

# Full Council

## Minutes

Monday, 26 January 2015 at 19:00

Present:

The Mayor Councillor Fairhead (in the Chair), Councillors Annison, Blyth, B Coleman, M Coleman, Collins, Conell, Cuniffe, Cutting, Fox, Grey, Hacon, Jeal, Jermany, Jones, Linden, Myers, Peck, Plant, Pratt, Robinson-Payne, Shrimplin, Smith, Tate, D Thompson, H Wainwright, T Wainwright, Walker, Weymouth, Williamson and Wright.

In attendance were Mr G Mitchell (Chief Executive Officer), Mrs J Beck (Director of Customer Services), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mr d Johnson (nplaw solicitor).

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr G Mitchell (Chief Executive Officer) declared a pecuniary interest in item 3(b) and left the meeting for the discussion on this item.

### **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrews, Bird, Field, Reynolds, Rodwell, Stenhouse and Sutton.

### **3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Council considered the following questions:-

(a) Question from Mr R Hudson:-

"Having not abdicated responsibilities to others could the Leader of the Council explain in more than one word since May 2012 the number of consultants the Council has engaged each year and the cost of those consultants each year and the salary saving in 2012, 2013 and 214 of staff who left under a severance scheme. Whether the Council has re-employed or engaged staff that left under a severance or similar scheme since 2012 and the numbers involved. One would hope that the savings in staff cuts would be greater than the cost of consultants?"

In response, the Leader reported that the ongoing salary savings in 2012/13 total £333,000 and in 2013/14 total £539,207 with a further saving of £1,078,414 for 2014/15. The number of consultants used in 2012/13 total three, in 2013/14 total three and in 2014/15 total 14. During 2014/15 seven of these consultants were used

as part of the Council's Transformation Programme and funding totalling £72,800 was used from the Efficiency Support Grant. The remaining amount spent on consultants since 2012/13 totals £212,377 (total amount spent on consultants £285,377).

Since 2012 four staff have been re-employed, all in different roles that when they left the authority under the severance scheme. In conclusion salary savings have exceeded the use of consultants by £793,077.

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, Mr Hudson was then entitled to ask a supplementary question as follows:-

"Do you think it is good for staff morale to make someone redundant and then take them back on again?"

In response, the Leader reported that the Council had taken every action not to make any staff redundant and all staff had left voluntarily since 2012 with four staff being re-employed but undertaking different roles.

(The Chief Executive Officer here left the meeting in accordance with his declaration of interest.)

(b) Question from Mr J Cannell:-

"The current Chief Executive was appointed in July, however, no invoices are shown for July, August and September on the Council's website paid to Solace Enterprises. However, invoices for executive team agency staff of £19,000 paid on the 5 October 2014, £16,915 paid on the 19 October and £21,890 on the 9 November are paid to Solace Enterprises.

Could the Leader of the council explain why there is an apparent lack of invoices reflecting the Chief Executive's consultancy charge of £1,000 per day given that he is a contractor and could the Leader provide further detail as to the payments to Solace Enterprises for executive team agency staff in October and November. For example, what are the invoices for and whether he expects more such invoices over the coming months?"

Mr J Cannell stated that this question had been raised on behalf of the Great Yarmouth Trades Council.

In response, the Leader reported that the first invoice received from Solace Enterprises was issued in September for the total amount of £19,000. This was for services provided in July 2014. The second invoice issued in October for the total amount of £16,915 was for services provided in August 2014. A third invoice issued in September for the total amount of £21,890 was for services provided in September 2014. A fourth invoice issued in November for a total amount of £17,910 was for services provided in October 2014. These invoices all relate to the services provided by the Council's Interim Chief Executive Officer which will continue subject to review by Cabinet until July 2015. Further invoices were awaited from Solace for further months.

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, Mr Cannell was then entitled to ask a supplementary question as follows:-

"Why is such a huge amount of money being paid to the Chief Executive Office when Great Yarmouth people are not being paid the living wage?"

In response, the Leader stated that this was the Great Yarmouth Trades Council opinion and he stated that the contract of the Chief Executive Officer will be reviewed in the next few months.

