

BROADLAND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Broadland District Council, held on Tuesday, 23 July 2024 at 6.30 pm.

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: N Starling (Chairman), P Bulman (Vice-Chair), P Berry, L Douglass, J Emsell, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, E Laming, P Newstead, S Ward and T Yousefian
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors: M Murrell, E Tovell and F Whymark
Cabinet Member in Attendance:	Councillor: S Beadle, M Booth and S Riley
Officers in Attendance:	E Hodds (Chief of Staff), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), C Lawrie (Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), D Baillie-Murden (Programme Manager - Economic Growth), J Kubala (Health and Wellbeing Partnership Lead), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

135. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was received from Cllr M Murrell, E Tovell, and F Whymark.

136. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

137. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded the meeting that suggestions for items for inclusion on the Committee's Work Programme, were always welcome.

138. UPDATE FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE - VERBAL

Cllr Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, reminded members that the Committee had reviewed the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service at its 23 January 2024 meeting, where the value of the Coordinator post to the Council had been noted and he had advised members that he would discuss the continued funding of this post with his counterpart at South Norfolk. He confirmed that he was pleased to report that funding for the Business Regulatory Support Hub Coordinator post on a temporary fixed term contract had been agreed with South Norfolk on a 45/55 split and that the post would be advertised in due course.

139. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised members that several new items had been agreed by the Chairman for inclusion on the Work Programme. These were:

Support for Young People	10 September 2024
Budget Questions for Cabinet	12 November 2024
Working with Housing Providers	12 November 2024
Joint Budget Meeting with Cabinet	12 November 2024
Housing Allocations Policy	25 March 2025

140. BROADLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP

Members considered the report of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Lead, which provided an update on the spending and activities of the Broadland Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

Members were reminded that the Broadland Health and Wellbeing Partnership brought together partners across all sectors to promote health and wellbeing, address the wider determinants of poor health and tackle health inequalities.

The Partnership had a collective mission, 'to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of communities in Broadland' and a shared vision that 'every person in Broadland would have equal opportunities to live healthier, happier lives.'

Projects included providing training to establish World Cafes for community engagement, and Mindful Towns and Villages with a particular focus on children and young people.

A member noted that planning could have a significant impact on health, and asked how the departments across the Council addressed this issue and how it influenced the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. She also noted that the County Council was not a statutory consultee on health in Planning matters, which appeared to be an omission.

In response the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families confirmed that the Communities Team worked closely with Planning on the place shaping agenda, but it was a valid point to raise and he would do some further work on this and bring back some ideas to the Committee in due course. He would also discuss the point about the County Council as a health consultee with the Assistant Director for Planning to clarify this matter.

A member emphasised the importance of publicising the Partnership activities, especially those related to men's mental health, to raise public awareness of the support on offer.

In response to a question from the Chairman about what could be done about the lack of NHS dentists in Broadland, the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families, confirmed that the Council sat on the Place Board, which oversaw operational delivery of local resources to improve healthcare, which was seeking to establish a school of dentistry at the UEA with the aim of retaining dentists who had trained locally. There were also some interesting ideas around encouraging the sharing of buildings or establishing Health Hubs.

The Chairman noted that a lack of pharmacies was also a concern in existing communities and that this could be an even greater problem for new developments.

In response, the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families confirmed that he would discuss the provision of pharmacies with the Assistant Director for Planning but as they were commercial enterprises, he suspected there would be no easy solution for this problem. He noted that there were a range of issues to explore, and he would update the Committee on them at a future meeting.

In answer to a query about the provision of health information courses, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Lead advised members that Public Health was an influential member of the Partnership, which had extensive data that could be utilised to target groups, for example men's mental health, which already had funding in place. It was confirmed that further work could be carried out to expand this provision.

In answer to a question about the World Café, it was confirmed that 25 people had been trained in Broadland and that it was the ambition for 60 people to attend the participation event. A robust plan was in place in terms of engagement and working with primary care to identify those difficult to reach people who could be those most in need of support.

The aim of the World Café was to have an initial broad theme, such as healthy and resilient communities and then explore what the community needed to meet this need, to self-identify areas that the partnership could support in delivering.

It was also confirmed that discussions had been held yesterday about how to involve individual Older People's Forums in the work of the Partnership.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To endorse the current work of the Partnership; and
2. That the comments and suggestions made by members be explored with the Partnership.

141. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report, which provided an update on the progress of the Customer Experience Programme and sought the views of the Committee on the proposed member engagement and the draft key reporting milestones.

Members were reminded that in December 2023, the Council agreed to initiate a Customer Experience Programme as a mechanism to achieve the strategic aims set out in the Council Plan.

The Programme had the three core objectives of:

- improving customer experience and satisfaction,
- generating efficiencies by use of technology, and
- streamlining processes and improving staff experience.

The Programme was multi-year and complex and would deliver several core improvements, including a new web forms platform and the customer experience platform.

The report was the first of a number that would be made to the Committee as the Programme progressed and it included known milestones which would increase as the Programme developed.

