

# Full Council

## Minutes

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 at 19:00

Present:

Councillor Weymouth (in the Chair), Councillors Andrews, Annison, Bird, Blyth, Carpenter, Collins, Cutting, Davis, Fairhead, Grant, Grey, Hanton, Jeal, Jermany, Jones, Lawn, Linden, Mavroudis, Plant, Pratt, Reynolds, Robinson-Payne, Rodwell, C Smith, J Smith, Stenhouse, Sutton, Thirtle, H Wainwright, T Wainwright, Williamson and Wright.

Also in attendance were Mr G Mitchell (Chief Executive Officer), Mr D Johnson (NPLAW), Mrs J Beck (Director of Customer Services), Mr R Read (Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods), Mrs K Watts (Transformation Programme Manager), Mr A Radford (Chief Financial Officer), Mrs A Cooke (Head of HR) Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mr D Wiles (Press and Communications Officer).

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Coleman, M Coleman, Connell, Fox, Myers and Walker.

### **3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Members were advised that there were no public questions to consider.

### **4 REPORTS TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION**

#### **(i) ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2014-15**

Council considered the Group Manager Resources report in respect of the Annual Statement of Accounts 2014-15.

On reference from the Audit and Risk Committee of the 21 September, Council was recommended to approve the Statement of Accounts 2014-15, subject to any final

amendments arising from the audit process, and to agree that the Audit and Risk Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Williamson be given delegated authority to approve the accounts should there be any subsequent changes to them to be completed on Wednesday 30 September 2015. Council was also advised that the Audit and Risk Committee has serious concerns about the lack of capacity of the Finance Team and the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer and that it needs clarification on the action to be taken to improve the position.

With regard to the issue concerning the Finance Team and Chief Finance Officer the Leader reported that the Chief Executive Officer was currently investigating options to improve capacity issues in both the Finance Team and also with regard to the appointment of a Chief Financial Officer. Members were also advised of action being taken with regard to discussions in respect of the establishments of the LGSS with Norwich City Council.

Proposer: Councillor Grey    Second: Councillor Williamson

That the Statement of Accounts 2014-15 be approved subject to any final amendments arising from the Audit Process and also to agree that the audit and risk Chairman, Vice- Chairman and Councillor Williamson be given delegated authority to approve the accounts should there be any subsequent changes to them to be completed on Wednesday 30 September.

CARRIED

**(ii) ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2014-15**

Council considered the Group Manager Resources report on the Annual Treasury Management Review 2014-15.

Proposer: Councillor Grey    Second: Councillor Plant

That the Annual Treasury Management Review 2014-15 be noted.

CARRIED

**(iii) TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVE - TOWN CENTRE PARKING**

Council considered the Director of Customer Services report which detailed the recommendations of the Town Centre Initiative Working Party for the introduction of trial incentives for Town Centre Car Park Operations.

In discussing the report Councillor Jeal asked Council to give consideration to the allocation of a sum of £70,000 from the Town Centre Initiative fund to be allocated to a bus company in order to reduce bus fares to those people living in the Borough and also to those who would be visiting Great Yarmouth.

The solicitor from NPLAW advised Members that this matter was in fact a matter for Cabinet to determine and he recommended that any decision made by Council should be referred to the Cabinet for approval. It could therefore be deemed as an unlawful decision if the matter was determined by the Council. The point was made that a number of working groups that had been established by the Cabinet on certain issues had in fact reported direct to Council who had then made decisions in respect of those matters.

Proposer: Councillor Jeal    Second: Councillor T Wainwright

That approval be given to the allocation of a sum of £70,000 to a bus company in order to reduce bus fares to those people living in the Borough and also those who visit Great Yarmouth.

LOST

Proposer: Councillor Plant    Second: Councillor Reynolds

That Cabinet be recommended to approve the following:-

- (i) To initiate for a trial period free parking on Saturdays and Sundays in the Town Centre, the period to run from October 2015 to March 2016 inclusive on Fullers Hill, Brewery Plain, Stone cutters, George Street, Greyfriars and King Street Car Parks.
- (ii) To remove the overnight charge on all Town Centre Car Parks reverting to a charge until 4pm only.

CARRIED

#### **(iv) AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION - FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Following a recent Single Cabinet Member decision and its subsequent consideration by the Scrutiny Committee, Council was asked to consider adding a new clause into the Council's constitution in appendix A to the Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures.

