

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015 at 4:30pm

### **P R E S E N T**

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)  
Councillor Allen Alderson  
Councillor Sue Austen  
Councillor Derrick Beckett  
Councillor Lorna Dupré  
Councillor Colin Fordham  
Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith (as Substitute for Councillor Hazel Williams MBE)  
Councillor Tony Parramint  
Councillor Charles Roberts  
Councillor Mike Rouse

### **OFFICERS**

Amanda Apcar – Principal Solicitor  
Julia Atkins – Senior Environmental Health Officer (Domestic)  
Kathy Batey – Head of Human Resources & Facilities Management  
Jo Brooks – Director, Regulatory Services  
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager  
Emmanuel Orekogbe – Accountant  
Richard Quayle – Director, Support Services  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer

### **I N A T T E N D A N C E**

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith  
Councillor David Ambrose Smith  
Councillor Bill Hunt  
Jo Andrews – Anglia Revenues Partnership

#### **27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

#### **28. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Hazel Williams. Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith substituted for Councillor Williams for this meeting.

#### **29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

30. **MINUTES**

Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith proposed the addition of the word “more” under minute number 21, between the words “to encourage” and “staff to get involved” in the minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> October meeting.

Councillor Mike Rouse proposed that the word “dingle” under minute number 21 be replaced with the word “dongle” in the minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> October meeting.

These proposals were both agreed.

It was resolved,

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014, as amended, and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014 be confirmed as correct records and be signed by the Chairman.

31. **CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman asked the Committee to note the extra paper tabled, being an updated forward agenda plan.

32. **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY**

The Committee received a report, reference P175 previously circulated, that informed Members of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy consultation response.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer advised the Committee that the report had been brought back, as it had been amended with a few changes. The policy was more to do with the provision of grants and loans. The main changes related to stopping the provision of loans for empty properties as the owners now pay council tax meaning it was less likely the properties would be left to deteriorate, stopping renovations and only allowing minor works grants for over two years.

Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith thought the list from Care & Repair should be given to appropriate customers.

Councillor Lorna Dupré noted there was nothing in the text to reflect what happened to people coming home from hospital though they were a priority. When would the House Condition Survey take place and what was the process for it? The Senior Environmental Health Officer could amend the policy to reflect the priority as suggested. The Council were looking to do a housing stock model, to save around £30K, and this would be done via the Building Research Establishment and would be brought back to this Committee for consideration.

Councillor Anna Bailey noted that a couple of links in the report did not work. In response to Councillor Bailey's query, it was revealed that the Green Deal programme had not finished.

It was resolved:

That the East Cambridgeshire, Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy be approved and implemented.

### 33. **INTRODUCTION OF A HOME WORKING POLICY**

The Committee received a report, reference P176 previously circulated, that reviewed the Council's new Home Working Policy.

The Human Resources & Facilities Manager reminded the Committee that the introduction of this new policy had been highlighted in the relevant Service Plan. A focus group had been set up to see if home working was wanted and to establish a policy for it. Two staff surveys had been created to understand how home working was operating for existing users and to gauge the need for others and what they would use it for. The surveys indicated that there was a need for this type of working. A draft policy had been drawn up, which included health and safety aspects and the need for data protection. This had been presented to Management Team and the Joint Consultative Committee. Unison had welcomed the scheme but had suggested some minor amendments to the policy, which had been accepted.

*Councillor Bill Hunt joined the meeting at this point, 4:44pm.*

The Human Resources & Facilities Manager continued by advising that the policy would be reviewed and brought back to the Committee for further consideration, after around six months, dependent on take up. There would be some cost to implement the new scheme but any applications would have to come out of existing budgets. Any applications from staff would be assessed to determine whether it would be right to accept the application and to judge its benefits.

Councillor Anna Bailey thanked the officer, the team and the officers who had taken part in the pilot scheme. It was noted that Appendix 3 to the draft policy showed a timesheet, which would be used to understand how the staff used their time at home. The Council would be working on a scheme to ensure staff cover for the public, Councillors and other departments, so this scheme would have to fit in with that. Councillor Mike Rouse did not want the responsibility to the public interface to be affected by this policy. So this was something that had to be taken account of.

