

BROADLAND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Committee Members Present:	Councillors: N Starling (Chairman), P Bulman (Vice-Chair), L Douglass, J Emsell, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, E Laming, M Murrell, P Newstead, A Tipple, E Tovell, S Ward, F Whymark and T Yousefian
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor: S Jones
Substitute:	Councillor: P Berry (In place of S Jones)
Cabinet Member in Attendance:	Councillor: S Beadle, M Booth, J Davis, N Harpley, S Holland and S Riley
Officers in Attendance:	E Hodds (Chief of Staff), P Courtier (Director of Place), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), S Phelan (Assistant Director of Community Services), C Lawrie (Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), L Chant (Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr S Jones.

80. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had raised the concerns expressed by some members in respect of the Changes to Earmarked Reserves item at the 16 January 2023 meeting of Cabinet.

The Chief of Staff advised the meeting that in order for video livestreaming to take place, the layout of the Upper Yare room would need to remain in the theatre style. If

the Lower Yare was used for meetings only audio streaming would be available.

81. BUDGET QUESTIONS FOR CABINET

The Committee noted the responses to the budget questions for Cabinet and asked the following supplementary questions:

- q) The overarching Charging Policy referred to in the response to question 9 was about principles not actual fees, would car parking fees be reviewed?
 - a) *A review of car parks was being undertaken and would be brought to Cabinet in due course. Members were reminded that the Council was not allowed to make a profit from charges, only to recover costs.*
- q) In respect of Social Prescribing (question 12), what was being done to ensure the Community Connectors service covered all of Broadland.
 - a) *The Council recognised that NHS areas did not align with district boundaries and was working to influence the future social prescribing contract to ensure a consistent approach across Broadland.*
- q) What was the current situation regarding the Capital Budget for Bure Valley Railway and Marriotts Way Bridges? (Question 7).
 - a) *These items would be separated out in the future.*
- q) What progress was being made with bringing forward the construction of the Rackheath Leisure Centre, via the Greater Norwich Growth Board? (Question 18).
 - a) *Facilities associated with growth areas were often reliant on contributions from developers, as well as other funding streams. As with the Gym and Fitness Hub in Aylsham, the Leisure Centre in Rackheath might be progressed with the local High School. It was emphasised that local residents should be clear about what they wanted in relation to leisure facilities when responding to the consultation currently being carried out by the developers in Rackheath.*
- q) How was the pre-application planning advice for the disposal of Thorpe Lodge progressing? (Question 10).
 - a) *The disposal of Thorpe Lodge was a challenge, as it was a difficult site. Pre-application submission advice was seeking to make it a more attractive proposition. Bidwells were marketing the site for commercial use, but most of the interest had been for residential development.*
- q) Were members involved in lobbying central Government regarding local authority funding? (Question 6).
 - a) *The Leader had attended a number of virtual meetings in respect of local government funding. Cllr Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and*

Housing, had attended a summit of local authorities in Westminster today to discuss local government funding. A further meeting was to be held with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Members were also regularly attending meetings of the East of England Local Government Association.

- q) Were there plans to invest the £200,000 savings made in the bed and breakfast budget in more temporary accommodation? (Question 14).
 - a) *Yes, consideration is being given to the purchase of two properties and the budget underspend could go towards their purchase.*

- q) What progress had been made with expanding the recycling of soft plastics and did the Council still need a Senior Recycling Manager? (Question 19).
 - a) *New recycling requirements were being introduced by the Government in 2026 and the Council would be looking at these as part of the Norfolk Waste Partnership. The Council was committed to improving recycling rates but funding new initiatives should take account of Government policies, which were currently unclear. It should be noted that the technology to separate soft plastics did not currently exist at the Materials Recycling Facility. A number of new recycling initiatives were currently being explored through the Norfolk Waste, such as the recycling of paint.*

The Senior Recycling Manager's post had recently been filled.

The Chairman asked that the Committee be kept informed about any progress with the recycling of soft plastics.

- q) When was the Food Innovation Centre scheduled to break even? (Question 16).
 - a) *The Food Innovation Centre was already breaking even. The Centre was performing well ahead of expectations and with a budgeted rental income of £377,000 for 2024/25 was operating at no net cost to the Council. Under the terms of the European funding agreement any surplus generated from the Centre needed to be reinvested for economic development activities.*

- q) As there was no allocated budget for improving the mental health of young people what was the Council doing about this issue? (Question 17).
 - a) *The Council was starting a young person's mindfulness scheme but in order to ensure safeguarding measures were in place it had not yet commenced; the scheme was being funded through the Health and Wellbeing Partnership.*

- q) What was the Council doing to improve its performance in meeting environmental challenges? (Question 11).
 - a) *The Council was taking part in a number of initiatives, such as the retrofitting*

scheme. But money was limited and without Government funding any schemes initiated by the Council needed to have a robust business case to demonstrate they were sustainable and could attract match funding. Work on behaviour changes was also an important aspect of meeting environmental challenges.

