

## **BROADLAND COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Council of Broadland District Council, held on Thursday, 28 March 2024 at 7.00 pm.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: , A Tipple (Chairman for the meeting), P Auber, B Baby, J Bailey, P Berry, M Booth, F Bowe, N Brennan, P Bulman, S Catchpole, S Clancy, J Coplestone, A Crotch, J Davis, L Douglass, C Eden, J Emsell, M Goodman, S Gurney, N Harpley, J Harvey, S Holland, B Johnson, S Jones, E Laming, K Leggett, A Miah, P Newstead, G Nurden, R Potter, S Riley, D Roper, J Royal, N Starling, D Thomas, E Tovell, K Vincent, S Ward, F Whymark and T Yousefian

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors: C Karimi-Ghovanlou (Chair), S Beadle, L Hemsall, K Kelly, T Mancini-Boyle, M Murrell and L Starling

**Officers in Attendance:** T Holden (Managing Director), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), P Courtier (Director of Place), D Lorimer (Director of Resources), J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), R Fincham (Assistant Director - Finance) and C White (Democratic Services Manager)

**Also in Attendance:** Two members of the public

### **90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **91. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs S Beadle, L Hemsall, C Karimi-Ghovanlou, K Kelly, T Mancini-Boyle, M Murrell, and L Starling.

### **92. MINUTES**

With reference to the minutes of the meeting held 22 February 2024, Cllr S Gurney wished to make it clear that she had been unable to vote on the "Council Plan 2024-2028 and the Delivery Plan" (minute 84), as she was not present in the

room for the entirety of the debate.

Cllr P Bulman referred to comments made by Cllr N Starling in relation to a Council Tax increase four years ago, made under a Conservative administration (minute no. 81). He requested that the wording in the minute be amended to make it clear that this was a statement of opinion, and not necessarily a matter of fact.

It was agreed that the words “Cllr N Starling *noted* that..”, would be replaced with “Cllr N Starling *suggested* that..”

Subject to this change, the minutes of the meeting held 22 February 2024, were agreed as a correct record.

### **93. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members noted the civic engagements undertaken by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council since the last meeting.

Cllr A Tipple advised members that he was chairing the meeting that evening as the Chair of the Council, Cllr C Karimi - Ghovanlou was unwell and was currently in hospital. He asked members to join him in wishing her a speedy recovery.

The Leader informed the meeting that she had recently attended a District Council Network Conference. The Conference had been attended by MPs of each of the main parties and there had been some interesting discussions around the future of local government funding and structure, and also the future role of Artificial Intelligence.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, Cllr J Davis, advised members that he had recently attended a Water Summit, which had been called to look at the role of water supply in sustaining housing delivery and economic growth across the region. It was recognised that current water supplies were not adequate to support planned development and that strategies would need to be developed to optimise water usage and the responsible management of the environment. He would circulate his report on the Summit to members following the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing, Cllr N Harpley, informed the meeting that she had recently completed Domestic Abuse Champion training. All the Domestic Abuse Champions at the Council were listed on Connect and were specially trained to offer informal, confidential support to officers or members who were, or knew someone who was, involved in a domestic abuse relationship.

The Managing Director advised members that he was pleased to welcome Ben Burgess back to the One Team as the new Assistant Director for Planning and CNC Building Control.

### **94. QUESTIONS**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

**95. PUBLIC SPEAKING**

The were no representations from members of the public.

**96. ADOPTION OF THE GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN**

The Leader introduced the report and recommendations from Cabinet, which proposed the adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

She noted the hard work that had been undertaken over eight years to get to this point and that the Plan was one of only a few in the country that covered three local authorities.

Members were advised that the Independent Inspector had found the Plan to be sound, meaning that it was positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy and importantly the adoption of the Plan would secure a five-year land supply, which would prevent speculative development proposals in unsuitable areas.

Cllr N Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing, seconded the proposal.

During discussion, one member informed the meeting that she was disappointed that the Inspector had removed the amenity land allocation at the end of Reepham Road from the Plan, as this was the last piece of green open space within the Hellesdon parish boundary. Another member explained that she could not support the Plan because she felt that the interests of Aylsham had not been represented.