The Director, Support Services informed the Committee that this work had started, as some customers struggled to contact some departments already. There were also issues over staff holidays and opening times. The Home Working Policy should not affect the services provided.

Councillor Charles Roberts fully supported this scheme as it provided clear advantages but had some concerns. Staff would have to ensure that they separated work time and home time when participating in this scheme. Communication was important and clear guidelines had to be adequately addressed. Clear agreements would be needed on procedures and the basic things needed to be ironed out. Basic parameters were required and these should not be agreed by individual line managers. Were there any more details about protocols and guidelines?

The Human Resources & Facilities Manager explained that the intention was for staff to agree protocols with their line managers, as these would vary depending on how long the staff member would be expected to take part in the scheme and the necessary interaction with customers. The Human Resources & Facilities Manager would be involved and would have to be satisfied with the arrangements.

Councillor Derrick Beckett queried whether an initial health and safety assessment would be carried out by a qualified person. Clear objectives would have to be maintained for this scheme but how would Councillors know whether this scheme could be justified? The work done needed to have a quantity that could be measured, so Councillors could go to the relevant line manager with that information.

Councillor Anna Bailey reminded the Committee that the staff would have to fill in their log sheets, which would be kept by the Human Resources & Facilities Manager. So if there was an incident then it could be checked. There had to be some trust with the staff and managers. A close eye would be kept on the scheme and it would be reviewed, when any necessary changes could be made.

Councillor Lorna Dupré had experience as a home worker and thought it was a great way to give people more control and responsibility. However, the management role was important, so training for managers ought to be included in the policy. People needed to be trusted first but they had to be managed properly.

The Director, Support Services assured the Committee that managers would be prepared for the scheme. When working from home staff would be under more pressure, so staff needed to be prepared and plans were needed to ensure they did not become isolated.

It was resolved:

That the Council's new Home Working Policy be adopted with immediate effect following the end of the consultation period with the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).

34. **ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP – NEW MEMBER PROPOSAL**

The Committee received a report, reference P177 previously circulated, that proposed that Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils become full members of the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP).

The Director, Regulatory Services introduced Jo Andrews, from ARP. The Committee was reminded that currently the ARP consisted of five local authorities as full members. Last year both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils joined as part partners, which had helped generate additional savings. Two phases for joining had been completed, with databases merged and offices shared with ARP. The benefits if they became equal full partners would include additional savings of around £29K for this authority in 2015/16, the opportunities for joint procurement and joint document management systems.

Councillor Mike Rouse asked whether the Council had received comments from its representatives on the Joint Committee. Councillor David Ambrose Smith was currently a Council representative on that Committee and was happy to accept both Councils into the Partnership but did not think ARP should get any larger.

It was resolved:

- (i) To approve that Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils become full members of the Anglia Revenues Partnership;
- (ii) That the Director of Regulatory Services be authorised to negotiate a new Anglia Revenues Partnership agreement (via the ARP Operational Improvement Board) to include Waveney District and Suffolk Coastal Councils as full members of the Anglia Revenues Partnership.

35. **ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**

The Committee received a report, reference P178 previously circulated, that presented a business case for a shared Enforcement Agency Service for the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP).

The Director, Regulatory Services advised the Committee that on April 13<sup>th</sup> an Act of Parliament had been introduced which enabled considerably higher statutory fees to be charged by enforcement agencies. ARP had the knowledge and the capacity to create such an agency. The benefits for doing this would include ensuring charges were paid, the maintenance of a high customer service and to ensure debtors were charged only after all other attempts had been made.

*Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith joined the meeting at this point, 5:12pm.*

The Director, Regulatory Services continued by explaining that the income stream would be shared across the Partnership. The business case for the proposed new agency had been taken to the Joint Committee and approved. If

the ARP became an enforcement agency then it might affect local enforcement businesses, though they were keen to work with the ARP.

