rates and affordability issues, unless positive measures were in place the right homes in the right places could not be delivered. He suggested that more detail was required on how this aim was going to be delivered and that meaningful targets for housing delivery should be included in the Plan.

Cllr J Emsell felt that the Plan lacked innovation, and that some measures were backward steps, such as reducing the recycling rate target from 60 percent to 51 percent. He also suggested that there was no viable business case for the Retrofit Accelerator Programme.

Cllr M Booth, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, noted that there were a number of activities in the Plan that were listed as businesses as usual, but they included some very significant examples such as at the Food Innovation Centre where 115 food and drink businesses had been supported, (28 percent over target), 550 members signed up for the Food Cluster (175 percent over target), 17,000 cluster events and workshop attendees (70 percent over target) and 18 startup business supports (20 percent over target). He emphasised that these activities were delivering tangible outcomes for the Council.

Similarly, a Council-wide approach to the green agenda was being embedded across the organisation, so all decisions considered environmental impacts and supported the Council's net zero target. For example, at Broadland Country Park an intrinsic part of the new Visitor Centre project was for the design to deliver a low carbon footprint.

Cllr N Starling noted that it was disingenuous to ask for more money for projects in the Plan when it was clear from the budget discussions earlier in the meeting

that the Council was under significant financial pressure. He commended the Plans for being ambitious, whilst providing services for residents at a fair and reasonable cost.

Cllr Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing noted that when the Conservative Group were the administration, they had never offered the opposition the opportunity to help draft the Council's Strategic Plan, so Cllr Whymark should not expect any different treatment now that his Group was in opposition. She commended the Plan to Council.

The Leader emphasised that schemes such as the Retrofit Accelerator programme were intended to demonstrate that the Council could deliver on a small scale, so that when the Government funding became available the Council had tangible examples of what it could do on a bigger scale. This was a realistic and pragmatic approach to take when the Council was under financial pressure and an example of this was establishing Broadland Living Ltd to produce housing and bring a return on investment to the Council. She noted that this was a starting point for a project that could take 15 -20 years to build revenues and fund services for the Council and for the generations to come. She recommended the Plans to Council.

Following a show of hands with 22 in favour and 17 against it was,

RESOLVED

To approve the adoption of the Council Plan 2024-2028 and Delivery Plan 2024-2026.

85. COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2024/25

Cllr Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, recommended the Council Tax Resolution

A recorded vote was held for recommendations 1,2 and 3, as follows

Cllrs Auber, Baby, Beadle, Booth, Bowe, Catchpole, Clancy, Copplestone, Crotch, Douglass, Eden, Emsell, Goodman, Gurney Harpley, Harvey, Holland, Johnson, Jones, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Kelly, Laming, Leggett, Miah, Murrell, Newstead Nurden Riley, Roper, L Starling, N Starling, Thomas, Tipple, Tovell, Ward, and Whymark Yousefian, voted in favour of the recommendations.

Cllr Berry, Brennan, and Bulman voted against the recommendations.

With 37 in favour and 3 voting against it was,

RESOLVED

1. That the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 be noted.
2. The sums that have been calculated for 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act.
3. That the County and Police precepts be noted.

A recorded vote was held for recommendations 4 and 5, as follows,

Cllrs Auber, Baby, Beadle, Berry, Booth, Catchpole, Eden, Goodman, Harpley, Harvey, Holland, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Laming, Miah, Riley, Roper, L Starling, N Starling, Thomas, Tipple, Tovell, Ward, and Yousefian, voted in favour of the recommendations.

Cllr, Bowe, Brennan, Bulman, Clancy, Coplestone, Crotch, Douglass, Emsell, Gurney, Johnson, Jones, Kelly, Leggett, Murrell, Newstead, Nurden, and Whymark voted against the recommendations.

With 23 in favour and 17 voting against it was,

RESOLVED

To agree

4. The Council Tax for 2024/25.

That the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25 is not excessive.

To Follow

86. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Leader introduced the report which proposed amending the layout and ordering of the Constitution and an update on the representation to outside bodies.

Following a review and feedback received from both Members and officers, it was proposed that the Constitution required reformatting and re-ordering to ensure that correlated sections were located together, making it easier to find and access key information on how the Council should be operating.

It was also proposed to add in a new section, which would outline a list of all Outside Bodies the Council was involved in and provide clarification on their purpose for openness and transparency.

The report also set out a number of changes to member representation on Outside Bodies and Committees.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

1. To the reformatting of the Constitution as set out in section 2 of the report.
2. To add in a new section to the Constitution outlining the role and purpose of outside bodies.
3. The amendments to outside bodies and committees as set out in section 3 of the report.
4. The consequential changes to the Constitution to be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.

87. OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Members noted Cllr S Catchpole's report from Norfolk Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 6th February 2024.

Members also noted Cllr J Royal's report on the Youth Advisory Board.

88. QUESTION FROM CLLR NIGEL BRENNAN

1. When Broadland District Council agreed to purchase 50% of the Horizon Centre with South Norfolk District Council, it was on the premise that all costs would be offset by the sale of our offices at Thorpe Lodge. Would the Leader explain to the Council what progress has been made and when will we see the sale of Thorpe Lodge?