In discussing the proposal the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee recommended that the words land or property should be included in the last sentence of the proposed amendment to the clause in the Council's Constitution.

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee reported that the auditors had been critical of the lack of claw back provisions contained within the current financial procedures.

Proposer: Councillor Williamson    Second: Councillor T Wainwright

That the following clause be added to paragraph 3.62 of the Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures as follows:-

"In respect of any asset transfer whether it be for land, buildings or any other property owned by the Council such ownership is not transferred until such time as full payment is made by the purchaser. In all transfers the agreement will include an appropriate claw back provision.

Further any grants given by the Council to land or property will include an appropriate claw back provision.

CARRIED

**(v) APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES 2015-16**

Council was advised that Councillors Connell and Myers were no longer members of the UKIP group on the Council. Under the Widdicombe Rules Councillors Connell and Myers are entitled to two seats on committees.

The UKIP Group had agreed to offer seats on the Housing Appeals Committee and the Community Housing Board. The Conservative Group had agreed to offer a seat on the Housing Appeals Committee. The Labour Committee had agreed to offer a seat on the Audit and Risk Committee. This creates the four seats to be offered to Councillors Myers and Connell and they would now be approached to determine which committees they now wished to serve on.

As no formal groupings had been declared, the membership numbers on committees for the party's would remain the same. Therefore, Council was asked to agree the following changes:-

- Councillor Annison to replace Councillor Myers on Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor Andrews to replace Councillor Connell on Licensing Committee
- Councillor Grey to replace Councillor Myers on the Appeals Committee
- Councillor Jones to replace Councillor Myers on the Audit and Risk Committee
- Councillor Grey to replace Councillor Connell on the Area Museums Committee

Proposer: Councillor Grey Second: Councillor Jeal

That the proposed changes to membership of Committees as outlined above be approved.

CARRIED

**(vi) CORPORATE PLAN**

Council was reminded that at its last meeting consideration of the Corporate Plan had been deferred to allow the political groups to consider the details of the plan. Following some minor amendments Council was now asked to agree the Corporate Plan.

Proposer: Councillor Plant Second: Councillor Thirtle

That the Corporate Plan for 2015-2020 be approved.

CARRIED

**(vii) APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2015-16**

(i) Proposer: Councillor Plant Second: Councillor T Wainwright.

That Councillors C Smith and Williamson be members of the Great Yarmouth Sports Partnership, similar to the membership of the Great Yarmouth Sports Council.

CARRIED

(ii) Council was advised that Councillor Annison had resigned with immediate effect as being one of the Councils nominated representatives on the Sentinel Leisure Trust. Council considered a statement read out by Councillor Annison as to the reasons why he had resigned from the Trust.

The Cabinet Secretary asked Council to consider the nomination of a replacement for Councillor Annison on the Sentinel Leisure Trust.

As both the Conservative Group and the UKIP Group did not wish to nominate any of their members to replace Councillor Annison on the Trust, Council agreed that the replacement nomination would be made by the Labour Group, and that the Leader would advise the Cabinet Secretary as to who this replacement would be.

## **5 MINUTES**

### **Council Minutes 21 July 2015**

The Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 July 2015.

With regard to the item in relation to the Crematorium, Councillor Jeal asked whether the Council currently has a credit card scheme available for public use. The Director of Customer Services confirmed that this scheme was in place.

In connection with the item in relation to the Back to Back Public House, Councillor C Smith reported that he had personally visited the site in question and that the necessary action had been taken.

With regard to the item in respect of the Chief Executive Officer's contract, Councillor T Wainwright reported that he was pleased that there had now been progress on this matter.

### **Cabinet Minutes 12 August 2015**

The Leader presented the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 12 August 2015 and 9 September 2015.

### **Scrutiny Minutes 3 September 2015**

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Scrutiny Committees meeting held on 3 September 2015.

## **6 MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **(a) Budget Housing Measures**

Council considered the following motion from Councillor T Wainwright, Walker, Jeal, Linden, Pratt and H Wainwright:-

This Council is very concerned at the implications for its tenants and housing stock, in the Tory Governments Emergency Budget' housing measures.

Namely:

A benefit cap of £20,000 a year for couples, and £13,400 for single people in the Borough.

Housing Benefit to be withdrawn from 18-21 year olds.

Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance to be frozen for 5 years.