It was also suggested that although the Plan was a very good piece of work, the Planning system could make it very difficult to deliver the houses allocated.

Cllr F Whymark, commended the Plan which he thought represented a huge amount of work across the three councils and he stressed the importance of securing a five-year land supply, and allowing the delivery of much needed housing across the area.

Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, acknowledged that some members might take issue with some of the allocations in the Plan, but he urged that this should not be a barrier to its endorsement, as it was much needed for the development of Greater Norwich going forward.

Cllr N Starling, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, advised the meeting that the Committee had unanimously recommended adopting the Plan. He noted the length of time that the Plan had taken to draft and that securing a five-year land supply was essential if unsuitable speculative development was to be prevented.

Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, acknowledged that there were concerns in respect of individual allocations but also noted that the Inspector had found the Plan to be sound and that there would be a serious lack of development control if a Plan was not in place. He, therefore, recommended that it be

adopted.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, Cllr J Davis, emphasised the need for the right homes, in the right place, at an affordable price and delivered in a sustainable and energy efficient way.

In summing, up the Leader stressed that concerns about local allocations were not for consideration at the meeting and that the Plan had been agreed and found to be sound and there was a huge risk that inappropriate development could occur if it was not adopted. Member were also reminded that development land could only be allocated on land put forward by the landowner, so it was a case of choosing the best of these sites rather than simply selecting where the Council would prefer to develop.

With 39 in favour and 1 against, it was

## **RESOLVED**

To

1. Note the inspectors' report (at Appendix A) and the required main modifications in appendices 1 to 5;
2. Adopt the modified GNLP (documents J2.1 to J2.11 inclusive) and

Delegate 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 Broadland.

## **97. STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Leader introduced the report and recommendation from Cabinet, which proposed a framework under which the Council would manage, dispose and acquire property assets. She recommended the Strategic Asset Management Framework for adoption.

A member suggested that the table at paragraph 3.2 of the framework was not sufficiently transparent, as the Food Innovation Centre was listed under offices and there were several other instances where the assets being described were listed under generic terms.

Another member queried the valuation of the Bure Valley Railway in the framework, suggesting that the figure provided was for 2016 and should have been updated.

A suggestion was made that the Business Support Centre should be reclassified as a Business Training Centre, as there had been a covenant placed on Carrowbreck House which stipulated that it should only be used as a training centre.

Cllr S Riley, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, seconded the proposals and drew members' attention to the footnote to the table at paragraph 3.2, which stated that 'asset value is for capital accounting purposes and is not necessarily related to market value as at 31/03/2023'. However, he confirmed that the assets would be listed differently in future to make them clearly identifiable. He added that the framework was a very important document, which adhered to the latest guidance

on strategic asset management and helped focus on the Council's capital requirement and investment. Members' attention was also drawn to the actions on page 140 of the agenda, which listed the actions to be undertaken including a survey of all assets.

In summing up, the Leader noted that the Council had a duty to manage its assets responsibly and the framework set out a clear way of how this should be done.

It was unanimously

## **RESOLVED**

To adopt the Strategic Asset Management Framework.

### **98. NORFOLK NUTRIENT MITIGATION FUND - SCHEMES AND GOVERNANCE**

The Leader introduced the report and presented the recommendations from Cabinet, which proposed a delivery mechanism for administering the Nutrient Mitigation Fund, and associated governance model, for allocating the funding moving forwards.

Members were reminded that the Council had submitted an Expression of Interest on behalf of all the Norfolk Local Planning Authorities affected by nutrient neutrality to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and as a result an award of £9.6m had been received, with Broadland being the accountable body for administering the funds.

The report proposed how the funding would be administered. It was emphasised that there would be no cost to the Council for undertaking this work.

A member drew attention to the Terms of Reference of the Member Working Group and asked how political consensus would be achieved at these meetings.

Cllr J Davis, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Excellence, supported the scheme, which would help address some of the very significant environmental challenges faced whilst providing much needed housing. In respect of the query about political balance, Broadland had demonstrated that different parties could work together, as had been demonstrated by the current administration, and many common aims to find solutions to environmental problems were shared by other local authorities in Norfolk affected by nutrient neutrality, so it was anticipated that members could work effectively and collectively on this issue.