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development responded to this query as it fell under his Portfolio. He advised the meeting that Thorpe Lodge had and continued to be advertised for sale. In line with planning policy the site had to be advertised for at least 12 months in its current use before any alternative use could be considered. A number of viewers had looked at the site all of them were considering alternative residential use, rather than the previous commercial usage. The agent had suggested that in order to obtain the maximum proceeds for Thorpe Lodge it would be advisable to market the site for alternative use with pre-planning advice, as this would reduce the risks to potential purchasers and increase incentives.

Work had, therefore, been focused on drawing the pre-application submission together which would be submitted imminently, however alongside this officers had also been exploring opportunities for brownfield funding and had recently submitted an application via Broadland Growth Limited to see if this was a potential development site that could be taken forward. Officers continued to explore other brownfield funding opportunities as well.

In answer to a question about the ongoing cost of keeping the Thorpe Lodge site secure, members were advised that this came to around £70,000 a year.

5. Would the Leader tell Council if there is an intention to install a prominent sign on the south-facing aspect of the Horizon Centre? Doing so would proudly proclaim to Broadland residents, and the general public, that the Horizon Centre is the home for Broadland District Council and South Norfolk District Council?

The Leader confirmed that there was no intention to install such as sign, as it would need planning permission, be expensive and probably hidden from view once the new neighbouring building was built on that side of the Horizon Centre. She also considered that it would be of no benefit to residents.

89. MOTION - NORWICH WESTERN LINK

Cllr S Clancy moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr J Copplestone

The Norwich Western Link (NWL) is widely supported by residents, businesses, emergency services and Norfolk County Council (NCC), due to reductions in congestion and pollution which will inevitably follow. Jerome Mayhew MP, recently wrote to the Leader looking 'for confirmation that the Council remains unequivocal in its support' for the NWL, 'which will see nearly £250m' of investment in our infrastructure.

Broadland District Council (BDC) resolves its strong support for the NWL and agrees that the Leader and Managing Director will write on behalf of BDC to the Leader and Chief Executive at NCC asking that they progress this important infrastructure project urgently, to avoid further costly and unnecessary delays.

Cllr Clancy noted that the Council had long supported the Western Link and had asked members to support the project.

Cllr N Starling expressed amazement that Cllr Clancy believed that Norfolk County Council were delaying the Western Link because they were waiting for a letter from the Managing Director and Leader of a Council that had no control over this matter. He suggested that this motion would be better directed toward the County Council.

Cllr Bulman advised the meeting that if any member was in doubt of the need for the Western Link, they should get in touch with Ringland Parish Council or Western Longville Parish Council, who were desperate to see it delivered. He added that the people who opposed the scheme were not those not affected by the heavy traffic going through their villages. He urged members to support the motion.

The Chairman informed the meeting that she was also the Chair of Taverham Parish Council and she wanted to see the Western Link completed, but that the County Council, not Broadland was the right forum for this matter.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development noted that the Council had already made it clear at the meeting on March 2022 that it fully supported the Western Link and at that meeting there had been only four votes against the motion. Since March 2022 the political makeup of the Council had changed and there were members who were opposed to the project and indeed have been elected on that basis and it was clear that the motion would have far greater opposition. Therefore, if the motion was put to the vote a message would be sent to the County Council that it had less support now at Broadland than it did in March 2022 and as a supporter of the Western Link, he thought it would be unwise to reopen the debate when the Council had already given the project its support by a massive majority.

Cllr M Murrell noted that it had been suggested that the Western Link was not in the Council's remit and yet in July the Council had declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and in December it had declared support for the Climate and Ecology Bill, both of which were not within the Council's remit, so it was double standards to not support the motion.

Cllr J Emsell stated that the aim of the motion was to clarify to the residents of Broadland the position of Council in respect of the Western Link.

Cllr Jones agreed with the point made by Cllr Murrell and reaffirmed that the Council had voted on motions that it had no influence on and yet the Western Link affected Broadland residents, so the Council should make clear its support for the project.

The Leader pointed out that the County Council had already said they were going ahead with the project and the Government had confirmed that they were going to fund 85 percent of it, so it was a matter for the County Council and if the concern was that they had not proceeded with it she suggested that the matter be taken up with the County Council. She confirmed that she would be voting against the motion, not because she was opposed to the road, but because she was against the principle of motions being brought to the Council over which it could have no influence.

Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, agreed that the motion should have been moved at the County Council which was the correct forum for this matter.

Cllr Whymark said that he was disappointed that some members thought that Councillors should not represent their residents who were being impacted by this issue and that reaffirming the support of the Council would add weight to argument that the central Government should fund the whole scheme.

Cllr J Copplestone noted that the Norwich Western link was essential infrastructure for the economic growth of Broadland, and she highlighted the importance of cars for residents who lived in smaller village and currently relied on a substandard road network.

In summing up Cllr Clancy accepted that Broadland would not make the decision on the Western Link but support for the motion would send a strong message to the County Council that the Broadland was fully behind the delivery of this scheme.

A recorded vote was held, as follows,

Cllrs Auber, Baby, Beadle, , Booth, Catchpole, Eden, Goodman, Harpley, Harvey, Holland, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Laming, Miah, Riley, Roper, L Starling, N Starling, Thomas, Tipple, Tovell, Ward, and Yousefian voted against the motion.

Cllr, Berry, Bowe, Brennan, Bulman, Clancy, Copplestone, Crotch, Douglass, Emsell, Gurney, Johnson, Jones, Kelly, Leggett, Murrell, Newstead, Nurden, and Whymark voted for the motion.

With 22 voting against and 18 in favour the motion was lost .

(The meeting concluded at 10.00 pm)

Chairman