The Council was keen to take part in environmental pilot schemes and initiatives that could demonstrate that it had the ability to deliver results and to access early funding streams.

The Chairman thanked members of Cabinet for attending the meeting and answering the Committee's budget questions.

82. EARLY INTERVENTION ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OFFICER PILOT SERVICE - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Assistant Director for Regulatory introduced the report, which reviewed the progress of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service following its introduction in April 2022.

He explained that incidents of anti-social behaviour were increasing in the district and the purpose of the pilot was to test the effectiveness of rapid and early intervention as an inexpensive extension of the existing Community Protection service.

An example of the type of work undertaken was a response to a first-time complaint about loud music where a resident was visited and made aware that a complaint had been made. This might lead to a change in behaviour that could resolve the matter, if not more formal enforcement procedures might take place.

A second example was of a dog barking when the owner was out of the house and so unaware of any nuisance being caused or might not know how to deal with the problem. The Anti-Social Behaviour Officer could offer advice on dog control and dog training opportunities. One case had even led to the complainant looking after the dog when the owner was out which had solved the problem.

Members were also informed that early intervention might also reveal safeguarding problems, vulnerability or mental health issues that could be referred to a triage service for some early mental health support.

In summary, the Committee was informed that early intervention, added value to the service, but would come at a cost if it was to continue after the pilot scheme ended after March 2024.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that there was an overall increase in anti-social behaviour being reported and that this was not being driven by an increased awareness of the Council's willingness to address these problems.

It was confirmed that the Council was discussing the continued funding of the service with housing associations, following on from the discussions from the recent Social Housing Time and Task Panel. However, if this was not possible

efforts would be made to absorb as much of the learning as possible into the Community Protection Team, to continue to provide early intervention.

The pilot had commenced with two Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour officer temporary fixed term posts, but one officer left during 2023 and had not been replaced.

A member noted the new regulations on social housing being introduced shortly and suggested that this service might be complementary to housing associations, and that they might wish to fund the service. It was confirmed that discussions around these issues were taking place.

Members were advised that the heat map showing the locations of anti-social behaviour service requests reflected the urban fringe of the district, Future iterations should be able to track the distribution of incidents over time. The information on the map covered October 2022 to August 2023 across residential areas. Officers had daily triage sessions where any issues could be escalated if necessary, and if a significant issue arose it would also be brought to the attention of the local Ward member.

Members were informed that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner had confirmed that they would not be able to fund the pilot beyond March 2024.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that the pilot was intended to intervene and challenge anti-social behaviour, not the wider activities relating to young people that were addressed by other services in the Council.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To note and endorse the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service progress to date.

83. BUSINESS REGULATORY SUPPORT HUB PILOT SERVICE - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Food, Safety and Licensing Manager introduced the report, which presented an overview of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service.

The pilot service was introduced in January 2022 and was designed to offer an inexpensive but highly beneficial service to businesses that were complementary to the specialist operational functions within Regulatory and Economic Growth. The aim being to support the local economy and employment opportunities, together with integrating awareness and adherence to any relevant legal requirements from an easy to access pilot service.

The report includes a lot of data on engagement with customers, as well as feedback that demonstrate the success of the pilot.

Appendix 3 showed that 133 businesses were engaged with by the service by November 2023 and that this figure had now risen to 192 businesses.

One example of how the Council engage with businesses was by using new food business registrations, which was a legal obligation, to establish very early contact with new businesses to provide them with help and advice to get a good food hygiene rating.

Members were advised that the feedback for the pilot had been excellent, with no adverse comments on the service at all during the entire project.

In response to a query, members were advised that the post was a fixed term contract up to the 31 May 2024 and that there was no obvious funding source to continue the post after that date. If it did continue to be funded, salary and oncosts would be split 45/55 between Broadland and South Norfolk.

Cllr Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, advised the meeting that he recognised value of the post to the Council, and he would discuss this matter with his counterpart at South Norfolk, to assess if the post could be funded going forward.

Following further discussion, it was unanimously,

RESOLVED

To recommend that officers review the funding opportunities for the Business Regulatory Support Hub post in consultation with South Norfolk Council and to then take a report through to Cabinet should funding be secured.

84. WORK PROGRAMME

The Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised the Committee of the following additional items on the Work Programme:

24 March 2024 meeting

- Broadland Food Innovation Centre - To review the Broadland Food Innovation Centre to ensure it was meeting its desired outcomes and to identify and make any recommendations for improvement.
- Cost of Living Review - To review the effectiveness of the Council's support to residents in light of the cost-of-living crisis.

August 2024 meeting

- Community Safety - Police and Crime Plan - To review the Police and Crime Plan to ensure it met desired outcomes and to identify and make any recommendations for improvement. The Police and Crime Commissioner to be in attendance.

September 2024

- Review of the move to the Horizon Centre.

The Committee noted its Work Programme.

(The meeting concluded at 8.08 pm)

Chairman