Jo Andrews stated that commercial bailiffs had initially shown some resistance to this new agency but now were willing to work with it and the agency would need their help.

Councillor Lorna Dupré was concerned, not about the idea in principle but that information would not be coming to Members. The report itself did not give any evaluation of the two options suggested or comparisons of finances nor an analysis of the risks. It was understood that ARP's data protection policy was out-of-date, so how would the governance of this work? However, the scheme had merit so it was proposed that the business case be sent away and brought back with the information required. This was duly seconded.

Councillor Derrick Beckett was also worried in relation to the points made by Councillor Dupré but thought the Committee had been presented with a fait accompli. This Committee should be making the decision, as there would be a cost to this Council. The report was too short in details and there was not enough information to make a decision.

When put to the vote this proposal was declared lost.

Jo Andrews informed the Committee that current arrangements involved using bailiffs, so the costs went to those companies. If the agency was set up then the costs would be kept. The agency could be governed via the Joint Committee or one of the partners, but this had not yet been decided.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith stated that ARP had a bailiff section that worked extremely efficiently. This scheme would allow control of the bailiffs and procedures for it were in place.

The report recommendations were then duly proposed and seconded and when put to the vote declared carried.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the recommendation of the ARP Joint Committee to introduce an Enforcement Agency Service be supported;
- (ii) That the Director (Regulatory Services) in consultation with the appointed ARP Joint Committee Members be given delegated authority to introduce a shared Enforcement Agency for the Anglia Revenues Partnership in accordance with the business case agreed by the Joint Committee.

## 36. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a report, reference P179 previously circulated, that updated Members on the Committee's financial position for 2014/15, based on current projections for both revenue and capital expenditure.

The Accountant advised the Committee about the projected overspend on the revenue budget and that the capital expenditure had remained the same.

Councillor Mike Rouse noted the budget for specialist planning advice and accepted that it would be needed for more complicated planning applications.

*Councillors Christine Ambrose Smith and David Ambrose Smith left the meeting at this point, 5:30pm.*

Councillor Rouse continued by suggesting that it would be better if such knowledge was within the planning team, so the money would be better spent on training those officers. This would probably cost less than the £20K set aside.

The Director, Regulatory Services thought that was a valid point but currently the Planning Department were undergoing a huge transformation with a number of new procedures being brought in. The money in the budget had been requested by that Department, as it had no other money left, and would only be used when seeking independent advice.

Councillor Anna Bailey did not understand how an underspend of £19K in October had turned into an overspend of £10K. The Accountant agreed to look into this and report back. The Director, Support Services agreed to get back to the Chairman and send the information to all Members.

It was resolved:

- (i) To note that this Committee has a projected over spend of £10,658 compared to its approved revenue budget of £6,329,400;
- (ii) To note that this Committee has a projected capital budget of £892,594 as previously reported.

### 37. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its revised forward agenda plan, as tabled.

The Director, Support Services advised the Committee that following the 'root-and-branch' review a number of service areas needed to be looked, including Information Communication Technology and Customer Services. These would need a fundamental review and the transformation programme would be coming back with plans, a scope and aspects of the reviews.

It was resolved:

That the forward agenda plan be noted.

38. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining agenda items no. 13 to 15 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1, 2 and 4 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

39. **LICENSING**

The Committee received an Exempt report, reference P180 previously circulated, that related to Licensing.

The Director, Regulatory Services provided the background and details of the report and explained the options available.

The Committee discussed the options and, when put to the vote, accepted the recommendations within the report.

That the recommendations within the report be agreed.

40. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS, RESIGNATIONS AND TRENDS**

The Committee received a report, reference P181 previously circulated, that detailed staff appointments, transfers and resignations for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

It was resolved:

That the content of the information report be noted.

41. **EXEMPT JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE NOTES**

It was resolved:

That the notes of the Joint Consultative Committee be noted.

The meeting closed at 5:57pm.