The milestones outlined for the Committee were:

- Milestone One: Roadmap for Customer Journey Mapping, expected in Quarter Two 2024. This would seek views on the order and timeline on the services mapped.
- An informal update at milestone two; the result of the procurement process with confirmed costs expected in Quarter Three autumn 2024.
- Milestone three Programme closure expected Quarter Four 2026/27

As the programme progressed it was proposed that member engagement was sought in the development through a member user group. This would involve testing user journeys against specifications and providing feedback.

A member noted that there would be several technologies and partners to work with on the project and he suggested that it would be more informative if the report included the complete Programme Plan, as well as the accompanying Earned Value Management report, which recorded how much time and cost has been expended for each activity in relation to work completed.

In response, the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation confirmed that the Programme Plan could be included as part of the first key milestones report.

A member advised the meeting that he had experienced problems reporting a pest control problem because the website could not locate his address. He emphasised that it should be ensured that new platforms should be compatible with other systems at the Council and that it should allow for feedback on the service.

In reply, the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation confirmed that all webforms would work across all platforms and she would pick up the issue of his address with him after the meeting. She also confirmed that part of the Customer Experience Programme would be exploring how to best gather feedback to ensure the best service possible.

The Vice-Chairman expressed his disappointment that the report was vague and did not give assurance that the project was on target in terms of time and cost.

In response, the Assistant Director for ICT/Digital and Transformation assured members that the programme was on schedule and on cost, and she indicated the year one high-level breakdown set out in the table at paragraph 3.1 that included progress and savings to date.

It was confirmed that members would be emailed the Programme Plan, as well as an updated progress table and that a report would be brought to the 12 November 2024 meeting of the Committee with more detail as requested by the Committee, and to review and input into the roadmap for Customer Journey Mapping.

In answer to a query from the Chairman, it was confirmed that software testing would be split into two parts, with initial functional testing undertaken by the supplier, followed by user acceptance testing undertaken by service areas to ensure that it met their requirements. Following this a decision would be made on the implementation, or not, of the product.

The Chairman noted that new software had caused issues in the past and emphasised that it should be tested to ensure that there were no conflicts with existing IT systems.

RESOLVED

1. To note the key principle related to member engagement in the delivery of the Customer Experience Platform.
2. To add key milestone one, to the Work Programme to allow for input on the proposed draft of the Customer Journey Mapping roadmap.
3. Acknowledge that any update post procurement and contract award is received informally via email.

142. BROADLAND FOOD INNOVATION CENTRE

The Committee received the report of the Programme Manager – Economic Growth, which reviewed the Council's investment in the Broadland Food Innovation Centre, including a financial assessment compared to predicted budgets for the first full year of operation.

Members were reminded that the completed Food Innovation Centre opened in September 2022, with 13 food-grade units, which were now all occupied or at the point of agreeing the Heads of Terms. The support programme had delivered significant benefits to the wider cluster with the introduction of 118 new products and 48 enterprises exploring new markets. All income and costs associated with the Food Innovation Centre were accounted for and in accordance with the funding agreement.

In answer to a query about the discrepancies between the budget and actuals in the table at paragraph 3.10, which set out the expenditure and income accounts for 2023/24, the Assistant Director for Economic Growth advised the meeting that the values were confused by the required accounting practise of the Council, which included the construction costs carried over from the previous financial year, as well as some grant funding. If these figures were taken out, the accounts for 2023/24 were in a healthy financial position.

A member suggested that a visit to the site would be very beneficial for members understanding of the Food Innovation Centre, which was very impressive. The Assistant Director for Economic Growth confirmed that he would be happy to arrange a visit to the Centre for members.

The Committee was also informed that the Food Innovation Centre had a dedicated website and marketing information was included in business publications sent out by the Council.

The Vice-Chairman noted the budgeted rental income of £330,000 against the actual income £97,000 was concerning and asked officers to explain the shortfall.

In response, the Assistant Director for Economic Growth explained that this had been a new venture for officers to support and deliver and one of the areas of learning had been the time differential between agreeing the Heads of Terms and a tenant moving in, due to a requirement for more fit-out works than anticipated, which could be complex and time consuming. It was this time lag that was the primary cause of the discrepancy between the expected rental income and the actual income received. In future the budgetary forecasts would take this into account. The figures in the table also included initial rent-free periods to encourage business to locate in the Centre.

It was anticipated that the actual rental income would match the budgeted rental income for 2024/25. The Assistant Director for Economic Growth confirmed that he could provide a written response with the forecast budget for the Committee.

It was emphasised that there were many variables for any enterprise, however, officers were confident that over the long-term the Centre would break even.

Members were also reminded that a condition of the funding received from ERDF was for any income generated to be reinvested into the site for a period of 20 years from completion.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development emphasised that the figures for 2023/24 were significantly skewed by building costs and the accounting methodology used.

To discuss Appendix 1 of the report the Committee passed the following resolution:

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

Following discussion, the press and public were readmitted to the meeting.

Members requested that the Committee be provided with an update on the Food Innovation Centre in 12 months' time.

It was,

RESOLVED

To note the progress being made in the delivery of the intended outcomes of the Broadland Food Innovation Centre project.

(The meeting concluded at 7.48 pm)

Chairman