

BROADLAND CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Cabinet of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday, 16 July 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: S Holland (Chairman) and S Beadle

Officers in Attendance: T Holden (Managing Director), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), P Courtier (Director of Place), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), B Burgess (Assistant Director for Planning), S Phelan (Assistant Director of Community Services), D Slowther (Senior Finance Business Partner), R Dunsire (Head of Housing and Benefits), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer), H Hall (Performance Lead) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S Beadle and S Holland.

121. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

122. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised members that the Committee had queried an issue with the Direct Debit payments for Garden Waste collection when considering the Performance Report and had suggested restricting the allocation of S106 properties going forward to those with a local connection in perpetuity, when considering the Housing Allocations Policy. The Committee had also recognised that the new Government might no longer require the Productivity Plan, but it was considered a useful exercise to demonstrate the efficiency of the Council.

123. REPRESENTATIONS FROM NON-CABINET MEMBERS

Cllr Whymark drew members' attention to the economic indicators in respect of new jobs, employment and Universal Credit in the Performance Report and asked Cabinet what they were doing to address these issues. He also asked what the long-term plan was for S106 properties, which were currently only being let on a local connection basis for the first let.

In response the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing advised the meeting that the economic indicators were affected by national issues outside of the control of the Council and could also be related to a changing demographic profile that saw more retirees move into the district. Similarly, Universal Credit was a national policy, however the Benefits Team were working very hard to support the increase in the number of claimants.

In respect of the S106 query, the Head of Housing and Benefits confirmed that a report was scheduled to be brought to members to address planning and local housing needs in 2025.

124. STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 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, for Quarter 4.

Cabinet was advised that in Quarter 4 performance was good with 70 percent of measures on target and rated as green, 8 measures were amber indicating the target had not been met but was within the set tolerance and two were red, indicating that performance was below an acceptable level and remedial action was required.

In respect of the customer satisfaction measure, which had not met its target, the Strategy and Data Officer explained that due to a delay with the supplier, the launch of the customer satisfaction survey on the Council's telephone lines had been delayed. However, this issue had now been resolved and surveys would be rolled out for the next Quarter, which would allow monthly detailed response data to be sent to service areas to enable improvements. It was emphasised that the data in the report was purely for the website and as it was an incomplete picture it had resulted in the measure being rated red.

The demand on housing measure, which was also rated red, had seen a far higher pressure than anticipated due to adverse economic conditions, the implementation of new Government legislation and a decline in the private rental sector. The Council's temporary accommodation purchase programme was bringing 43 units into use to help address this issue.

The collection rate of Council Tax and Business Rates were both amber due to the implementation of a new Revenues Benefits system in December, which resulted in four weeks of downtime during the conversion and court recovery work being suspended during this time. These issues had mainly been resolved and collection rates were now returning to expected levels.

The measures for new jobs, employment and Universal Credit had shown a decline and were rated amber, as already discussed. The Council was continuing to promote the Business Builder and Building Futures programmes to encourage additional investment and employment opportunities. It was also more likely that residents were moving over to Universal Credit from other benefits, which was likely to be the cause of the increase, rather than lower paid jobs.

The measures for staff turnover, which had been red had shown a 22 percent reduction and was now rated amber. The HR Team continued to support managers in reducing their turnover using exit interview feedback and continuous coaching through the employee cycle.

Both measures for food hygiene ratings and the percentage of fly tips removed within one working day were set to very high standards and only missed their targets by a minimal amount. They would, therefore, be the subject of light monitoring.

Twenty-two measures were on target and rated green. These included business survival rates where the latest data available indicated that for 2022 the percentage of businesses surviving over one year was 94.9 percent in Broadland. This was an increase on the previous year and reflected in part the success of the Business Builder support programme in providing start-ups with the essential tools to increase their resilience.

The number of residents accessing support via the Help Hub, had also exceeded the target and was driven by the cost of living and increased awareness, as well as individual projects that targeted support. A review would be undertaken to fully understand the demand profile so that proactive interventions could be put into place to help support people earlier and before issues escalated. Participation levels in the Garden Waste Service had also increased by over 1,800 customers, despite pressures with the cost of living.

There were no new risks on the Risk Register. The cyber security risk continued to be rated high and had a range of measures in place to address this, including a third-party review, raising awareness about adhering to the security policy and ensuring that staff and members were trained in cyber security.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing advised the meeting that it was pleasing to see so many measures rated green, and she especially noted that those related to housing were very positive.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development also noted that Customer Satisfaction measure was set high, but it was heading in the right direction and should meet its target next year.

In answer to a question about the new system for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, the Assistant Director for Finance confirmed that the Council was on target to deliver significant savings through the adoption of one licence instead of two and that even though the collection rate had dipped recently it was still very good in comparison with other neighbouring local authorities and it was expected to improve going forward.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To endorse the Quarter 4 2023/24 performance.
2. To endorse the current position with respect to risks and agree the actions to support risk mitigation.

125. FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 2023/24

Cabinet considered the report from the Senior Finance Business Partner, which summarised the Council's financial position for Quarter 4 and the final year end position.

Members were advised that over the year inflation and increased demand on services had led to cost pressures. However, this had been offset by buoyant investment income of £1.939m, which exceeded the budgeted amount of £1.108m. This would allow £451,000 to be transferred to the General Reserve.

As at the end of March the Council had spent £14.571m on capital schemes in 2023/24, compared with the £13.693m that had been forecast in the Quarter 3 report.

