

Full Council

Minutes

Thursday, 15 October 2015 at 19:00

PRESENT:

The Mayor Councillor Weymouth (in the Chair); Councillors Andrews, Annison, Bird, Carpenter, B Coleman, M Coleman, Collins, Connell, Cutting, Davis, Fairhead, Grant, Grey, Hanton, Jeal, Jones, Linden, Mavroudis, Myers, Plant, Pratt, Robinson-Payne, C Smith, J Smith, Stenhouse, Sutton, Thirtle, H Wainwright, T Wainwright, Walker, Weymouth, Williamson and Wright.

Also in attendance were Mr G Mitchell (Chief Executive Officer), Mrs J Beck (Director of Customer Services), Mr R Read (Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods), Mrs V McNeill (nplaw), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary), Mrs J Cooke (Head of Human Resources) and Mr D Wiles (Communications Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blyth, Jermany, Lawn, Reynolds and Rodwell.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES 2015-16

Council considered the Cabinet Secretary's report which advised Council that Councillors Connell, Fox and Myers had given formal notice that they had formed an independent group on the Council. As a consequence, this would require Council to reconsider allocations to Committees for 2015/16.

Proposer: Councillor Plant

Seconder: Councillor T Wainwright

That the following changes be agreed:-

- Scrutiny Committee – delete Councillor Annison and replace with Councillor Fox
- Audit and Risk Committee – delete Councillor Jones and replace with Councillor Jeal
- Licensing Committee – delete Councillor Andrews and replace with Councillor Connell
- Development Control Committee - delete Councillor Bird and replace with Councillor Myers
- Housing Appeals Committee – delete Councillor Myers and replace with Councillor Lawn
- Area Museums Committee – add Councillor Connell
- Local Plan Working Party – delete Councillor Stenhouse and replace with Councillor Myers

CARRIED

4 DEVOLUTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK

Following a presentation from the Chief Executive Officer at a Member Development Session, Council considered the Chief Executive Officer's report on Devolution Opportunities for Norfolk and Suffolk. Members were advised that the devolution of decision making to local areas has become a central policy focus nationally; greater autonomy over such strategic issues as transport, economic development, housing, flood defence, and strategic planning would support the Council's ambition for Norfolk and for Great Yarmouth.

The Chief Executive Officer's report updated Members about the devolution agenda in Norfolk and Suffolk, and it detailed some of the benefits and opportunities that the current devolution agenda offers in areas such as economic development, skills, transport, infrastructure, housing, health and social care and outlined the next key milestones.

The Leader presented a statement which explained the progress currently being made in Norfolk and Suffolk with regard to devolution opportunities. The Shadow Leader commented that further detailed information would be required on this matter and that all four groups on the Council would need to have an input into the devolution process.

The Leader of the independent group asked why the report stated that a Norfolk only devolution option was not seen by the Government as a viable option. The Leader commented that the Government had indicated that this was due to population numbers. The Leader of the independent group also questioned as to whether school standards would be fragmented for the education of school children and the Leader stated that he did not have the details on this matter at the present time but that he would respond to Councillor Myers later.

The Leader of the UKIP group expressed her group's concern as to when the finer details of the devolution proposals would be received. Councillor Connell also asked for clarification with regard to the disposal of school surplus sites.

Proposer: Councillor Plant

Seconder: Councillor B Coleman

- (i) To note the progress to date.
- (ii) To agree the principle of a Norfolk and Suffolk combined authority.
- (iii) To agree that the Leader and Chief Executive Officer continue to play a full part in discussions, representing the best interests of Great Yarmouth residents.
- (iv) To agree that all three group opposition Leaders should be fully briefed before any devolution meetings (pre agenda) and receive a report back from the Chief Executive Officer or Leader as soon as possible following such meetings.

CARRIED

5 INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND INTERIM SECTION 151 OFFICER

Council considered the Leader of the Council's report asking Council to consider the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive Officer and Interim Section 151 Officer.

The Leader reported that on the 7 October 2015 he had taken the decision to terminate the Council's contract with Solace for the provision of an Interim Chief Executive and that this contract would end on the 6 November 2015. The Council was therefore required to appoint a new Head of Paid Service. The Leader reported that it was proposed that an interim appointment be made of Sheila Oxtoby, Chief Executive of North Norfolk District Council, who would then undertake the role on a shared basis.

Members were already aware of informal discussions that had taken place with North Norfolk District Council on shared services generally and that in the light of those discussions it is considered that an interim shared Chief Executive appointment could be made quickly.

Members were advised that Council could make an appointment now on the basis that the final interim details will be determined by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Group Leaders. Once the interim arrangements are in place the Council can

both assess their effectiveness and consider the business case as to whether they should be permanent.

Members were also advised that the Council's Interim Section 151 Officer had now left the Authority and the Leader reported that it was proposed to appoint Karen Sly from North Norfolk District Council to undertake this role on an interim and shared basis.

The Leader formally recorded his thanks and appreciation to Mr G Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer, for all the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Council during his period of appointment.

The Shadow Leader stated that, in his opinion, this process had been badly handled and that there had been no consultation with any Group Leaders on the proposal to terminate the contract with Solace. He stated that this decision would create a huge risk to the medium term financial strategy and to the Transformation Programme and that this decision would not be in the best interests of the people of Great Yarmouth.

The Leader of the independent group had requested further details with regard to the costings involved in respect of the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive and Interim Section 151 Officer.

Councillor Williamson commented that the process that had been undertaken had not been open and honest and reiterated the view of the Shadow Leader that there had been no consultation with other Group Leaders. He commented on the audit report that had flagged up issues around the Transformation Programme and stated that any decision on this matter should await the outcome of the devolution proposals. Both Councillors T Wainwright and Williamson recorded their thanks and appreciation to Mr G Mitchell for his work on behalf of the Borough Council.

The Leader of the UKIP group commented that the former Interim Section 151 Officer did not wish to take up the position of Section 151 Officer on a permanent basis. Councillor Grey also commented that the Chief Executive Officer's contract would be coming to an end anyhow at the end of December and she endorsed the proposal to pursue the shared services proposals pending the receipt of the business case as to whether the arrangement should be made permanent. The UKIP Leader also reiterated the thanks and appreciation that had been expressed to Mr G Mitchell.

The Leader reported that the business case would be worked up over the next six months and that any decision made by Council would be subject to endorsement by North Norfolk District Council at their Council meeting next week.

Proposer: Councillor Plant

Seconder: Councillor B Coleman

That a recorded vote be taken in relation to this item.

CARRIED

Proposer: Councillor Plant

Seconded: Councillor B Coleman

(i) That Sheila Oxtoby be appointed Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service for Great Yarmouth Borough Council from 7th November 2015.

(ii) That the detailed arrangements for the interim appointment be determined by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders.

(iii) That Karen Sly be appointed Interim Section 151 Officer on terms to be agreed by the Head of HR, effective from 7th November 2015.

For the motion –

Councillors Andrews, Annison, Bird, Carpenter, B Coleman, M Coleman, Collins, Grant, Grey, Hanton, Jones, Mavroudis, Plant, C Smith, Stenhouse, Thirtle and Weymouth.

Against the motion –

Councillors Connell, Davis, Fairhead, Jeal, Linden, Myers, Pratt, Robinson-Payne, J Smith, Sutton, H Wainwright, T Wainwright, Walker, Williamson and Wright.

Abstentions –

Councillor Cutting

CARRIED

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at: 20:30