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

##### **a Committee Form of Governance**

Council considered the Chief Executive Officer's report with regard to changing to a committee form of governance for Great Yarmouth Borough Council. The Leader reported that this report had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee on the 4 December who had recommended to Cabinet that the status quo for the committee form of governance should remain, this matter was then considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 10 December who agreed the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and had recommended to full Council that the status quo should remain.

The Leader referred to previous discussions at the Council meeting on the 23 September 2014 when the possibility of establishing a cross party committee consisting of two members of each party to consider in detail a committee for of governance. Councillor Plant commented that this matter had been fully discussed by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 4 December when they had recommended the retention of the status quo and stated that he did not see the merit of establishing a cross party working group to consider this matter. Councillor Myers commented that, in his opinion, the information that Scrutiny Committee considered was based on supposition and that the establishment of a cross party working party would be able to investigate this matter in greater detail. Councillor B Coleman endorsed Councillor Plant's view in respect of the establishment of a cross party working group as he felt that this matter had already been fully considered through the committee process.

Proposer: Councillor T Wainwright    Second: Councillor Grey

That before a final decision is made in respect of a committee system of governance further detailed information is required on this issue and therefore a cross party committee consisting of two members of each party be established to consider in detail issues relating to the establishment of a committee form of governance, such appointments to the cross party committee to be determined by the Group Leaders.

CARRIED

##### **b Appointments to Committees 2014/15**

Proposer: Councillor T Wainwright    Second: Councillor Jeal

That the following appointments to Committees be agreed:-

Appeals Committee - Councillor Robinson-Payne  
Housing Appeals Committee - Councillor Sutton

CARRIED

## **c Public Toilet Review Working Group Recommendations**

Council considered the Director of Customer Services report which detailed the work undertaken by the Car Parking Working Group and identified recommendations moving forward by operation, charging, utilisation and review.

Councillor Fox asked whether the identified £140,000 savings were one-off and what would be the improvements to the toilets. The Cabinet Member (Transformation and Regeneration) reported that the savings were ongoing year on year and that it was expected that the toilet's improvements would be carried out to provide better specification.

Councillor Myers sought clarification as to the reference to future operations being provided in house, and in response the Cabinet Member stated that decisions on future operations would be addressed in the near future. The Director of Customer Services reported that the service was currently provided through Norse and that a full procurement process would be undertaken for future operations.

Councillor Shrimplin asked whether the Working Party had considered the fairness of their proposed recommendations for the future of public conveniences and referred to the issue of parish toilets to be paid through the parish precept and on the timings that Parish Councils would need to reflect such costs in their budget process. He asked that early dialogue be held with Parish Councils on this matter. The Cabinet Member reported that a further report to Council would be made on public toilets later in the year.

Councillor Jermany stated that a significant number of toilets would be closed in the rural Northern Parishes and he asked whether consultation should take place with visitors to this area. The Cabinet Member reported that there was no planned consultation but the Working Group could look at this proposal.

Councillor B Coleman reported that the Working Group had agreed a good template to move forward and it was anticipated that the cost of administering the toilets could be diminished .

Councillor Grey sought clarification on the proposals for the toilets at Caister and the Director of Customer Services reported that there were currently three at Caister and that the proposal was to consult with Caister Parish Council to determine which toilets should be kept open.

Councillor Fox commented that he would not support the proposals for the closure of toilets in his ward.

The Leader of the Council expressed his concern that despite having two representatives on the public toilet review working group, it now appeared that the UKIP representatives would be opposing the proposals of the Working Group despite having agreed to the proposed recommendations at the Working Group's meetings. Councillor Annison commented that the UKIP Group were reflecting what their constituents had commented on the proposals for the future of public conveniences. Councillor Jones stated that she had voiced her concerns at the Working Group meetings but she had received further representations from her constituents about their concern with regard to public convenience closures that had

taken place following the Working Group's meetings.

