



SOUTH NORFOLK CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the South Norfolk Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday, 18 March 2024 at 9.00 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: The Lord Fuller OBE (Chairman), D Elmer (Vice-Chair), K Carsok, R Elliott, K Kiddie, G Minshull and L Overton-Neal

Officers in Attendance: T Holden (Managing Director), P Courtier (Director of Place), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), S Phelan (Assistant Director of Community Services), Burgess (Assistant Director for Planning), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer), N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), D Slowther (Senior Finance Business Partner), R Squires (Senior Community Planning Officer), M Burrell (Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager) and L Arthurton (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance: C Brown, J Cook, T Laidlaw, D Sacks and J Webber

3210. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3211. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman noted the passing of Stephen Ridley, who had served as the Conservative Councillor for Bunwell since 2019. The Chairman paid tribute to Stephen, who he remembered for his wit and wisdom. Cabinet then observed a minute's silence in memory of Stephen Ridley.

The Chairman welcomed the new Assistant Director for Planning, Ben Burgess, to the Council.

3212. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3213. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

Cabinet noted that since the last meeting, the Council had received further funding from the Government for the Local Authority Housing Fund and officers were currently reviewing proposals for how this could best be utilised.

3214. GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN: ADOPTION

Members considered the report of the Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager, 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.

The Chairman introduced the report, noting that the drafting of the Plan had commenced in 2015 and a lot of work had gone into its creation along the way. He added that the Plan had been able to carry forward 36,000 houses from the existing Joint Core Strategy and that a further 9,000 homes would then take the plan up to 2038. Members were reminded that GNLP had been drafted by the three greater Norwich Councils, together with the County Council and the Broads Authority and that the Plan was notable as one of only two in the Country that covered a sub-regional area.

Cabinet was also advised that in addition to dwellings the Plan covered employment land, the protection of natural assets and the delivery of infrastructure and services, via the Greater Norwich Growth Board. The Plan also provided a five-year land supply and clarity on the Gypsy and Traveller sites.

In summing up the Chairman also noted the progress that had been made with the nutrient neutrality issue.

The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager explained that the Plan had received a very positive Inspector's report, and that, subject to the main modifications that they had recommended, they had considered that the case for adoption was overwhelming.

The Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager further highlighted the significant benefits of adopting the Plan, which included progress in evidence-based policies, the success of joint working arrangements, and the importance of achieving a five-year land supply.

Cllr Overton-Neal, the Portfolio Holder for Stronger, Greener Economy, noted the importance of the Plan and the work undertaken collaboratively to not only provide housing but introduce policies on environmental issues as well. She further highlighted the importance of the five-year land supply in terms of being able to protect and supply housing going forward in a managed way. Finally, she noted the South Norfolk Village Clusters Plan, which would also feed into the Plan in the future.

Cabinet was also informed that Norwich City Council had already adopted the Plan at their recent Council meeting.

The Chairman summarised the salient points of discussion, noting that further consideration would be needed in the future to review the need for a new settlement to be formed in the Greater Norwich area and that work with the Council's partners would be essential to this process. He also noted the work on the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan and the commencement of work on the Long Stratton Bypass. It was then;

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL

1. notes the inspectors' report (at Appendix A) and the required main modifications in appendices 1 to 5;
2. adopts the modified GNLP (documents J2.1 to J2.11 inclusive; and
3. delegates 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 South Norfolk.

Reason for decision

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

Other options considered

None

3215. TASBURGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - CONSIDERATION OF EXAMINER'S REPORT

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which detailed the independent examiner's report in relation to the Tasburgh Neighbourhood Plan. The examiner had suggested several modifications to the Plan and had recommended that, subject to these modifications, that it should proceed to the referendum stage.

The Chairman drew Cabinet's attention to page 143 of the agenda, where a series of community action projects that were intended to be delivered for the Tasburgh Neighbourhood area through the Plan were listed. These included cycle paths and the repair or replacement of the Village Hall play area. The Chairman emphasised that the Plan was well drafted and purposeful and should be welcomed.

The Senior Community Planning Officer added that appendix two of the report set out examiner's recommendations and that the Parish Council had confirmed that they were satisfied with the changes recommended.

In response to a question on the next steps, the Senior Community Planning Officer explained that, if approved, the Council would publish a decision statement, which would then progress to the referendum stage. The Elections Team had confirmed that this could take place in May alongside the Police, Crime, and Commissioner elections.