Tax Credits and Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance only to take into account the first two children in households for children born after April 2017.

Market Rates to be charged in Social Housing for all households with incomes of £30,000, with the additional rent receipts going to the Treasury not the Council.

The Council considers that the impact of these measures in the Borough will be to seriously worsen the housing affordability crisis in Great Yarmouth, and increase poverty, homelessness and the number at risk of being homeless in the Borough, particularly amongst the young and very low income families.

The Council recognises that for individual tenants who have faced significant above inflation rent increases and falling incomes over the last few years, the Budget proposal to cut social sector rents by 1% for the next 4 years will be welcome.

However, it notes that a 1% rent cut will mean an estimated loss of rental income to its Housing Revenue Account of **£9.6 million** from 2016/2020 and an estimated loss of £146 million of the 30 Year business plan, and these losses will have very significant consequences for the Council's plans to build new homes and maintain its services to its **current** tenants.

The Council therefore resolves to write to Brandon Lewis MP, to lay out its concerns and ask him to do all he can to highlight the impact on Borough tenants of these measures in Westminster.

The Leader responded to the motion by stating that the Government has said that the reforms set out in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill are intended to support this commitment to increase employment, slow the growth of the welfare budget to help achieve a more sustainable welfare system and support the policy of rewarding hard work whilst increasing fairness within working households.

The Leader also commented on the issues raised in respect of the benefit cap, the issues of 18-21 year olds, tax credits and housing benefit for families with more than two children and on the 1% rent reduction for social housing tenants.

Councillors Linden and Sutton stated that in their opinion the proposed motion should be supported. Councillor Williamson also commented on the current national housing crisis and the need to build more homes throughout the country.

Proposer: Councillor T Wainwright    Seconded: Councillor Jeal

That the Council resolves to write to Brandon Lewis MP to lay out its concerns and ask him to do all he can to highlight the impact on Borough Tenants of these measures in Westminster.

LOST

**(b) Devolution Letter to DCLG**

Council considered a motion from Councillors T Wainwright, H Wainwright, Williamson, Robinson-Payne, Pratt and Linden calling upon the Council to censure Councillor Graham Plant Leader of the Minority Conservative administration regarding putting his signature to a devolution letter of intent sent to the DCLG on the 4 September 2015 without the authority of Full Council, or discussion with the Leaders of the opposition parties.

Prior to consideration of the Motion of Notice, the Chief Executive Officer gave a statement on the action taken so far by Chief Executive Officers throughout Norfolk on the devolution issue. He reported that a letter of interest had been sent to the DCLG which had been signed by the Leaders and Chief Executive Officers of all Local Authorities in Norfolk. He advised Council that the process still remains unclear but the Government had indicated that by the 25 November 2015 they will have made a decision on the bids that had been received to be pursued.

The point was made that there needed to be an agreed process on this issue to bring the full details to Councils attention.

Councillor T Wainwright commented on the issue of his group not being consulted on this matter. Councillor Grey also commented that the UKIP Group had not been considered on the proposed letter and that the UKIP group were not committed to any particular proposal at this stage.

The Leader explained that the letter was purely an expression of interest to the DCLG by the Local Authorities in Norfolk at this stage.

Proposer: Councillor T Wainwright Second: Councillor Jeal

That Council be called upon to censure Councillor Graham Plant Leader of the minority Conservative administration regarding putting his signature to a devolution letter of intent sent to the DCLG on the 4 September 2015 without the authority of Full Council, or discussion with the leaders of the opposition party.

LOST

Proposer: Councillor Sutton Second: Councillor Jeal

That approval be given to the waiving of standing orders to allow the Leader of the Council to make a statement on the devolution issue.

CARRIED

The Leader gave an update on the meeting held today between all Local Authorities in Norfolk on devolution. He reported that the meeting had agreed to establish an overarching board with agreement to one point of contact being appointed which will be the Chairman of the LEP. The Leader also reported that an officer working group had also been established to work on the Norfolk Council's proposals and the details

of these proposals would be considered further at a Leaders meeting.

The Leader agreed that any appropriate and relevant paperwork in respect of devolution should be shared with all Members of Council.

## **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Insurance Arrangements

The Cabinet Member (Resources) reported on the savings that had been agreed for the renewal of the Council's insurance contract due on 1 October 2015.

The meeting ended at: 21:40