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COUNCIL MEETING

1 November 2007 – 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Mayor, Councillor Garrod (in the Chair); Councillors Ames, Barker, Blyth, Burroughs, Castle, B Coleman, M Coleman, Collins, Cook, Cunniffe, Easter, Field, Hacon, Hewitt, Hodds, Holmes, Jeal, Linden, Peck, Pettit, Plant, Reynolds, Shrimplin, Smith, Stone, Tate, B Taylor, M Taylor, D Thompson, M Thompson, Wainwright, B Walker, C Walker, Watts, Weymouth and Williamson

Mr R Packham (Managing Director), Mrs J Ratcliffe (Executive Director – Customers and Resources), Mr C Skinner (Head of Central Services), Mr S Duncan (Head of Financial Services), Mrs C Metcalf (Head of Customer Services), Mr T Howard (Head of Regeneration and Environment) and Mr R Hodds (Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer)

1. FORMER COUNCILLOR WILLIAM DOUGAL

The Mayor referred to the recent death of former Councillor William Dougal and Members stood for one minute's silence as a mark of respect.

2. WELCOME TO COUNCILLOR B TAYLOR

The Mayor referred to the recent by-election in Nelson Ward and welcomed Councillor B Taylor to the Council.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the 30 August 2007 were confirmed.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with paragraph 9 of part 4 (Rules of the Procedure) of the Constitution, Council considered the following questions from the public:-

(a) Mr M King of 79 California Avenue, Scratby

"At Great Yarmouth Borough Council meeting on the 22 August 2007, the Councillor for Ormesby St Margaret and Scratby, Councillor J Shrimplin, proposed that the Borough Council adopt SMP2 (the ACAG Kelling to Lowestoft Ness SMP), his recommendation was accepted. There were no discussions, members of the public who attended the meeting

were not allowed to ask any questions and Councillor Shrimplin's proposal to recommend acceptance of this SMP at the next full Council meeting was accepted by the Chairman as though a foregone conclusion.

When this SMP was circulated for public consultation during 2006 there were more than 2,400 responses and only 10 of these found this SMP acceptable. Why were the public invited to attend this meeting if they were not allowed to comment or ask questions and why was this proposal rushed through against local public opinion without allowing any comments? I understand that the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Shrimplin, has offered consultations but these will be meaningless because once the Borough Council accept this SMP DEFRA and the Environment Agency will not allow any changes to the specified policies for each unit."

In response to the above question, the Leader reported that no member of the public had been specifically invited to attend the Cabinet meeting in question although this meeting was open to the public but not in fact a public meeting. The Leader confirmed that the issue of acceptance of the SMP would not be the subject of discussion by Council this evening.

The Leader also reported on the detailed discussions that had taken place in the past on this issue and pointed out to Council that agreement was needed in principle that the Borough Council was considering a Shoreline Management Plan in order to apply for funding from the Government. He reaffirmed that no definite decision had been made with regard to the SMP. The Leader also referred to a meeting scheduled with the Minister this week which unfortunately had been cancelled. Council were informed that issues relating to social justice and on the need for a medium term solution would be raised as part of the discussions with government representatives. The Leader confirmed that more detailed discussions were needed on this issue before Council would be in a position to make any definite decisions.

The Cabinet Member (Environment) reported that two further public consultations would be taking place on this issue. He informed Council that all concerns expressed at the consultation meetings that had taken place so far were being correlated and would be presented to DEFRA.

In accordance with the agreed procedure, Mr King was then entitled to ask a supplementary question as follows:-

"Will the Borough Council reject the Shoreline Management Plan if the required technicalities are not satisfied?"

In response, the Leader reported that at this stage the Borough Council could not take this action as issues relating to compensation needed to be fully discussed and addressed. He pointed out that unless the Borough Council agrees to some form of Shoreline Management Plan he did not envisage that the required necessary coastal defences could be put in place for the future.

(b) Mr S Ashton of Old Post Office Cottage, West Somerton

"Will the Borough Council back the plan of the northern Parishes?"

In response to the above question, the Cabinet Member (Environment) reported that there was in fact no specific plan for the Northern Parishes as this was included in the overall plan. He reassured Council that all comments would be taken into account.

