



MINUTES

CABINET

5.00 – 6.10 pm

5 January 2011

Present: Councillors Morpew (chair), Arthur (vice-chair), Bremner, MacDonald, Sands, Waters and Westmacott

Also Present: Councillors Stephenson and Lubbock

Apologies: Councillor Brociek-Coulton

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bremner declared a personal interest in item 3, response to Norfolk County Council's budget reduction proposals, as an elected member of the county council. Councillors Sands and MacDonald also declared personal interests in item 3 as employees of the county council.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2010.

3. RESPONSE TO NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S BUDGET REDUCTION PROPOSALS

(Councillors Bremner, MacDonald and Sands had declared a personal interest in this item.)

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources, performance and shared services, introduced the report and said that he had been present at the scrutiny committee meeting when the draft response to the county council was considered. He questioned the approach that Norfolk County Council was proposing to meet its budget deficit and the effect that this would have on the most vulnerable people in the county. He suggested that the county council could use its reserves of £75m to allow time for a more detailed consultation and work with other authorities to find alternative ways to provide services, therefore mitigating the impact, particularly in preventative and shared services. The county council's proposal for savings to ICT was welcomed but it could go further and follow the city council's example of making substantial savings through its ICT and business process re-engineering.

Councillor Arthur, cabinet member for housing, said that the county council should review its proposals to cut funding for the supporting people programme and for

adult social services to intervene only in critical cases, and that it was not aware of the impact that these proposals would make.

Councillor Stephenson, chair of the scrutiny committee, referred to recommendations made by the scrutiny committee at its meeting on 16 December 2010 and said that the committee considered that there needed further clarity on the proposals as it was difficult to comment without knowing what the impact could be. Scrutiny committee had been most concerned about the proposals for social services adult care and that without preventative care more cases would become critical and require greater resources in the longer term.

Detailed discussion ensued on the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee. Councillor Sands, cabinet member for wellbeing, said that she considered that looked after children should be placed in a placement of choice, even if this was outside the county, and that no monetary value could be given on ensuring that they received the best opportunity in life. Councillor Lubbock pointed out that the county council should provide further information on its definition of “in-house” provision so that an adequate response could be made in relation to this service. Cabinet members considered that privatisation of the meals on wheels service could mean a reduced service and that they could not support the scrutiny committee’s recommendation on this element. Councillor Lubbock pointed out that further clarification on the proposed reduction of support for the Wherry and Bittern railway line should be sought as this could mean publicity and promotion rather than a reduction in the actual train service. The chair pointed out that the cabinet did not oppose the county council’s proposals to reduce support for the Wherry and Bittern Line given the other transport imperatives. Members considered that the sensory support services must continue and that no cuts could be made until a shared service with other councils had been developed. Councillor Stephenson referred to the scrutiny committee’s recommendation that the county council maximised its opportunities to find savings from renewable energy and said that this also should include income. The chair said that the city council shared its ‘one small step’ initiative with other organisations and this could be shared with the county council. Councillor Stephenson explained that the scrutiny committee had suggested that planning work on the northern distributor road (NDR) should stop temporarily. Cabinet members considered that as the northern distributor road (NDR) was an important part of the greater Norwich joint core strategy, which would attract funding for new homes, jobs and greater prosperity for the local economy. Planning work on the NDR was therefore important to secure funding.

The chair said that he had sympathy with the county council’s position but considered that its proposals to meet the budget deficit would have a disproportionate impact on Norwich where there were higher levels of vulnerable people. This would result in a greater number of people falling back on the city council’s services and making service delivery more difficult and were also subject to budget cuts.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) having considered the recommendations of the scrutiny committee to incorporate into the council’s response:

(a) strengthened wording in regards to:-

- The lack of overall information provided by the county council on its proposals;
- The opportunity for the county council to make use of their reserves to buy themselves time to work up other proposals that would not affect frontline services;
- The county council's proposal to increase the eligibility criteria for adult social care to critical only;
- The county council's proposal to reduce spending on prevention services;
- The county council's proposal to end the HIV/AIDS service;
- The county council's proposal to end the subsidy for college transport;
- The county council's proposal to close the travel information desk at Norwich Bus Station.

(b) the following additions:

- request greater clarification on the county council's proposals in relation to efficiency savings from bringing the looked after children service 'in house' and that there should be continued use of out of county placements where it is in the best interest of the child;
- that the county council should explore developing a shared service with other councils for sensory support services;
- that the county council maximises all opportunities to find income from renewable energy and make energy savings.

(2) delegate approval of the wording and the finalisation of the council's response to the consultation to the chief executive in consultation with the chair, vice-chair and the relevant portfolio holders.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of item 5 below because it would disclose information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority as in paragraph 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

***5. REDUCTION IN FUNDING FOR TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS SERVICES**

Councillor MacDonald, cabinet member for environment, introduced the report. The head of transportation presented the report and answered questions.

RESOLVED to endorse consultation on staff adjustment proposals consequent on changes in funding for transportation and highway services as set out in this report.

CHAIR