



Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 September 2020
at 10:00 as a virtual teams meeting

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)
Cllr Alison Thomas (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Emma Corlett
Cllr Phillip Duigan
Cllr Ron Hanton
Cllr Chris Jones
Cllr Joe Mooney

Cllr Judy Oliver
Cllr Richard Price
Cllr Dan Roper
Cllr Haydn Thirtle

Substitute Members present:

Cllr David Harrison for Cllr Stefan Aquarone

Parent Governor Representative

Mr Giles Hankinson

Also present (who took a part in the meeting):

Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy
Cllr Martin Wilby	Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance
Tom McCabe	Head of Paid Service
Fiona McDiarmid	Executive Director of Strategy and Governance
Rob Walker	Chair of TSG and Executive Director Place, Breckland Council
Jon Peddle	Chair of Animal Welfare Cell and Food and Farming Manager, Trading Standards
Ceri Sumner	Director, Community, Information and Learning
Dr Louise Smith	Director of Public Health
Caroline Clarke	Head of Governance and Regulatory Services
Karen Haywood	Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Tim Shaw	Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Roy Brame and Cllr Stefan Aquarone (Cllr David Harrison substituting), Ms Helen Bates (Church Representative) and Mr Paul Dunning (Church Representative).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meetings held on 19 August 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent Business

- 4.1 No urgent business was discussed

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 There were no public questions.

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

- 6.1 No local Member questions were received.

7. Call in: County Council Highway Authority - Planning Consultation response to South Norfolk Planning Application 2018/2631

- 7.1 The annexed report (7A) related to the call-in of an item of the Cabinet papers of 7 September 2020 entitled "County Council Highway Authority - Planning Consultation response to South Norfolk Planning Application 2018/2631."
- 7.2 The Chair explained the way in which he would handle this item to best ensure a fair and balanced scrutiny process and to decide what (if any) issues the Committee would refer to the Cabinet.
- 7.3 In addition to welcoming Cllr Dan Roper (a member of the Committee who would present the reasons for the call-in) , the Chair welcomed to the meeting Graham Plant, Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy, Margaret Dewsbury, Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships and Martin Wilby, Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure.
- 7.4 Cllr Roper explained the reasons for the call-in which were set out in Appendix A to the report. He said that the call-in was not about seeking to influence the way in which South Norfolk District Council determined the planning application. The call-in was about why the County Council had changed its highways view and about the evidence that Cabinet had used to reach its decision. The report to Cabinet had contained only a "narrow" highway view on the suitability of roundabouts as road junctions. It was important to ascertain where in the Council's economic strategy it said that the proposed development must be at this place with this exact roundabout. The evidence Cabinet used to reach a decision should be published in full or the reasons for not publishing it made clear.

- 7.5 The Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services said that the proposed roundabout was deemed to be safe and appropriate and could be built to the required standard to allow direct access onto the A140.
- 7.6 In reply to questions, Cllr Graham Plant, Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy said that the planning application was on behalf of Ben Burgess (a national farm machinery company) for the location of their new headquarters. The application provided for 90 jobs and included the provision of a training hub. In reply to questions the Cabinet Member said that the Cabinet had weighed up the relatively narrow highways view on the junction versus the broader impact of the proposed development on the Norfolk economy.
- 7.7 Cllr Martin Wilby, Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure, said that he shared views expressed by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services and the Director of Highways and Waste that the proposed roundabout would be the correct form of junction on this type of road and would meet with the current and forecast traffic flow volumes.
- 7.8 Cllr Margaret Dewsbury, Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships referred to reduced traffic flows on the A140 (a part of the national Major Route Network) and said that the roundabout was a good solution to help keep this nationally significant business in Norfolk and at a site where the company wanted to locate.
- 7.9 During discussion the following key issues were raised:
- The economic benefit to the Norfolk economy (while not a direct consideration for the Highways Authority) was a significant consideration for Cabinet.
 - The Highway Authority had been engaged in lengthy discussion with the company before the application was submitted and at no time had officers said to the applicant that a roundabout would not provide a safe solution. The discussions with the applicant had come down to technical issues about the location of a roundabout rather than would a roundabout provide an appropriate solution.
 - This application now met with highways policy guidance.
 - There had been many other applications for vehicular access to the A140 which had not met with road safety requirements. Each application had to be considered on its own merits
 - Cllr Corlett said that there was no evidence to show that brown field sites had been considered as an alternative to the proposed site or that the application met with the County Council's plans to be carbon neutral by 2030.
 - In reply to questions officers said that a full route appraisal of the A140 (that included Suffolk Highways Authority) had yet to take place. The absence of an environmental development strategy and site selection issues were matters for SNDC to consider on planning grounds.
 - The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy said that the company was committed to the use of low carbon farm machinery and to providing a training and development centre with opportunities for apprentices.
 - The hours of access to the site from the roundabout would be an issue for

South Norfolk District Council as the planning authority and not for the County Council to decide.