(c) Mr P Gowen (e-mail address)

“In the interests of ethical policy, common rights, justice and fair play to your threatened populace would you demand of DEFRA that the following conditions be accepted before the SMP demands be considered as acceptable by the Council:-

(1) That the full pre-blight market value of the infrastructure, properties, businesses, heritage and amenity to be lost and the cost of re-housing be fully and properly considered when determining the value of these relative to the cost of maintaining adequate sea defences to prevent their loss.

(2) That modern sustainable far more effective sea defence methodology at one tenth of the cost of concrete sea walls and constant beach recharge be considered when evaluating the realistic costs of the level of funding required to protect the entirety of the coastline.

(3) That a part of the money derived from the main cause of the erosion, i.e. offshore aggregate exploitation, be taken from that sum derived as royalties to the Crown Estate for licensing dredging operations and as VAT to the Exchequer on the sale of the aggregate, which totalled £1,178,677,942 from aggregate taken offshore to Great Yarmouth alone between 1993 and 2006. A small fraction of this sum accrued from the main causative damaging practice would be needed to fully protect the entire coastline of the entire United Kingdom.”

In response to question (1), the Cabinet Member (Environment) reported that the original Halcrow report into the SMP had considered market values. Subsequent to the report a revision of market values had been considered. The Cabinet Member reaffirmed to Council that issues relating to social justice and compensation would form part of the detailed discussions with the Government.

With regard to question (2), the Cabinet Member asked Mr Gowen to let the Borough Council know of any sea defence methodology that could be applied in this case. Mr Gowen confirmed that he would supply this information to the Head of Regeneration and Environment.

In connection with question (3) above, the Cabinet Member (Environment) reported on both the Borough and County Council’s concern with regard to the level of offshore dredging but pointed out that neither Council had any control over this. He confirmed that he agreed with the detail of the question but that this should be most properly directed to the Government. Mr Gowen confirmed that he would be writing direct to the Government on this issue.

5. REPORTS TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION

(a) Annual Report on the Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2006/07

Council considered the Head of Financial Services’ report on the Annual Report on the Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2006/07. Members were advised that the Annual Treasury Report is a requirement of the Council’s reporting procedures and covers the treasury activity for 2006/07. The report also covers the Actual Prudential Indicators for 2006/07 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

Proposer: Councillor Smith

Seconder: Councillor Coleman

- (i) That the Actual 2006/07 Prudential Indicators as detailed in the Head of Financial Services' report be approved.
- (ii) That the Treasury Management Stewardship Report for 2006/07 be noted.

CARRIED

(b) Town Hall Re-Roofing

Council considered the Head of Customer Services' report which provided a foundation for the initiation of a scheme to re-roof and carry out structural repairs to the Town Hall which is a Grade II listed building. Council were informed that the roof had reached its life limit and the building was currently suffering from dry rot on the south elevation and water ingress on the east and north elevations as a result. A number of emergency works were currently underway but the underlying problem of the condition of the roof needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Council were informed that the current Capital Programme includes £300,000 for 2007/08 and £250,000 for 2008/09 for the renovation of the Town Hall. Additional funding had been identified in the sum of £520,770 in 2007/08 and £159,480 in 2008/09. An additional £250,000 contingency fund was recommended, giving a total project cost of £1.48 million. Council was informed that it was proposed that the additional expenditure of £930,250 would be met in part by a transfer of funds which are no longer required from another project (£250,000) and in part by additional prudential borrowing of £680,250. The revenue implications of this additional prudential borrowing was estimated to be £30,000 in 2008/09, and £50,000 in 2009/10 and future years.

Council was also advised that following a recent meeting with the Council's VAT advisors, it was expected that the works to be carried out to the Town Hall would impact on the Council's partial exemption. Members were informed that the Council is allowed to recover VAT with regard to exempt activities up to a certain limit but if this limit is exceeded then all of the VAT on these activities becomes due. There was a potential that the work on the Town Hall could cause the Council to exceed that limit.

Proposer: Councillor Stone

Seconder: Councillor Smith

- (i) That approval be given to undertaking the repairs to the Town Hall as detailed in the Head of Customer Services' report as a matter of urgency and that the Capital Programme be amended on the lines outlined above.
- (ii) That authorisation be given to an application to H M Revenue and Customs to opt to tax on the building for VAT purposes, if this is considered necessary by the Council's VAT advisors.

CARRIED

(c) Appointments to Outside Bodies

Proposer: Councillor Wainwright

Seconder: Councillor Coleman

That Councillor B Taylor be appointed as the Borough Council's representative on the Norfolk Rail Policy Group.