The Chairman congratulated all who were involved in the drafting of the Plan, noting that it was a well-considered piece of work.

It was then;

RESOLVED

To approve each of the recommended modifications to the Tasburgh Neighbourhood Plan, as detailed within the examiner's report, and publish a Decision Statement setting out the Council's response and announcing the intention for the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to a referendum.

Reason for decision

Cabinet was satisfied with the recommended modifications from the Independent Examiner and that the Plan should progress to the referendum stage.

Other options considered

None

3216. STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE, RISK AND FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 2023/24

Members considered the report of the Senior Finance Business Partner and the Assistant Director for Transformation, ICT & Digital which provided an overview of the performance of the Council against the key outcomes set out in the Delivery Plan for 2023/24.

The Chairman noted that the inflationary pressures being faced on the cost of core services were being offset by buoyant investment income, due to higher cash balances and interest rates, which meant that an additional £770,000 of resources were available to the Council. He was also pleased to note that Wymondham Town Council had agreed to the proposals to co-invest in public realm improvements.

The Chairman also drew Cabinet's attention to the Capital Scheme listed in the report, noting that the Council was making good material progress with the programme and that the report recommended an additional £95,000 investment in the vehicle inspection facilities at Ketteringham Depot.

The Senior Finance Business Partner advised members that the overall costs of core services showed a deficit of £239,000, but that this figure was more than covered by the amount of interest the Council was gaining on fixed-term investments.

The Chairman added that although the Council was going to run a budget surplus this year it was not due to a lack of spending and he emphasised the huge amount of work done to provide help and support to those residents most in need. The Senior Finance Business Partner also noted that the Council could see a slight increase in the amount of interest it received, which might see a further improvement in the Council's financial position.

Cllr Elliott, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources noted that leisure services had seen an improved position and turning to the Capital Programme he noted that Big Sky had not called upon the loans, which were provisionally set aside, which had addressed some of the gaps in overall spending within the Capital Programme.

Conversation turned to the performance dashboard, where the Chairman explained that the Council had always set ambitious targets. In relation to the red indicator for housing and homelessness, the Chairman noted that the service had continued to see increased demand and that the quarter included the Christmas period, which always recorded an increase in numbers. He also noted that further investment in temporary accommodation was taking place, with the site in Diss progressing quickly. It was further noted that, alongside the Council's temporary accommodation offer, £350,000 was available to help families in the form of a discretionary fund and through this fund over 100 families were given assistance every week.

Turning to the staff turnover performance indicator, the Chief of Staff noted that the Council had set a high target of a 10 percent turnover since the implementation of the One Team back in 2020. It was noted that within the current markets a target of 15 percent was more realistic. Cabinet also noted that, through the exit interview process, detailed data was being recorded to allow a better understanding of why employees had left and that career progression had been a reason in many cases.

Reference was made to the performance indicator for Council Tax collection, where it was noted that there had been some difficulties in collection rates resulting from cost-of-living pressures.

Looking at the positive performance indicators, Cabinet noted the 100 percent record for planning decisions being made on time and that there were only 18 missed bins per 100,000 collected by the waste service. Cllr Elmer, the Portfolio Holder for Governance, Technology and Innovation noted that affordable home delivery had also doubled.

Moving on to the Strategic Risk Register, the Chairman highlighted risks around cyber security at the Council, noting that there had been several councils across the country that had been victims of cyber-attacks and that officers were continuing to work on an Action Plan for further improvements to the Council's cyber security.

In response to a query from Cllr Laidlaw about investment of income from Big Sky the Managing Director explained that the payable interest was accounted for on an annual basis, which was reflected in the report. He further confirmed that

Big Sky had not taken out additional anticipated loans. The Chairman added that there had been a hiatus due to the nutrient neutrality issue and the anticipated drawdowns for Big Sky had not happened. However, now that the sale of environmental credits had begun, development would recommence.

It was then;

RESOLVED

1. To endorse the revenue and capital position (variance details in Appendix 1).
3. To endorse the 2023/24 performance for Quarter 3 (detail in Appendix 2).
4. To endorse the current position with respect to risks and agree the actions to support risk mitigation (detailed in Appendix 3).
5. To agree that an additional £95,000 be added to the list of additional works agreed at the South Norfolk Council meeting on 21st Feb 2024 to fund essential works to improve the current vehicle inspection facilities at Ketteringham Depot.

