

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 3 August 2020 remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am**

### **Committee**

#### **Members Present:**

Mr A Brown	Mrs S Bütikofer (Chair)
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Ms V Gay
Mr G Hayman	Mr N Lloyd
Mr E Seward	

#### **Members also attending:**

Mr H Blathwayt  
Mr C Cushing  
Mrs P Grove-Jones  
Mr J Rest

#### **Officers in Attendance:**

Chief Executive, Democratic Services Manager, Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance and Asset Management/Section 151 Officer and Democratic Services and Governance Officer (Scrutiny)

#### **Apologies for Absence:**

Mr R Kershaw

The Chairman opened the meeting by informing Members of the death of former Councillor, Norman Smith. He had worked extremely hard for the residents of North Norfolk and would be sadly missed. His work relating to mental health and suicide bereavement support had been outstanding and greatly valued. She asked members to observe a minutes silence in his memory.

### **MINUTES**

**14**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> July were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **15 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS**

There were three public speakers in attendance. They all wished to make a statement regarding Agenda item 8: Recommendations from Cabinet Working Parties.

The Chairman invited Mr Hadley to speak. He began by referring to the Planning

Policy & Built Heritage Working Party meeting held on 13 July 2020 and the site allocation for Blakeney. He said that he was concerned that the public speaker in attendance at that meeting had been allowed to speak for substantially longer than the allocated three minutes, and that it appeared that Members were persuaded by his promotion of an alternative site as they then resolved to replace the recommended site (BLA04/A) with the site BLA01. Mr Hadley said that this had resulted in an alternative site which had not had an in-depth assessment and which had several serious issues associated with it which would need to be resolved. In addition, because BLA01 had not been the initial preferred site, residents of Blakeney had not felt the need to attend the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party meeting to express their support for BLA04/A and their concerns about BLA01.

Mr J Myers was then invited to speak. Mr Myers reiterated Mr Hadley's concerns. He said that he, like many other residents of Blakeney, were supportive of the original preferred site BLA04/A. Consequently, no one had attended the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July to put forward the case for that site and the unexpected resolution by the Working Party to change the site allocation had caused huge concern amongst residents. He said that there should be an opportunity for a more balanced approach and requested that the matter should be referred back to the Working Party for further consideration.

The final speaker, Mr T Schofield, was then invited to speak. He spoke in support of the previous speakers and said that there had not been a fair and balanced presentation at the meeting of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party on 13<sup>th</sup> July as neither the owner or promoter of site BLA04/A were present to make representations. The only speaker had been an objector to BLA04/A and due to the considerable amount of time that he was allowed to speak for, he had been able to persuade the Working Party to opt for an alternative site. He then outlined why he felt that BLA04/A was a preferable site and why BLA01 was not suitable, concluding by requesting that the matter was reconsidered by the Working Party, allowing representatives from the village to attend and put forward their views.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their comments and asked Cllr A Brown (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Chairman of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party) to respond. Cllr A Brown began by saying that he felt there were some issues with the process and he accepted that inadequate notice had been given to the Parish Council and the residents to respond in relation to BLA04/A. He said that he would recommend that both sites were referred back to the Working Party for further consideration. He clarified that the role of the Working Party was only to recommend their preferred sites to Cabinet, with Cabinet making the decision regarding the allocation of sites. However, this was still not the final decision on the allocation of sites. Between now and June / July 2021, the process would move to the Regulation 19 stage, and the Planning Policy Team would consider issues of viability, issues of access and the impact on the landscape and the tenure of the properties. He added that one of the key elements of the Council's Corporate Plan was to provide local homes for local people and this would be a significant factor moving forward when these two sites were considered.

The Chairman asked whether any of the speakers wished to raise any further points. Mr Hadley said that his main concern was that there was a significant shift between the June and July meetings of the Working Party and he could not understand how Members could change their view in such a short period of time. The Head of Planning replied that the site allocations for Blakeney had only been considered at the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> July.

Mr T Schofield sought clarification from Cllr Brown that he would be making a recommendation to refer the Blakeney site allocations back to the Working Party for consideration. Cllr Brown confirmed that he would.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input. She said that it was important that people had an opportunity to voice their concerns.

## **16 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

## **17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **18 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Chairman reminded Members that they could ask questions during the meeting as issues arose.

## **19 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MATTERS**

The Leader invited the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to speak. Cllr Dixon began by saying that at the meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, five recommendations had been made to Cabinet. He began by referring to the 'Customer Services and Complaints policy' report. He outlined the four recommendations, adding that he wanted to provide some context to the request for a Member briefing on the 'Digital by Design' proposals. He said that most Members seemed to be surprised by the model that was being presented to them and were concerned that they had not had an opportunity to have more input into the development of the proposals.