- 7.10 After further discussion, Cllr Dan Roper said that apart from the comment that could be found at paragraph 2.4.2 of the Cabinet report there did not appear to be any evidence presented to Cabinet to explain how the Council had gone from a position in 2019 where it had objections on highway grounds to where it now had no such objections.
- 7.11 Cllr Dan Roper, seconded by Cllr Emma Corlett, moved:
- To refer back to Cabinet the recommendation that there are no objections on highways grounds and instead ask Cabinet to put forward a County Council response that presents a “balanced view” between the original recommendation on highways grounds in 2019 and the advice Cabinet subsequently received from the Director of Highways and Waste.
- 7.12 In seconding the proposal Cllr Corlett said that it was important for Cabinet to explain its “workings out” as to how it had arrived at its decision and how it had taken account of the impact of wider Council strategic issues.
- 7.13 After further discussion, the motion was LOST there being 5 votes in favour and 7 votes against.

7.14 **RESOLVED**

That Scrutiny Committee note the report.

8. Banham Poultry Covid-19 Outbreak

- 8.1 The Director Public Health and the Head of Paid Service provided the Committee with a report that explained the recent Covid-19 outbreak at Banham Poultry and the measures that Norfolk County Council and partners had taken to contain the spread which had been reported to Cabinet.
- 8.2 Dr Louise Smith, Director of Public Health, Rob Walker, Chair of TSG and Executive Director Place, Breckland Council, Jon Peddle, Chair of Animal Welfare Cell and Food and Farming Manager, Trading Standards and Ceri Sumner, Director, Community, Information and Learning provided the Committee with a presentation about the following issues:
- Covid-19 cases each day in Norfolk since 1 August 2020. This enabled the Committee to better understand the impact of the Banham Poultry outbreak on the overall incidence of Covid-19 in Norfolk.
 - Inequalities amongst people already diagnosed with Covid-19.
 - The community response to the outbreak
 - The wider business and economic implications of Covid-19.
 - Animal welfare issues.
- 8.3 During discussion the following points were noted:
- The Director of Public Health explained the timeline of events since when on

Friday 21st August Norfolk County Council's Public Health Team became aware that a member of Banham Poultry's staff was admitted to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and subsequently tested positive for Covid-19. This was set out in the report.

- An increased testing regime was put in place as a result of the outbreak at Banham Poultry.
- The numbers of positive cases from Banham Poultry were now mostly through the system and Norfolk was returning to "normal" levels. The data would be reviewed on 25 September 2020 to ascertain if there was further spread of Covid-19 or if the rapid measures that were taken by Banham Poultry, those working at the factory and by colleagues working in the community had contained the outbreak.
- At 10 September 2020, including all positive cases in Norfolk, the rolling 7-day incidence per 100,000 was 8.9 per cases per 100,000 compared to England with 33.8 cases per 100,000.
- There were a small number of people admitted to hospital as a result of the Banham Poultry outbreak, but no recorded deaths.
- Outbreaks of Covid-19 were more likely in meat processing plants because of environmental reasons.
- The mobilisation of early testing, the participation and support of all those associated with Banham Poultry, of Environmental Services Officers at Breckland District Council and of Trading Standards Officers at the County Council had significantly reduced the impact of the Banham Poultry outbreak. The outbreak had also been reduced by close working with employment agencies, landlords and the publication of information about the outbreak in different languages.
- The Banham Poultry site fell within Government regulations that specified types of premises of national significance where decisions regarding factory closure laid with the Secretary of State.
- The work of the Tactical Support Team set up to deal with the outbreak was now at an end. An analysis of the lessons learnt from the outbreak would be reported back to the Committee later.
- The main learning point from the outbreak was that the local NHS had to remain on constant alert to the unexpected ways in which Covid-19 might present itself to them. The local NHS needed to be able to identify patterns of cases of Covid-19 and work to a much lower number of such cases before notifying the multi-disciplinary outbreak team. The Director of Public Health agreed to take up the matter with the NHS and in particular the need for local hospitals to have a watch list of particular groups of people where it would take only one or two cases for them to be reported to the multi-disciplinary outbreak team.
- Hospitals and employment agencies needed to retain up to date information about those working in high risk industries.
- Cllr Bill Borrett, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention, stressed the importance of personal health protection measures such as hand washing and social distancing in dealing with the pandemic. He said that the Government and all public and private bodies operating in Norfolk recognised the importance of joint working to deal with the pandemic. He praised all those who had worked hard to contain and control the outbreak including the company and its workers.
- The racist comments made by a small minority of people about some workers at Banham Poultry was condemned by the Cabinet Member and by Members