Reason for decision

The report was a factual account.

Other options considered

None

3217. STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members considered the report of the Director of Resources which detailed a proposed Strategic Asset Management Framework and Commercial Property Asset Management Plan, under which the Council would manage, dispose, and acquire property assets.

Cllr Richard Elliott, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, introduced the report, noting that the Framework and Strategy were comprised of the following three elements:

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

He noted that the Council had assets valued at £48m, which included operational assets such as temporary accommodation and commercial properties.

The Chairman noted that there had been a shift in the way the Council treated its assets since 2017 due to wider investment in sites where social and economic

benefits could be delivered.

The Director for Resources added that there had been a change in the emphasis in the Strategy, driven by central Government to ensure that investments in properties were beneficial for the district, as well as a source of income generation. It was noted that the assets of Big Sky were held separately.

In response to a question raised by Cllr Webber, the Director of Resources confirmed that all investment assets fell under the framework and were within Government guidelines.

Cllr Overton-Neal highlighted some of the investments that the Council had made in the district. Notably, the delivery of Ketts Park and the Ella May Barnes building which had created jobs and enhanced the communities. Cllr Elmer further highlighted the future delivery of the new doctors surgeries in Diss and Hethersett, which were scheduled to be delivered in 2026/27.

It was then;

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

1. The adoption of the Strategic Asset Management Framework.
2. The adoption of the Commercial Property Asset Management Strategy.

Reason for decision

To update and adopt the Strategic Asset Management Framework and Commercial Property Asset Management Strategy in accordance with best practice.

Other options considered

None

3218. DISTRICT DIRECT FUNDING

Cabinet considered the report of the Health and Wellbeing Senior Manager, which sought Cabinet approval to enter a partnership agreement with Norfolk County Council to continue the delivery of the District Direct service from 2024 to 2025.

The Chairman noted that the Council had previously invested in a scheme to provide home facilities to allow residents to be discharged from the hospital and reduce bed blocking and that this approach had been successful.

Cllr Carsok, Portfolio Holder for Active and Healthy Lifestyles, introduced the report, noting the service was essential in keeping the NHS running, making sure patients were discharged quickly, as well as preventing people from going into hospital. She further highlighted that the District Direct Service was not statutory

but has become an essential part of the healthcare system now. The funding for the service came primarily from Norfolk County Council and the Integrated Care Board, with a small amount of funding also coming from the Council.

Members noted that the Team worked in an agile and flexible way, which allowed patients to be discharged quickly by dealing with non-medical needs such as key safes and pendant alarms. The Team handled more than 3,000 referrals per year, which equated to an estimated bed-day saving of over £17m per year.

The Assistant Director for Individuals and Families added that South Norfolk Council had led the way in delivering the service, and through this it had shown the key role the Council played in the health service. He further explained that the Council worked on behalf of five other district councils, as NHS boundaries did not correspond to district geographical areas.

Cabinet noted that the report was made up of two elements: the first, making sure the service continued for the next year, and the second, to allow delegation to the Director of People and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Active and Healthy Lifestyles, to enter into a multi-year funding stream for this service from April 2025.

The Chairman reiterated that the service not only saved money on hospital beds but also helped people leave hospital and return to their own homes safely.

In response to a question raised by Cllr Webber regarding potential costs of the service, the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families confirmed that the service was fully funded by Adult Social Care and the NHS with the Council adding on 10 percent for management costs.

The Chairman emphasised that the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants scheme provided funding to make improvements to residents' homes and the District Direct Team help determine prioritisation of where this money was spent.

It was then;

RESOLVED

1. To delegate authority to the Director of People and Communities to enter a fully funded partnership agreement with Norfolk County Council for the provision of District Direct in 2024/25.
2. To approve the proposal to pursue discussions with the Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board with the aim of establishing a substantive and multi-year funding stream for this service from April 2025, delegating authority to the Director of People and Communities in consultation with the portfolio holder for Active and Healthy Lifestyles, to enter into such agreement.

Reason for decision

Continuing this service through a partnership with Norfolk County Council would ensure that residents had access to hospital beds or had the chance to remain at

home and retain independence where this was a viable option.

Other options considered

None

3219. FORWARD PLAN

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

(The meeting concluded at 10.26 am)

Chairman