Proposer: Councillor B Williamson

Seconder: Councillor T Wainwright

That approval be given to the public toilet review Working Group recommendations as follows:-

(i) Reduce Operational costs of the northern parish public toilets for the 2015/16 year allowing the opportunity to further review the position and work with parishes and businesses to identify and agree alternative options. This would mean that the facilities at California (two toilet blocks - Parish to agree priority) and Acle are not opened for the 2015/16 season and considered for long term closure/transfer. The Working Group recommend that facilities at the following locations remain in place until 31 October 2015 at which point alternative options must be agreed to enable future operation:-

- Casiter x1
- Hemsby Beach
- Scratby Cliffs
- Winterton Beach
- Martham
- Thurne (alternative cleaning, opening/closing to be identified to enable this toilet block to operate for the 2015/16 summer period).

Reduce operational costs at two locations in Great Yarmouth (North Drive and Caister Road) and two locations in Gorleston (Alpha Road and Brush Quay), all of these locations suffer from a mixture of anti-social behaviour, low usage or the close proximity of other facilities. The Council will continue to review facilities as and when required. It is proposed that these facilities are not operated for the 2015/16 year and options for a re-use, disposal or demolition be reviewed.

The transfer of any toilet block will be considered by the Working Party on a case by case basis identifying any appropriate conditions.

(ii) To ensure that facilities which remain in operation are of a suitable standard and during the 2015/16 year identify opportunities to refurbish/enhance facilities.

(iii) Currently all public toilets within the Borough are free of charge, the Group would recommend that an evaluation in relation to charging for facilities be undertaken to better understand the operational issues and investment opportunities of introducing charging.

(iv) The existing budget of £477,000 would be reduced to £337,000 for the 2015/16 financial year by approval of the above recommendations. A further £40,000 per annum would be achieved through full realisation of the above recommendations.

CARRIED

(Councillor Fox requested that his opposition to the above recommendations be recorded.)

**d Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2013-14**

Proposer: Councillor Plant    Second: Councillor B Coleman

That the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2013/14 be received.

CARRIED

**e Car Parking Working Group Recommendations**

Council considered the Director of Customer Service's report which detailed the work undertaken by the Car Parking Working Group which identified recommendations moving forward by operation, charging, utilisation and review.

Councillor Myers sought clarification as to whether the smart card would be introduced at the same time as the car park increases. The Director of Customer Services reported that this was part of the digital scheme which would go live in April 2016.

Councillor B Coleman expressed his concern with regard to the removal of the free parking on the pay and display car parks after 4.00pm in the evenings.

The Leader pointed out that the Town Centre traders had been consulted on the recommendations of the Car Parking Working Group and had endorsed the proposals.

In response to a comment from Councillor Fox with regard to the policing of overnight charges, the Director of Customer Services reported that the rota system for staff would be able to cover this situation.

Proposer: Councillor B Williamson    Second: Councillor Jeal

That the recommendations attached at Appendix D of the Director of Customer Service's report be approved.

CARRIED

**(f) Member's Allowances**

The Leader reported that Cabinet at its recent meeting had been advised of the current Council policy that Member's Allowances would normally be annually index linked to the Local Government Staff Pay Award. Cabinet had been advised that the Local Government Staff Pay Award had recently been implemented with effect from the 1 January 2015 with an increase of 2.2% and Cabinet had been asked to consider whether Member's Allowances should be increased in line with the Previous Council policy. Accordingly, on reference from Cabinet, Council was recommended not to approve an increase of 2.2% to Member's Allowances. Proposer: Councillor Walker    Second: Councillor Grey That an increase of 2.2% to Member's Allowances be not approved.

CARRIED

**5 MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

**i Council Minutes**

The Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meetings held on the 25 November and 11 December 2014. With regard to the Council minutes of the 25 November in relation to item 7, the Cabinet Secretary reported that the words "LOST" should have been added to the proposal of Councillor Myers with regard to the comments expressed by the Leader of the Council to Councillor Field.

**ii Cabinet Minutes**

The Leader presented the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on the 10 December 2014 and 21 January 2015.

**iii Scrutiny Minutes**

The Chairman presented the minutes of the meetings held on the 4 December, 18 December 2014 and the 22 January 2015.

Proposer: Councillor T Wainwright    Seconded: Councillor Williamson

That the minutes of Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee, as detailed above, be endorsed.

CARRIED

The meeting ended at: 20:15