Members were asked to approve the revenue and capital slippage requests.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised members that the Council faced challenging times particularly in relation to inflation, which could vary from the headline figures according to what goods and services were required. The Council had also done a lot of work on efficiencies and savings to bring down the deficit on the cost of core services to £63,000, which was covered by investment income. However, as income was spent on the Capital Programme, there would be less money to invest and a subsequent reduction in investment income. The Council, therefore, needed to maintain its focus on savings and efficiencies.

He proposed an additional recommendation to set aside £30,000 from the positive revenue variance of £451,000 to support the work of the Housing Team. This would consist of £10,000 for the Whatever It Takes Fund, £5,000 for the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Fund and £15,000 for Discretionary Housing Payments. Any of these funds not spent during 2024/25 would be transferred to General Reserves.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing seconded the proposal, and it was,

RESOLVED

1. To endorse the revenue and capital position for year-end.
2. To approve the revenue and capital slippage requests for use in 2024/25.

And subject to an amendment proposed by Cabinet:

3. To set aside £30,000 from the positive revenue variance of £451,000 to support the work of the Housing Team. This is to consist of £10,000 for the

Whatever It Takes Fund, £5,000 for the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Fund and £15,000 for Discretionary Housing Payments. Any of these funds not spent during 2024/25 would be transferred to General Reserves.

126. ANNUAL TREASURY REVIEW REPORT

The Assistant Director for Finance introduced the report, which reviewed the Treasury Management activity during the financial year 2023/24 and reported on the prudential indicators on Treasury Management.

The Council's investments totalled £42.662m as of 31 March 2024, including £8.3m in externally managed funds.

The Council's budgeted investment income for the year had been set at £1,107,700. and interest earned was £1,939,000, which was £831,300 over budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance informed members that security of capital remained the Council's main investment objective.

It was,

RESOLVED

To

1. Note the treasury activity for the second half of the year and that it complies with the agreed strategy.
2. Note the 2023/24 prudential indicators for the latter six months of the year.

127. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Housing and Benefits, which proposed the adoption of an updated Housing Allocations Policy following extensive member engagement, a consultation, and legislative changes.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing proposed the following amendment to the Policy, to take account of the concern expressed about the removal of the family connection in the consultation:

That the family connection qualification in table 4.1 in the report should be the following:

An applicant aged 55 or over with a family connection to Broadland District Council who has an ongoing need for care, and it is necessary to move to Broadland to enable the family member to meet this care need.

It was also proposed to add further clarity to the core Policy, at paragraph 6.4.3, with the following:

An applicant will have a family connection where they have a close family member who has resided in the district continuously for at least five years. The family member must be responsible for the unpaid care of the

applicant who needs help because of frailty, illness or a disability and they cannot cope without this support. Consideration will be given to the extent and frequency of the care required, the distance the applicant lives from the family member and what other provision of care is available to the applicant in their current locality. Evidence may be requested to verify the relationship between the applicant and the family member, the care needs of the applicant and the length of time the family member has been resident in the district.

The Head of Housing and Benefits reminded members that the Allocation Policy was the means that residents gained access to social housing and the review had been subject to a significant member engagement during its development. This process had also allowed any suggested changes to be stringently assessed, so that officers could be confident that the recommendations in the report would reflect the needs of residents.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing advised members that she was pleased with how the Policy had been developed to best meet the needs of the Council's residents.

The Portfolio Holder noted the amount of attention that had gone into the Policy, which he was happy to support.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence also commended the report, which had clarity and evidence to support the guidance therein.

It was,

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To adopt the Housing Allocations Policy, as amended.

128. PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

Members considered the report from the Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer, which presented the Council's Productivity Plan in response to the Productivity in Local Government request, from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

The submission deadline for the Plan was 19 July 2024, but following the General Election the Council was awaiting a steer from Government on what the next steps should be. However, until then submission of the Plan would go ahead as requested.

Members were advised that the DLUHC required that Plans consider the following themes:

- 1. How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.*
- 2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.*
- 3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.*
- 4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help reduce or remove.*

The Plan reflected the Council's current Policy Framework and had been drafted based on the Council Plan for 2024-2028 and Delivery Plan and would be used to consider emerging issues, implications for future national policy design and the role of central Government in supporting further change in local government.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development noted that the Plan demonstrated that driving efficiencies was business as usual for the Council and that it was useful to put forward some Broadland specific requests about barriers that were preventing progress to central Government.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence emphasised that long-term funding was the most important issue for local government.

The Managing Director suggested that as the DLUHC no longer existed recommendation 2 should be amended to submit the Plan to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To approve the draft Productivity Plan for Broadland District Council.
2. To delegate authority to the Chief of Staff (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with the Leader, to finalise and submit the Productivity Plan to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

126. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY ANNUAL UPDATE AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

The Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report which summarised the progress made by the Council during 2023-2024 in complying with the duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty, as required by the Equality Act 2010 and to update the Equality Objectives for the Council.

The report highlighted some of the activities and work which had been undertaken by the Council over the last year to improving equality, serve the people of Broadland and behaved as a responsible employer.

The Equality Objectives had been updated to reflect the Council Plan 2024–28 and Delivery Plan for 2024–26 and showed the activities the Council was undertaking to achieve both the Public Sector Equality Duty and its Equality and Diversity Policy. The revised Objectives now included target delivery dates and lead officers to ensure greater oversight and accountability for delivery.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that both staff and members undertook mandatory training on equalities, diversity, and inclusion. The Council also ran regular events on the equalities for staff and members it was also raising awareness of the INTRAN translation and interpretation service. The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development endorsed the report but suggested that it might be improved by having a full list of the equality events held by the Council in future iterations.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To note the Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report.
2. To approve the Equality Objectives for 2024 – 2028.

130. FORWARD PLAN

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

(The meeting concluded at 6.52 pm)

Chairman