

Cabinet
Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 17 January 2023
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 2pm

Present:

Cllr Andrew Proctor	Chairman. Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Graham Plant	Vice-Chairman. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy
Cllr John Fisher	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Tom FitzPatrick	Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Greg Peck	Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Executive Directors Present:

James Bullion	Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy
Simon George	Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services
Kat Hullat	Assistant Director of Governance
Tom McCabe	Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services

Cabinet Members and Executive Directors introduced themselves.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention and the Executive Director for Children's Services.

2 Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 No interests were declared.

3 Matters referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee, Select Committees or by full Council.

- 3.1 None.

4 Update from the Chairman/Cabinet Members

- 4.1 There were no updates given at this point. An update was given by The Vice-Chairman later in the meeting; please see paragraph 7b.

5 Public Question Time

- 5.1 No public questions were received.

6 Local Member Questions/Issues

6.1 No local Member questions were received.

7 A Devolution Deal for Norfolk

7.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing details of the Norfolk Deal and the steps to be taken following the announcement of the “minded to” County Deal for Norfolk and seeks agreement to commence the consultation on the Deal.

7.1.2 The Chairman introduced the report to Cabinet:

- From discussion held at the Full Council in the morning, it had come over strongly that Norfolk County Council and Norfolk wanted to see devolution delivered.
- It had also been recognised that we need to start somewhere; the deal being presented was a deal that was in principle and “minded to”, and subject to primary and secondary legislation which was still to happen.
- Progressing the deal would recognise that this was the first step on the ladder of Norfolk showing it was a can-do County with ambition, one to do business with a stronger voice nationally and an insider.
- This deal was not about taking powers from District Councils or local government reorganisation. The governance changes that would be required to execute the deal once legislation had gone through would be a Full Council decision. The decision today was not a hard stop-go decision but to move the process on.
- The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report, with an amendment to recommendation 2 b, shown below with added text underlined, and two additional recommendations 5 and 6, set out below:
 - 2 b) develop implementation planning and assurance processes (as set out in section 5 of the report) and, as part of this, consider what an exit strategy would be if there would have to be one.
 - 5) set up a cross-party member working group to oversee the work around implementation planning and assurance processes.
 - 6) start to hold regular Member briefings and workshops to ensure all understand what needs to be done.

7.2 The Vice-Chairman noted paragraph 2.5 of the report which set out the funding and powers that the deal with Government would provide related to investment funding, building homes on brownfield sites, regeneration, affordable homes, capital funding, shaping local provision, transport, railways and the Shared Prosperity Fund, among others, all detailed in the report. Speaking with districts would be part of the process to ensure developments happened in the best interest of Norfolk. The Vice-Chairman felt that having an elected leader would provide a voice to Government from Norfolk and voiced his support for the deal.

7.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance was encouraged by the debate in Full Council in the morning where clear points had been made. This deal was for £20m per annum for 30 years; the final split of the £20m was 40% capital and 60% revenue, representing £12m revenue. Working on an asset life of 25 years this £12m per annum revenue funding would allow the council to fund £125m, giving an idea of the power of this deal. The Norwich Western Link was bringing in £250m funding with a £37.5m contribution from Norfolk County Council. With

£125m the council could gear up faster for projects which could be put through the development corporations set up as indicated in the report.

- 7.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that there had been positive discussion at Full Council in the morning about the benefits of the County Deal. He discussed the importance of the consultation which he felt should be taken seriously and be a quality document. No parish councils he had spoken to had been against the pathway proposed and this was an opportunity to show the ambitions of the council to improve the commitment to communities and benefits to them.
- 7.5 The Chairman asked The Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy to provide assurance that the consultation would be ready by the 6 February 2023. The Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy updated Cabinet that the consultation would extensively inform the public about the work by giving information about what was in the deal and what it would provide. The consultation would allow an opportunity to listen to the public and for them to give their views on the component parts of the deal. Activities would be carried out with stakeholder groups and events held for partners and organisations to help them understand the deal and give feedback. The council encouraged organisations to respond to the consultation. Documentation and resources were being worked on and FAQ video summaries were already available online. Officers were working with an organisation to ensure the consultation complied with best practice and was meaningful and would learn lessons from areas already out to consultation such as Cornwall. The survey was constructed so that a sense for support for different parts of the deal could be gained and there would be areas for free text. Officers would be able to analyse the types of response, for example by resposdee type.
- 7.6 The Chairman was pleased to note that the consultation process was being taken seriously and would engage as many people as possible.
- 7.7 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management was pleased by the thorough debate seen at Full Council in the morning. There was an underlying want to move to a devolution deal however the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management was concerned that some opposition members had “belittled” the amount of money involved and pointed out that more funds would be able to be leveraged from Government throughout the process and in the future.
- 7.8 The Chairman felt that officials and ministers from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should say more positive things in public to confirm Government’s support.
- 7.9 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance felt that Norfolk was an innovative county which had always welcomed people and change. Norfolk was an important farming county with historic railway towns and a good tourism industry as well as a history of technological businesses. He believed that it was important to seize innovations for residents and take control of the destiny of the county.
- 7.10 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships felt that it was important to move forward with the next steps as soon as possible; consulting with the