The Leader noted that the Terms of Reference made clear that 'the parties will work together in good faith and in an open, co-operative and collaborative manner.' She added that she was confident that all parties involved would want to see housing delivered where it was needed, and it was intended they would work in the same spirit of co-operation as they did with the Greater Norwich Growth Board and the Greater Norwich Development Board. It was hoped that these decisions would be unanimous, although if there was a split decision Broadland as the accountable body would have a casting vote. This was,

however, considered to be unlikely.

It was unanimously

## **RESOLVED**

To add £9.6m to the Broadland District Council Capital Programme.

### **99. HOUSING COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Cllr N Harpley, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing, introduced the report, which proposed the adoption of a Housing Complaints Policy. It was emphasised that this Policy related to residents' complaints about temporary accommodation provided by the Council, not any other type of housing complaints, which were covered by other policies.

The proposals were seconded by the Leader of the Council.

Member noted that guidance regarding implementation of the Policy was provided to officers on the 21 February 2024, which made it clear that a Policy must be in place by April 2024. This did not allow it to go through the usual cycle of Policy Development Panel, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, if this timetable was to be met.

A member suggested that the title of the Policy could lead to confusion, and suggested that a more appropriate title that reflected what it related to should be used.

The Leader advised the meeting that she understood that the Ombudsman expected the Council to call it the Housing Complaints Policy, but she confirmed that it could be made clearer in the text that it was applicable to tenants of Broadland District Council.

It was unanimously

## **RESOLVED**

1. To approve the Housing Complaints Policy attached at Appendix 1.
2. To require the Monitoring Officer to determine the correct committee to receive the report on the annual self-assessment and to update the relevant committee's terms of reference accordingly.

### **100. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25**

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, Cllr D Roper, introduced the report, which proposed the approval of the 2024/25 Pay Policy Statement.

He advised that there were some changes from previous years, the first was the move to national pay negotiation from 2024/25 onwards, which had been agreed with UNISON as part of the local pay negotiations and secondly the move from

performance related pay to pay progression which sets out the scale point for each pay band with criteria that needed to be met to move through the scale points.

This was beneficial for recruitment and retention in that staff would know what to expect when they joined the One Team, and it was also good as far as budgeting was concerned.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Riley seconded the proposal.

During discussion, one member was surprised to note that MPs were paid less than senior staff who worked at a local council. Another member queried if there was a cost difference between the proposed Pay Policy and the previous Pay Policy.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr S Riley, reminded members that the rates of pay for senior staff had been set by the previous administration. There was a differential of around £300,000 when compared to the current Pay Policy, as agreed with UNISON and this was helping with staff retention and recruitment.

Cllr Roper added that it was in the interest of the Council to recruit the best possible people to serve residents and the Pay Policy was structured to attract and retain the best staff. Members should also note that the £300,000 figure referred to was divided across both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils and well within the budget set for salaries. In respect of the point made regarding comparing salaries with those of MPs, he referred to the specialised skills and knowledge required for senior positions at the Council.

It was unanimously

### **RESOLVED**

To approve the content of Broadland District Council's 2024/25 Pay Policy Statement.

## **101. PROGRAMME OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Members noted the Programme of Meeting 2024/25.

It was unanimously

### **RESOLVED**

To endorse the Programme of Meetings 2024/25.

## **102. OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

No reports had been received.

## **103. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

Cllr L Douglass put forward the following question.

*Who took the decision to issue paper bills to residents who had signed up for e-billing, how much did this cost and was this an effective use of taxpayers money?*

In response, Cllr D Roper, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development, informed the meeting that nobody took a decision to start issuing paper bills to people who had signed up to e-billing.

The Council had implemented a new joint Revenue and Benefits system, which was designed to save £0.5m over seven years. Broadland was one of the first Councils to adopt the system and there had been some teething issues with data migration and the separation of some residents who had signed up for e-billing and some who received paper bills. A cost for this could not be provided at this stage, but the system malfunction was being followed up with the supplier and recompense sought for the additional cost of paper billing.

It was confirmed that regular meetings were being held with officers regarding the data migration and that this work had nearly been completed.

#### **104. MOTIONS**

There were no motions to Council.

(The meeting concluded at 8.01 pm)

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Chairman