Turning to the Sheringham Leisure Centre project update, he said that there was one recommendation, which he outlined. He concluded by outlining the recommendation regarding the Market Towns Initiative. He said that he acknowledged that Cabinet had requested Overview & Scrutiny Committee to oversee the MTI process but it was felt that the decision to grant a further 6 months to applicants to complete their documentation should rest with Cabinet.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Dixon for his comments. She said that she was not aware that the presentation to the Committee was coming forward to that meeting. She was on vacation when it was produced. She always liked to see pre-scrutiny on such key projects and it was her intention for Cabinet to look at the proposals initially and then it would go to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration and input. She added that there would be an all Member Briefing on this topic too so everyone would have a chance to have an input.

The Chairman invited Members to comment:

Cllr C Cushing said that he was very surprised that the Leader was not aware of the content of the report. He suggested that there may be a dysfunctional relationship between officers and elected members. The Leader said that she did not agree. The presentation was a sincere attempt by the officer concerned to assist the Overview &

Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Cushing then suggested that another Member could have deputised for the Leader in her absence. The Leader replied that if she had been aware that the presentation was taking place then she would have made arrangements for the Deputy Leader to cover in her absence.

RESOLVED

1. CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

To update and consult with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time regarding the Digital by Design process.

2. SHERINGHAM LEISURE CENTRE: PROJECT UPDATE JULY 2020

To consider undertaking a viability study, including a cost-benefit analysis, to determine the viability of maintaining the existing Splash facility, and its impact on building the new facility.

3. MARKET TOWN INITIATIVE - INTERIM UPDATE

That a blanket extension of six months is offered to the completion deadlines of MTI projects from rounds two and three, to account for the impact and delays caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

**20 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET WORKING PARTIES**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Cllr A Brown, introduced this item. He proposed that the site allocations for Blakeney were referred back to the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party for further consideration. Cllr V Gay seconded the proposal. She said that it was an iterative process and there was still a long way to go. Lots of people would want to make representations and it was only fair that it was referred back to the Working Party.

It was proposed by Cllr A Brown, seconded by Cllr V Gay and

**RESOLVED**

**That the Five Year Land Supply Statement 2020 is published.**

**LOCAL PLAN SITE ALLOCATIONS: Briston / Melton Constable, Cromer & Blakeney**

**RESOLVED**

**1. That the following sites be identified for inclusion in the Local Plan:**

Settlement	Site reference number	Site Description
Briston	BRI01	Land east of Astley Primary School
Briston	BRI02	Land west of Astley Primary School

Cromer	C07/2	Land at Cromer High Station
Cromer	C16	Former Golf Practice Ground (subject to submission of a comprehensive drainage strategy)
Cromer	C22/1	Land west of Pine Tree Farm (subject to access details being resolved)

**2. That the following sites are referred back to the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party for further consideration:**

Settlement	Site reference number	Site Description
Blakeney	BLA04/A	Land east of Langham Road
Blakeney	BLA01	Land south of Morston Road

**3. That consideration of site C10/1 (Land at Runton Road/Clifton Park) is deferred pending an opportunity to consider the deliverability of sites C18 (Land south of Burnt Hills) and C42 (Roughton Road South).**

**4. The final policy wording is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.**

**21 COVID 19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS - 2020/21 REVISED BUDGET UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr E Seward, introduced this item. He said that the report provided a further update on the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances, following the Government's announcement regarding additional support towards lost income. It contained high level proposals for revising the 2020/21 budget to ensure that budget monitoring for the rest of the year was meaningful, whilst also considering the impact on the Council's medium term financial position. Cllr Seward advised Members that increasing service cost pressures, a reduction in income, reducing investment and pressure on future year savings and funding streams resulted in a high level budget deficit for 2020/21 of c£3.0m. Anticipated government funding of £2.4m would help to address this, and coupled with the one-off reserve funding of £0.284m, reduce it to c£0.4m which the Council would seek to address by making further savings and the reallocation of resources within the current budget. He added that the position was constantly changing and the high level projections within the report should be seen within this context.

Cllr Seward went onto say that until recently, it was not certain that the District would experience any kind of summer season. Fortunately, visitors had started to return in considerable numbers and this was likely to have a positive impact on the Council's finances as use of the car parks increased.