of the Committee.

8.4 RESOLVED

That Scrutiny Committee

- 1. Note the significant response by Public Health Norfolk and of our partners in district councils, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, the voluntary sector. along with regional and national government agencies, in working to contain a Covid-19 outbreak at Banham Poultry in Attleborough.**
- 2. Acknowledge, recognise and thank everyone associated with the large amount of work carried out by Norfolk County Council and partners (including the owners and managers of Banham Poultry) in containing this Coronavirus outbreak and in implementing Norfolk's Outbreak Control Plan.**
- 3. Continue to support and promote Protect Yourself, Protect Others Protect Norfolk public health messages to keep residents safe.**
- 4. Ask to hear back at a future meeting about the lessons learnt from the outbreak.**
- 5. Place on record thanks to the workers at Banham Poultry who, while not in a strong financial position, have shown an excellent example to other Norfolk residents about how to respond when faced with an outbreak of this kind.**
- 6. Ask that hospitals and employment agencies be alerted to the importance of keeping up to date information about those working in high risk industries.**

9 Strategic and Financial Planning 2021-22

- 9.1 The Committee received a report by the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance about the development of the 2021-22 Budget.
- 9.2 Cllr Andrew Jamieson (Cabinet Member for Finance) in introducing the report said that saving proposals to aid in closing the budget gap would be presented to Cabinet in October 2020, after being developed based on the approaches set out in Sections 4-8 of the Cabinet report presented to this meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and following input from Select Committees about the overall strategy in each Department during September 2020.
- 9.3 The issues that were discussed included the following:
- Councillors spoke about the difficulty that the Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees had in commenting on broad budget planning proposals that were not yet set out in enough detail and of the need for cross party support to deal with budgetary pressures that arose from the significant impact of Covid-19.
 - The scale of the budget gap to be closed remained subject to considerable uncertainty and there were issues which could have a material impact on the level of resources available to the Council to deliver services in the future.
 - While there remained a continuing rise in council tax collection rates as a result of more homes being built there was likely to be more people seeking

Council Tax support due to the impact of Covid-19 on the economy.

- It was pointed out that the Corporate Select Committee had suggested that to provide more focus broad budget planning proposals should be brought to Select Committees in July each year and that this should be suggested for future years.
- It was noted that the County Council awaited a Government announcement about the White Paper on Adult Social Care.

9.4 RESOLVED

That Scrutiny Committee note the key issues for 2021-22 budget setting and the broad areas proposed for savings development asset out in the appended Cabinet report.

10 Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 10.1 The Committee received a report by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance that asked Councillors to agree the most appropriate way forward for the scrutiny of Children's Services issues.

10.2 RESOLVED

That Scrutiny Committee agree

- 1. Scrutiny of Children's Services be undertaken by a Children's Services Scrutiny Sub Committee with the membership being: 5 Members (3 Conservatives, 1 Labour, 1 Lib Dem) (with substitution being permitted from the wider County Council membership than the Scrutiny Committee)**
- 2. The proposed programme of work and meeting dates outlined in the report.**

11. Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

- 11.1 The Committee received a draft of the forward work programme.

11.2 RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny Committee agree the forward work programme as set out in a report by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance subject to an opportunity at the October 2020 meeting (as part of an officer report) to examine the systemic issues that arise from ongoing outbreaks of Covid-19 in care homes and in public sector settings.

The meeting concluded at 15:30

Chair