CARRIED

(ii) Cabinet – 19 September and 24 October 2007

The Leader presented the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on the 19 September and 24 October 2007.

With regard to a previous issue discussed by Cabinet relating to the Great Yarmouth and Gorleston Area Liaison Committees, the Leader confirmed that meetings of these Liaison Committees would be arranged as soon as possible.

With regard to item 5 (Review of Local Government Structures in Norfolk), Council was asked to agree to the establishment of a Member Working Group on the review of Local Government Structures in Norfolk. Reference was also made to the need to agree a special meeting of Council in order for a decision to be made on the Council's preferred option to be recommended to the Boundary Committee on this issue. Council were also asked to give consideration to approving a supplementary budget in order to meet the costs associated with the work involved in regard to this matter.

Proposer: Councillor Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Smith

(i) That approval be given to the establishment of the Local Government Reorganisation Working Group to review local government structures in Norfolk comprising Councillors Castle, B Coleman, Smith, Stone and Wainwright and that substitutes be any Member of Cabinet and Councillor Williamson.

(ii) That the scheduled meeting of Cabinet on the 21 November be rearranged to take place on Wednesday, 28 November to be followed by a special meeting of Council on the same date.

(iii) That approval be given to a supplementary budget of up to £100,000 to be met from the LABGI Grant to be allocated towards the costs associated with the Local Government Reorganisation Review.

CARRIED

(iii) Scrutiny Committee – 17 September and 22 October 2007

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meetings held on the 17 September and 22 October 2007.

With regard to item 2 (Arrangements for Leisure Provision in the Borough) Councillor Castle was advised that the Environmental Advisory Group would be considering this issue.

In connection with item 4 (Public Broadcasting Screens) Councillor Castle asked that all of the recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Committee as a result of this review should be fully pursued and adopted. The Leader confirmed that Cabinet at its recent meeting had approved the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Councillor Wainwright asked for details on the present position with regard to the screen in the Market Place. The Cabinet Member (Regeneration and Tourism) reported that a private company had been commissioned to look into the problems with this screen.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Stone

That the minutes of Council of the 30 August 2007, Cabinet of the 19 September and 24 October 2007, and Scrutiny Committee of the 17 September and 22 October 2007 be received.

CARRIED

7. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

(a) Council was advised that the motion from Councillors Williamson, Wainwright, Blyth, Linden and Jeal relating to Unitary Status issues had been withdrawn. The Shadow Leader commented that he believed that the proposal to dismiss the Unitary Option for a Great Yarmouth and Waveney Unitary Council to bring both authorities together was premature at this stage.

(b) In accordance with paragraph 11.1 of part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Constitution, Members were asked to consider the following motion from Councillors Jeal, Wainwright, Williamson, Barker and Blyth:-

“This Council recognises the position of Chairman of the Council for the period 1991 – 2000 in the form of a plaque in the foyer of the Town Hall:-

1991/92	Councillor B Walker
1992/93	Councillor B Walker
1993/94	Councillor C Burroughs
1994/95	Councillor C Batley
1995/96	Councillor C Batley
1996/97	Councillor P Dye
1997/98	Councillor P Dye
1998/99	Councillor J Barnes
1999/00	Councillor J Barnes”

In presenting the above motion, Councillor Jeal commented that the High Steward of Great Yarmouth had previously indicated his support to the provision of the plaque as suggested within the proposed motion.

Proposer: Councillor Jeal

Seconder: Councillor Wainwright

That the motion asking the Council to recognise the position of Chairman of the Council for the period 1991 to 2000 in the form of a plaque in the foyer of the Town Hall be approved.

LOST

8. REPORT OF LEADER ON URGENT KEY DECISIONS MADE SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING WHICH WERE NOT IN THE FORWARD PLAN

Council was advised that there were no urgent key decisions to be reported.

9. PALLIATIVE CARE EAST HOSPITAL APPEAL

Council was advised that the presentation in respect of the Palliative Care East Hospital Appeal for a new Cancer Centre to be sited at the James Paget Hospital Site had been withdrawn and would be considered at the next meeting of Council.

10. BOROUGH COUNCIL BY-ELECTION – 25 OCTOBER 2007

Council was informed that the following Member had been elected at the Borough Council by-election on the 25 October 2007:-

- Nelson Ward – Brenda Anne Taylor

11. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.