He said that in terms of the capital programme, the Council would probably spend a maximum of £21m this year. Approximately 20% of this would come from the Council's reserves and the rest would be from borrowing and grants. He acknowledged that if the grants were not forthcoming then some of the work-streams would not be delivered.

Moving forward to 2021/22, Cllr Seward said that the fair funding review and the review of business rates retention had, quite reasonably, been slipped, resulting in a gain for the Council of £900k. One of the main challenges going forward would be around the collection rates for council tax and business rates, potentially outweighing any gain from the slippage of the funding reviews, however, currently

they remained similar to last year's collection rates. Cllr Seward concluded by saying that he felt the Council remained in a strong position and was well placed to face the challenges ahead.

The Chairman invited Members to speak:

1. Cllr C Cushing said that it was good news that due to Government support, the deficit had reduced to £400k. He asked what plans the Administration had to increase the Council's income in the years ahead. Cllr Seward replied that the reserves would be reviewed and the Leader added that there would be monthly meetings from now on to review the Council's financial position. Cllr Cushing asked for more clarification regarding the strategic plans in place to generate income as the Corporate Plan was not clear on this. The Leader replied that a lot of options were being considered but that she was not in a position to share them at this time.
2. Cllr J Rest said that the Independent Group was fully supportive of the Administration. The impact of the pandemic meant that it would take a little longer to implement some of their key objectives. Cllr G Hayman, Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation, agreed saying that the Administration was looking at alternatives for reducing the call on the Council tax payer and lots of options for revenue streams were being considered.

It was proposed by Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr N Lloyd and

**RESOLVED to agree:**

1. **The current package of financial support being provided to the Council by the government to support its response to COVID-19 and the continued importance of central government lobbying for further additional financial support;**
2. **The updated forecast cost and income pressures being faced by the Council and the extent to which they exceed the available government funding and therefore the requirement for any deficit to be funded from alternative Council resources;**
3. **The proposals for revising the budget at the current time (and the one-off costs to be funded from reserves) to ensure that budget monitoring for the remainder of the year is meaningful, including funding any year end deficit from the Delivery Plan Reserve.**
4. **The various caveats and risks associated with the current forecasts and;**
5. **The proposals in respect of updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the financial planning framework for the 2021/22 budget.**

## **22 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

Cllr N Dixon referred to section 6.5 of the report (treasury investment activity) and asked what the negative figures meant for future years. The Head of Finance replied that the financial markets were currently in turmoil. He said that the pooled funds were always seen as a medium term investment. He said that the Council was not intending to sell these investments at the current time so it was essentially only a 'paper' loss. The Council's treasury management advisers, Arlingclose, were keeping a close eye on the situation.

It was proposed by Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr Hayman and

### **RESOLVED:**

To recommend to Council that The Treasury Management Annual Report and Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 are approved.

## **23 DEBT RECOVERY 2019/2020**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Seward, introduced this item. He explained that it was an annual report detailing the Council's collection performance and debt management arrangements for 2019/2020. He explained that since March 2020, due to the pandemic and the effect on customers' ability to pay, the Council took the unprecedented step to stop all council tax and Non-Domestic Rates recovery work. Customers had been given the opportunity to defer or delay their payments whilst they sorted out their personal finances. This would impact on the collection performance for 2019/20 as well as 2020/21.

It was proposed by Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr Hayman and

### **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council:

- 1) To approve the annual report giving details of the Council's write-offs in accordance with the Council's Debt Write-Off Policy and performance in relation to revenues collection.
- 2) To agree the Debt Write Off Policy (shown in Appendix 2)
- 3) To agree the use of High Court Enforcement Agents if considered necessary (shown in Appendix 3)

## **24 OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS - JUNE TO JULY 2020**

The Chairman informed Members that this was report was for information only. The Chief Executive said that he was happy to respond to questions relating to any of the delegated decisions taken during the previous month.

### **RESOLVED:**

To receive and note the report and the register of officer decisions taken under delegated powers.

## **25 PROPERTY TRANSACTION, LEASE RENEWAL AT CROMER PROMENADE**

The Chairman reminded members that parts of the report were exempt. Members agreed not to refer to any confidential content and to keep the discussion in open

session. Cllr G Hayman, Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation, introduced the report and recommended it for approval.

It was proposed by Cllr G Hayman, seconded by Cllr A Fitch-Tillett and

**RESOLVED** to agree to the:

1. Surrender of the existing lease
2. Re-grant of a new 20 year lease as set out in the exempt Heads of Terms

**26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**27 PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The meeting ended at 11.22am

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Chairman