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CABINET

22 April 2009 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor B Coleman (in the Chair); Councillors Ames, Peck, Plant, Shrimplin and Stone.

Councillors Castle, Walker and Williamson attended by invitation.

Mr R Packham (Managing Director), Mr P Hardy (Executive Director – Economy and Environment), Mr T Howard (Head of Regeneration and Environment), Mr M Burns (Head of Community Services), Mr R Hodds (Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer) and Mr D Barker (Conservation Officer).

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the 18 March 2009 were confirmed.

2. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER – AUDIT COMMISSION

Members considered the Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter 2007/08. Cabinet was advised that the letter provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council.

Cabinet was informed that the key messages for the Council included in the Commission's report were:-

- Services continue to improve in many areas the Council identified as its priorities, in particular customer facing services. It is also making a positive contribution to why the community and Local Area Agreement outcomes. However, while the Council is improving across a wide front, other Councils are improving the overall quality of their services faster and the Council still has to overcome many challenges to reach its aim of being a customer driven organisation.
- The Council continues to focus on improvements in the areas that are most important for local people and in the main continues to deliver planned objectives and targets. However, comprehensive progress reporting against corporate priorities and full analysis of progress against intent remains work in progress and its capacity to improve on all fronts as quickly as it would like remains stretched.
- The inspection of regeneration in Great Yarmouth was concluded as "fair" with "promising prospects" for improvement.

- The Commission reported that the Council's financial reporting arrangements were inadequate in their last letter and the Council has taken steps to improve this resulting in a number of weaknesses being addressed. Despite a marked improvement in the quality of the draft accounts presented for audit this year, the Commission still identified a number of significant errors that required amendment. A qualified (limitation of scope) opinion was issued on 16 January 2009. The Council needs to ensure that the underlying capacity is sufficient so that further improvement is sustained and processes become embedded.
- The Commission concluded that the Council has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2008 except for the management of the asset base. The Commission issued a qualified "except for" opinion to reflect the fact that these arrangements remained inadequate.
- The Commission assessed the Council as performing at Level 2 in their "use of resources" judgement which represents an adequate level of performance and demonstrating that the Council has effectively addressed most of the key management of resources weaknesses featured in the Commission's last letter.

Cabinet was advised that the action needed by the Council was as follows:-

- Continue to drive forward the Council's improvement programme to address areas of poorer performance.
- Ensure that it has sufficient capacity to deliver its improvement agenda.
- Ensure that the recommendations made in the auditor's Annual Governance Report are implemented.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter 2007/08 be received, and the action points as detailed in the letter be referred to Council for approval.

3. ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, ADVISORY GROUPS AND REGULATORY COMMITTEES

(a) Traveller Incursions – Draft Operational Plan

On reference from the Scrutiny Committee of 30 March 2009, Cabinet was recommended to adopt the Travellers Incursion Draft Operational Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the amended Travellers Incursions Draft Operational Plan as detailed in the Head of Regeneration and Environment's report be adopted.

4. PROPOSED GORLESTON CONSERVATION AREA EXTENSION

Cabinet considered the Head of Regeneration and Environment's report on the proposed Gorleston Conservation Area Extension.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment reported that every local authority was under a continuing duty to consider whether it should designate new conservation areas or extend existing ones. The Gorleston area has been surveyed and under current guidelines areas of the town currently undesignated meet the criteria for, and have sufficient merit to be worthy of conservation area status. The proposed extension covers the historic settlement and areas considered to contribute to the important character of the town and its historic evolution. Members were advised that the purpose of designation is to highlight and seek to safeguard the special character and local distinctiveness of the area and encourage enhancement. Wide consultation had been undertaken and the proposal is generally welcome.

RESOLVED:

That Council be recommended to agree to approve the extension to the Gorleston Conservation Area and the proposed extension to the Gorleston Conservation Area be notified to the Secretary of State.

5. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Cabinet considered the Head of Financial Services' report which detailed an update to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance, in accordance with best practice.

RESOLVED:

That Council be recommended to approve the updated Code of Corporate Governance.

6. COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2009/10

Cabinet considered the Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer's report on the proposed Committee Timetable for 2009/10.

RESOLVED:

That Council be recommended to agree the proposed Committee Timetable for 2009/10 as now amended.

7. ISSUES DETERMINED BY THE CABINET UNDER THE TERMS OF THE CONSTITUTION

(a) Local Authority Housing Capital Grant Allocation 2009-2011

(b) Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12(a) of the said Act.

(c) **Proposed Regeneration Project for St George's Chapel and King Street – "Sea Change"**

(Councillor Plant declared a personal interest in the above item and took no part in the voting or discussion thereon.)

(d) **Beacon Park Innovation Centre and NWES – Proposal to Engage in a Disposal Process**

(Councillor Castle declared a personal interest in the above item and took no part in the voting or discussion thereon.)

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

The Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer reported that the LGR Working Group had met today to discuss the present position with regard to LGR.

The Working Group had agreed to ask the Managing Director to prepare the Council's response to the Boundary Committee on the latest proposals as follows:-

- (a) to restate the Council's preference for status quo
- (b) to explain why the Council is of the opinion that the option to create a Greater Norwich unitary authority and a Rural Norfolk unitary authority is flawed and would not be in the best interests of Great Yarmouth Borough
- (c) if either unitary option is pursued, it would require strong locality arrangements particularly around Planning, Scrutiny, Licensing and Civic issues

Members were advised that the Managing Director's response would be agreed by both the Leader and Shadow Leader and would be sent to all Members of Council.

RESOLVED:

That the arrangements for the Council's response to the Boundary Committee as detailed above be agreed.

9. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm.