

## **BROADLAND ECONOMIC SUCCESS POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Economic Success Policy Development Panel of Broadland District Council, held on Monday, 7 November 2022 at 6.00 pm.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: A Crotch (Chair), S Beadle, S Catchpole, J Davis, G Peck, R Potter and K Vincent

**Cabinet Members in Attendance:** Councillors: J Coplestone and J Leggett

**Officers in Attendance:** A Sommazzi (Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager), D Baillie-Murden (Programme Manager - Economic Growth), N Cunningham (Strategic Growth Projects Manager) and L Arthurton (Democratic Services Officer)

### **7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman advised members of the Panel that item 8 Renewable Energy Infrastructure: Green Loan Project had been withdrawn from meeting due to additional information being received which directly affected the report outcomes.

### **8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received from the following members:

<b>Minute no.</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Declaration of interest</b>
10 - Electric Vehicle Charging Point Installation on Council Owned Land	Cllr J Davis	'Other' Company Secretary of Norwich Community Solar, a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC)

### **9. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 10. RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

The Strategic Growth Projects Manager introduced the report, which set out an addendum to the UK Share Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan and would allow access to Broadland's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The Panel noted that the investment plan needed to include measurable outcomes that reflected local needs and opportunities.

Members noted that the REPF supported the aims of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme. Within this, it provided funding for capital projects to support business development, farm diversification and community infrastructure.

The report proposed that Broadland District Council focused on two principal interventions: the Pride in Place and the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor work programmes. If the recommendations were approved, the approach would maximise the impact of funding and secure the delivery of outcomes within the required timeframe.

Officers explained that the deadline for the submission of the addendum to the Council's investment plan was 30 November 2022. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs would then undertake an assessment and provide feedback as required. Approval for the addendum was expected in January 2023, with the first payments projected for April 2023.

Officers gave further details on the project areas within section 4. in the report. They emphasised that any projects eligible for the money needed to show a strong business case and value for money. A potential project listed in the report was for purchasing processing equipment for the Broadland Food Innovation Centre to help enhance the processing capability of this sector.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report and added that the principles proposed would allow the Council to support local rural businesses to develop.

In response to a question about whether micro businesses could access money to help scale up their ventures, officers confirmed that the allocated funds could be used for this purpose. A further question was raised concerning energy efficiency and whether it was a criterion when considering allocating funds to businesses and it was noted that when the Council issues grants, they would be able to stipulate conditions on the use and impact of the money.

A question was raised about the balance between funding the programmes and the flexibility of the figures proposed within the report. Officers explained that it was in the Council's gift to recommend how the money was allocated and which outcomes would be achieved by the spend.

Turning to section 4.7 of the report, the Chairman asked if the £200,000 allocation would be enough for the project and if any underspends in other areas could be utilised. The Strategic Growth Projects Manager explained that the figure had been set in the early stages of the process, and in the current financial climate, it was difficult to predict if this sum would be sufficient.

A member emphasised the importance of sustainability in any projects with long-term goals. Officers agreed that this would need to be addressed in the application and a clawback clause implemented if required. A further suggestion was made that the sustainability of projects should be a requirement of the overall business case.

Several members welcomed the community grant funding channels under the Pride in Place programme, one member raised a question about how the allocation of money was split between the two programmes. She further added that local community projects would benefit their areas and residents. Officers explained that the split of funds had been allocated in line with the grant availability of current business grants ending with the loss of European funding.

One member asked if Parish and Town Councils would be eligible to apply for the funding, officers confirmed that the grant would be available, and that the Pride in Place officer would be available to help with any questions.

Conversation turned to the timescales where concerns were raised over the short timeframe that the Council had to allocate the money and it was confirmed that any unallocated money would have to be returned. A suggestion was made that the Council should begin to look at potential projects which could benefit from the investment. Officers agreed and added that the Council could potentially build upon some existing projects, which would help retain the whole allocation of funding.

The Chairman proposed that an additional recommendation be added to the report, which proposed *a midpoint update on the Rural Business Builder Capital Fund to come back to the Economic Success Policy Development Panel for Oversight.*

Clarification was given over the details of the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor project, which had been running for some time. Members noted that Broadland Council had come late to this project, but the overall alliance offered opportunities for businesses in the District.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development explained that the funding had been well advertised and the Council had already received several enquiries. She expressed concern over the funding allocation in Programme One: Pride in Place as other sources of funding could be accessed to support this programme. She also suggested that the £100,000 allocation from Programme One should be diverted to help invest in businesses within the District under the Programme Two.

The Chairman asked officers to clarify the other funding grants which the Council could use to help promote areas within Programme One and it was explained that the Shared Prosperity Fund offered a sum of £224,345 for community projects. Further funding streams were also available from CIL funding and National Lottery funding competitions.

In light of this, the Chairman suggested that recommendation one be amended to divert the £100,000 from Programme One: Pride in Place to Programme Two. Allocating an additional £50,000 to the purchasing of a piece of food processing

equipment for the Broadland Food Innovation Centre at section 4.7 now totalling £250,000. The remaining £50,000 moved to section 4.8 in the report for Broadland's Business Builder programme. This would make the total amount for this programme £319.552. Recommendation one in the report would now read *to approve the diversion of funds from Programme One: Pride in Place to Programme Two split between sections 4.7 and 4.8 as the principal areas of investment in the report.*

A concern was raised that in the current energy crisis there was now limited opportunities for investment in communities where most help was needed.

Discussion turned to the need for funding support at the Food Innovation Centre and officers explained that any investment would need to provide support for a number of eligible businesses to grow. The Chairman added that investment in the Food Innovation Centre would allow food processing to take place locally, thereby reducing food travel in the area. Several members requested an update on the position of the Food Innovation Centre and suggested that it came back to the Panel. Officers confirmed that they would take this away and explained that there were several planned visits to the Centre that members could take advantage of.

In response to a question on the New Anglia LEP funding to support businesses to become Net Carbon Zero, the Programme Manager for Economic Growth confirmed that the funding would end in March 2023.

A potential funding route was suggested to help County Farms across the district to develop farming businesses and offer support in the purchasing of specialised equipment.

A member suggested that a governance process should be adopted to ensure transparency and that all businesses were fairly treated. A further comment was made that access to the funding needed to be as simple as possible to minimise the time needed to apply for the funding.

Several members raised concerns over the reallocation of funding from Programme One to Programme Two. A number of members requested that the funding allocations should be kept as originally stated in the report and not the revised suggestion by the Chairman. During the discussion, several members stated the value of investing in communities within the District and that the Council needed to balance its approach to both businesses and the community. The Panel decided to take each recommendation separately when voting. During the vote, the Chairman used his casting vote on recommendation one, and it was then;

**RESOLVED to recommend Cabinet to:**

1. Approve the diversion and allocation of funds from Programme One: Pride in Place to Programme Two: Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor, to be split between sections 4.7 and 4.8 as the principal areas of investment in the report.

2. Delegate to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Managing Director and the Leader of the Council, for the sign off and submission of an addendum to the UKSPF investment plan to meet the requirements of the funding.
3. Delegate to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Managing Director and the Leader of the Council, to make any non-substantive changes to the principal areas of investment as required by the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs.

and;

4. For a midpoint update on the Rural Business Builder Capital Fund come back to the Economic Success Policy Development Panel for Oversight.

#### **11. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT INSTALLATION ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND;**

The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager presented the report which sought approval to enable the installation of Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) within Council-owned car parks. Members noted that EVCP infrastructure was an important step in reducing on-road emissions and would provide further support in achieving the Government's net-zero 2050 target.

The report proposed that the Council awards the contract to a third-party supplier for an end-to-end delivery solution. This would mean that the supplier would be responsible for the funding and delivery of the necessary civil engineering works. They would also take responsibility for the ongoing management, maintenance, and operation of EVCPs in Council owned car parks.

The Council would also benefit from an annual licencing fee charged to the supplier for the use of the Council-owned car parks. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager then took members through the report and gave further details on the different sections.

The Chairman thanked the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager for her report and added that it was he was pleased to see an increase in access to EVCPs in the District.

Conversation turned to the ten chosen car parks in the District and where they were situated. One member asked if further car parks could be added to the list. It was noted that other car parks had been looked at, but due to their rural nature, it would be difficult to install charging points.

Concerns were raised over the impact on the availability of car parking spaces within the car parks, the number of EVCPs installed and the future-proofing of the project.

Several members agreed and suggested that section 3.3 in the report be added

to the recommendations. Members felt the solar canopy carports would offer the opportunity for users and external contractors to explore further options for EVCPs. However, the cost and impact of the canopies would need to be investigated.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development expressed concerns over the use of solar canopy carports and added that they worked well in the daytime but not in the evening. She also suggested that further work be undertaken to look at the concerns and implications raised.

A question was asked about the potential for the Council to work with parish and town Councils for EVCP installations to increase the network and capacity. Officers explained that there were opportunities, but the Council needed to be mindful of regulations in place which restricted parish and town council's from selling electricity. One member suggested working with other surrounding authorities to collaborate and match fund projects in parishes areas. It was noted that this could be looked at after further work had concluded to address the current restrictions.

One member suggested that officers looked at contracts with the grid suppliers, and the opportunities to invest in solar projects outside of EVCPs. It was noted that a project was currently being undertaken to look at the use of roof spaces for solar energy.

Discussions turned to the risks of contractors setting prices too high for users. Officers acknowledge these concerns, but reassured members that any contractors would have to be commercially viable in the market.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence welcomed the report and asked for clarification on the timescales for installing the charging points. The Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager explained that contractors had stated that installation times would be quick, and some would be within a three-month turnaround. Members also noted that no issues had been raised by other district Councils who had used outside contractors for car parks in their areas.

A concern was raised regarding what would happen if the external company chosen was to cease trading and who would be liable for it. It was noted that this would be covered in the outline agreement with the company and reviewed by the Council's legal advisors. The use of electric cars would only increase following the Government's decision to halt sales of diesel and petrol cars from 2030.

Further discussion took place, where it was confirmed that suppliers would put their proposals forward and the Council would look at setting the licensing fee appropriately. It was then;

**RESOLVED to recommend that Cabinet to**

1. Agree to the principal that EVCPs should be installed at council owned and managed carparks.
2. Delegate decisions regarding an award of contract to a third-party supplier to the Assistant Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the

Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth.

3. Explore the use of solar canopy carports and the role they may play in supporting the phase two roll out of EVCP infrastructure depending on a viability assessment taking place.

(The meeting concluded at 8.05 pm)

---

Chairman