

SOUTH NORFOLK CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the South Norfolk Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday, 8 July 2024 at 9.00 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: D Elmer (Chairman), G Minshull (Vice-Chair), K Carsok, R Elliott, K Kiddie and L Overton-Neal

Officers in Attendance: J Sutterby (Director of People and Communities), R Fincham (Assistant Director of Finance), E Hodds (Chief of Staff), B Burgess (Assistant Director for Planning), G Denton (Assistant Director of Economic Growth), M Pursehouse (Assistant Director of Individuals and Families), S Carey (Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer), R Dunsire (Head of Housing and Benefits), P Harris (Place Shaping Team Manager), A Sommazzi (Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager) and L Arthurton (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance: Cllrs D Bills, J Cook, T Laidlaw, J Rowe, J Webber and Phillip Nicholson from Hainstone.

3249. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3250. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from the following members:

Minute Item	Councillor	Declaration
3252 – Village Cluster Housing Allocation Plan Reg.19 Pre-submission Focused Changes	Cllr R Elliott	Had made several representations as part of the consultation and declared he was pre-determined. Left the meeting for this item.
3261- Roundwell Park	Cllr T Laidlaw	District Member for Costessey and Chairman of Costessey Town Council.

3251. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

3252. VILLAGE CLUSTER HOUSING ALLOCATION PLAN REG.19 PRE-SUBMISSION FOCUSED CHANGES

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager, which sought agreement to publish the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Addendum.

In introducing the report Cllr Overton-Neal, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Growth, reminded members that the loss of 30 units in Rockland St. Mary and Tasburgh from the original VCHAP allocation had taken it marginally below the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) minimum requirement for the South Norfolk Village Clusters. To address this shortfall, a further focused consultation on alternative sites was undertaken between December 2023 and February 2024

Of the 11 sites consulted on it was proposed that eight sites be allocated as an Addendum, which would incorporate a housing delivery buffer of 130 homes over and above the GNLP minimum allocation requirement of 1,200 dwellings, which if adopted should provide more certainty that the Plan would deliver enough homes. There were also several smaller amendments to the Plan, which had also been included in the Addendum.

The Planning Inspectorate had recommended consulting on the VCHAP Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Addendum for eight weeks, as opposed to the minimum of six weeks to take account of part of the consultation falling over the summer holiday period.

The Place Shaping Manager advised Cabinet that the conclusion of the Water Cycle Study was not expected until 19 July 2024, and, therefore, the recommendation requested delegated authority to make non-substantive amendments following the finalisation of the evidence base.

It was suggested and agreed to amend recommendation two of the report to specify the Portfolio Holder to provide greater clarity.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To publish the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Addendum document (Appendix A) for a period of eight weeks, following finalisation of the evidence base.
2. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Growth to make non-substantive amendments, following finalisation of the evidence base, and/or other minor factual corrections to the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission

Addendum prior to consultation and to agree final dates for the consultation.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the minimum housing requirement, as set out in the recently adopted Greater Norwich Local Plan could be met.

Other Options Considered

None

3253. SOUTH NORFOLK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) UPDATE JUNE 2024

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager, which proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Cllr Overton-Neal, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Growth, introduced the report and reminded members that the LDS was regularly considered by Cabinet to ensure that the timetable for planning documents was up to date. In this case, the LDS had been updated to reflect the latest timetable for the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation Plan (VCHAP) and other Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Place Shaping Manager informed members that the LDS could be seen as a project plan, which was periodically updated to reflect the Council's programme for preparing planning documents. These included: the South Norfolk Design Code, the Greater Norwich Self and Custom Build Development, the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure, and Sustainable Communities.

Members noted that these documents would help with the implementation of the Council's overall planning strategy.

It was,

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the proposed amendments to the current South Norfolk Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Reason for Decision

To update the LDS to reflect the latest timetable for the preparation of local plans.

Other Options Considered

None

3254. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON CALL-IN ITEM 'POLICY FOR RESIDENTS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE'

Cabinet considered the report, which made recommendations to Cabinet in respect of the Policy for Residents Experiencing Domestic Abuse.

Cllr Rowe, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, thanked officers and the Scrutiny Committee for the call-in of the Policy and he drew members' attention to paragraph 2.2 of the report, which provided details of the reasons for the call-in. He also asked members to note that at the 9 May 2024 meeting, where the item was considered, representatives from the Police and Crime Commissioner had been in attendance to provide evidence and answer questions.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their work on the report. He advised the meeting that the proposals from the Committee were already being carried out by the Council but were not explicitly mentioned in the Policy. Adding the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations to the Policy would make this clearer .

It was suggested and agreed to amend recommendation one to delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities to make the changes to the Policy as set out in the report.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities to make the following changes to the Policy:
 - *Add additional information into the Policy around the offer of the Council and what work is already underway within this area.*
 - *Amend the section of the Policy regarding children to ensure we advocate for additional support to children where possible to do so.*
2. Cabinet to direct the Communities Committee to conduct a review on what more the Council can do around supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse.

Reason for Decision

To amend the Policy for Residents Experiencing Domestic Abuse, in order to strengthen the support and service provided by the Council to address this issue.

Other Options Considered

None

3255. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY ANNUAL UPDATE AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

Cllr R Elliot introduced the report, which summarised the progress made by South Norfolk Council during 2023–2024 in complying with the duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the report had two purposes: to outline the progress made by the Council during 2023–24 in complying with its Public Sector Equalities Duty and to update the Council's Equality Objectives.

The Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report, as attached at Appendix A, set out the range of activities that the Council had undertaken in the last year, including the move to the Horizon Centre and the Customer Experience Programme. It was emphasised that most of the work the Council had undertaken was embedded in its day-to-day operations as a public body and governed by the specific duties in the Equalities Act, which also required the Council to publish one or more Equality Objectives every four years. These Equality Objectives, attached at Appendix B, had been updated to reflect the Council's Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan and now included target delivery dates and lead officers to ensure greater oversight and accountability for delivery.

An error was noted in respect of the gender identity statistic on page 275 of the report, and it was confirmed that this would be amended. Officers also confirmed that the website would also be updated to make sure the information was up to date.

In response to a question on the level of ethnicity and diversity data published by the Council, the Chief of Staff explained that a balance needed to be struck between publishing data and protecting the privacy of individuals who might be identified by this information.

It was;

RESOLVED

1. To note the Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report, as attached at Appendix A.
2. To approve the Equality Objectives for 2024 – 2028 as attached at Appendix B.

Reason for Decision

To meet legislative requirements.

Other Options Considered

None

3256. PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

Members considered the report of the Strategic Advisor and Deputy Monitoring Officer, which presented the Productivity Plan for South Norfolk Council.

The Chairman introduced the report, and noted that the Productivity Plan had been requested by the previous Government and set out the work the Council undertook to run as efficiently as possible, including the work that had been done in driving efficiencies in the move to the Horizon Centre and the use of data to drive improvements in customer service.

Cllr Overton-Neal commended the report, adding that it was useful to see an overall review of what the Council had achieved and delivered. The Chairman agreed and highlighted the savings of over £8.6 made by efficiencies and collaboration over the last few years.

In response to a question from a member about why the Plan was not produced collaboratively with Broadland District Council, the Chief of Staff explained that it had been a requirement for each Council to produce a separate report. She added that even if it was not required by the new Government, it was a good report that represented a pivotal point from which Council could move forward.

Cllr Carsok drew members' attention to section four of the Plan on the barriers preventing progress that the Government could help reduce or remove, noting that it provided a clear list of challenges for Government that needed to be overcome or addressed.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. To approve the draft Productivity Plan for South Norfolk 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 Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Reason for Decision

To approve the Productivity Plan for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Other Options Considered

None

3257. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2023/24

Cllr Elliott, the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Innovation, introduced the report, which provided a review of the Treasury Management activity during the financial year 2023–24, and reported the prudential indicators as required by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

Members were advised that the Council had seen a healthy return on external cash investments, due to favourable levels of interest over the past year.

The Assistant Director for Finance added that as of the 31 March 2024 the Council had investments totalling £79.5m, including loans and equity in the Council's wholly owned companies. This had seen a healthy return of £3.2m, which contributed to the overall budget position. It was also confirmed that there had been no breaches to the prudential indicators during the year, and there had been no need to carry out any additional borrowing.

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.

Reason for Decision

The report was a factual account.

Other Options Considered

None

3258. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Housing and Benefits, which reviewed the Housing Allocations Policy, which had been updated following a consultation and legislative changes.

In introducing the report Cllr Minshull, the Portfolio Holder for Communities, noted that the Council was seeing an annual ten percent increase in the numbers on the Housing Register and that much of this pressure was due to a reduction in private rented accommodation and an increase in domestic abuse.

The Head of Housing and Benefits advise members that there were 953 families on the Housing Register, compared to 500 prior pre-2020.

Cabinet was reminded that there had been a significant amount of member engagement on the Policy during its development, as well as a consultation, which had received numerous responses.

The Head of Housing and Benefits advised the meeting that, following discussions with members, it was proposed to expand the wording for the section on Family Connection to assist the elderly, who often needed more support and want to live near their families. It was, therefore, suggested that the word 'removal' be replaced with the following in the table at section 4.1 of the agenda:

Qualification title	Current qualification detail	Proposed Qualification detail
Family connection	Have a family member (parent, adult child or adult sibling) who lives in and has lived in South Norfolk for a continuous period of at least five years*	An applicant aged 55 or over with a family connection to South Norfolk who has an ongoing need for care, and it is necessary to move to South Norfolk to enable the family member to meet this care need.

Officers confirmed some further details of the Housing Policy, and that officers had discretion to review individual cases to make sure the right help and support was provided.

Following the amendment of the wording in Section 4.1 of the report, it was suggested and agreed to add an additional recommendation to delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities to finalise the wording under the Family Connection section, recognising the spirit of conversation held in the meeting.

Cllr Minshull further highlighted a minor change on page 328 of the agenda regarding proof of identity to add veterans ID cards and forces ID cards as acceptable forms of ID. It was confirmed that this minor amendment could be picked up by officers and added to the Policy after the meeting.

It was,

RESOLVED

1. **TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** the proposed Housing Allocations Policy.
2. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Individuals and Families in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities the wording of the Families Connections section at page 312 of the agenda to replace *Removal* recognising the spirit of the conversation held in Cabinet.

Reason for Decision

To review the Housing Allocations Policy to meet legislative changes and ensure best practice.

Other Options Considered

None

3259. FORWARD PLAN

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

3260. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee passed a resolution under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that the consideration of the items is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

3261. ROUNDWELL PARK

Members considered the exempt report of the Clean Growth and Sustainability Manager which provided an update on Roundwell Park.

Cllr Overton-Neal took Cabinet through the report highlighting the key aspects and details to be considered.

Following discussion, it was,

RESOLVED

To agree the recommendations, as outlined in the exempt report.

Reason for Decision

To progress the Roundwell Park project to the next phase of delivery.

Other Options Considered

None

(The meeting concluded at 10.18 am)

Chairman