general public would give a view on the benefits to themselves and their local areas. Adult learning were keen on the devolution of the adult learning budget as this would allow them to plan courses dependent on the needs of local people and businesses not on the needs of the Government. The Deal would allow the council to plan further ahead.

- 7.11 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services understood why Government wanted local councils to have more control of services as doing so would allow them to achieve what it was difficult for central Government to do. Local Government tended to be more stable than national Government. Section 23 of the report discussed the idea of a single boundary Norfolk; from a Children's Services perspective, services would be best provided within the bounds of Norfolk. Some devolution deals had fallen apart due to the threat of the falling apart of traditional Norfolk, but this deal sat in the traditional boundaries and kept services within them also. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services also noted that the section on climate change was positive, which stated that local government could bring forward change better than nationally; he pointed out that the energy sector in Great Yarmouth could be promoted through the devolution deal.
- 7.12 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy felt that if the council turned the deal down there would be a challenging need to explain to their constituents why £20m a year had been turned down and why Suffolk had received funding and Norfolk had not.
- 7.13 The Chairman summed up by quoting paragraph 13 on page 28 of the report: "The Norfolk County Deal will unlock significant long-term funding and give local leaders greater freedom to decide how best to meet local needs and create new opportunities for the people who live and work there. The Government recognises that devolution is a journey, not a one-off event. This agreement is the first step in a process of further devolution and will pave the way for future conversations as part of an ongoing dialogue. As institutions mature, they can gain greater responsibility, and Norfolk will be able to deepen their devolution arrangements over time, subject to Government agreement. The Government will continue to work with Norfolk to use the county's unique economic, environmental and delivery strengths to drive opportunity for all and support residents in fulfilling their potential". The Chairman noted that today's meeting would move the process more and that lots more work would need to be done.
- 7.14 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
- 1) ratify the "in-principle" devolution deal for Norfolk
 - 2) agree to proceed with the process, as summarised in this report, to:
 - a) undertake a full consultation exercise (as set out in section 4 of the report)
 - b) develop implementation planning and assurance processes (as set out in section 5 of the report) and, as part of this, consider what an exit strategy would be if there would have to be one.
 - c) prepare for a County Council resolution to change the current leader and cabinet executive governance model to a 'directly elected leader and cabinet' governance model in December 2023 (as set out in section 3 of the report)
 - 3) agree that a report on the outcome of the consultation is brought to Cabinet

- 4) agree that further progress reports are presented to the Cabinet as appropriate
- 5) set up a cross-party member working group to oversee the work around implementation planning and assurance processes.
- 6) start to hold regular Member briefings and workshops to ensure all understand what needs to be done.

7.15 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

The “minded to” devolution deal will deliver significant new powers and investment that will benefit communities and businesses in Norfolk. It means that decisions previously taken centrally can in the future be potentially taken closer to the people affected.

On the basis of the report and the benefits of a devolution deal, it is recommended that Cabinet agree to proceed with the Deal for Norfolk process and that the Deal be taken forward for consultation.

7.16 Alternative Options

N/A

7b Update from The Vice-Chairman

7b.1 The Vice-Chairman gave an update on funding received for electric buses in Norwich:

- The Vice-Chairman had been notified during the meeting that Norfolk County Council had received £14.7m funding from Government for electrifying of buses from Norwich taking the number of electric buses to 70 and meaning the depot at Rountree Way would be fully electrified.
- The Vice-Chairman felt this was great news for Norfolk and thanked the team who applied for the funding. Extra money had been received on top of what was applied for.
- The Vice-Chairman also thanked First Bus for their partnership working and for the money they put in to make sure this happened.

8 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting

8.1 There were no decisions to note.

The meeting ended at 14:36

Chairman of Cabinet