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**COUNCIL MEETING**

**26 June 2008 – 7.00 pm**

**PRESENT:**

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Hacon and Reynolds.

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), Mr R Hodds (Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer) and Mr P Vickers (Service Manager – Financial Services).

**1. MINUTES**

The minutes of 12 and 15 May 2008 were confirmed.

**2. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Members were advised that no questions had been raised by a member of the public.

**3. PROPOSED CLOSURE OF TAX OFFICES AT HAVENBRIDGE HOUSE**

Council was advised that Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs proposes to close the tax offices at Havenbridge House (both former Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue) and relocate staff to Norwich. The Branch Secretary (PCS Norwich Taxes) had asked the Borough Council if they could influence the HMRC's decision by ensuring that the Borough Council submits an objection to closure by the deadline of 6 August 2008.

The Leader reported that HMRC were reviewing their offices in the East of England, namely East Dereham, Norwich and Great Yarmouth. Members were advised that there are 140 people based in the Great Yarmouth office. The current proposal for the area is to keep Nelson House and St Cuthbert's House in Norwich open whilst the Dereham and Great Yarmouth offices would close along with Rosebery Court in Norwich. The Enquiries Centre based at Havenbridge House would remain open. An approximation of the value to the local economy of the HMR staff in terms of salary was £2.46m although only 50% were residents in Great Yarmouth. The point was made that Great Yarmouth would lose expenditure as at least 120 people would be made redundant/relocated and this would have an impact on spending in the local economy.

The Leader reported that it was not clear on what basis the closure plan had been developed. The point was made that Great Yarmouth has a case on a number of grounds to keep the offices open at Great Yarmouth, namely:-

- Outer Harbour – with the construction of the Outer Harbour due for completion in the first quarter of next year, it would be more efficient to keep the office open in Great Yarmouth to save regular travelling from Norwich to visit the Port.
- Unemployment and Deprivation – Great Yarmouth suffers from higher than average unemployment levels. This is steadily falling but a job loss of 100/140 will have a significant impact on the local economy. Great Yarmouth is also one of the most deprived areas in the region and 58<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the country.

In conclusion, the Leader reported that Great Yarmouth has well advanced plans to regenerate the local economy of the town, including Eastport and 1<sup>st</sup> East, the Urban Regeneration Company. The aim being to create well paid permanent jobs to reduce seasonal swings of unemployment. The loss of over 100 civil service jobs would be a severe blow to these efforts. The loss to the local economy of the wages of the staff would also be significant.

The Shadow Leader expressed his disappointment at the proposal to close the HMRC office at Havenbridge House and fully endorsed the comments expressed above by the Leader of the Council.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Castle

That the HMRC be advised that the Borough Council opposes the proposed closure of the HMRC offices at Havenbridge House, Great Yarmouth on the grounds that it will damage the regeneration plans for the Borough of Great Yarmouth.

CARRIED

#### 4. REPORTS TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION

##### (a) Council Constitution – Amendments and Revisions

Council considered the Monitoring Officer's report on proposed amendments and revisions to the Council's Constitution. Members were advised that amendments were required to take account of recent changes to the Member Code of Conduct Regime. Complaints that a Borough or Parish Councillors has breached the Code are now considered by the Standards Committee, rather than by the Standards Board for England. Furthermore, three matters were accidentally omitted from the updated Constitution document, namely the power for a single Cabinet Member to authorise compulsory purchase orders; the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Committee; and the additional delegations enjoyed by the Director of Community Housing.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Stone

That the amendments and revisions to the Council's Constitution as detailed above be approved.

CARRIED

**(b) Nominations to the Great Yarmouth Seaman's Trust**

Council consider the Head of Central Services' report with regard to nominations to the Great Yarmouth Seaman's Trust. Council was reminded that this charity was resurrected in 2004 and the Mayor is an ex-officio trustee. The Council has the power to nominate three further trustees, one of whom should, as far as possible, be a representative of the Great Yarmouth and District Inshore Fisherman and Licensed Boatman's Federation. The Council's nominated trustees, namely Councillor Garrod, Mrs G Doyle and Mrs L Stroud (representing The Boatman's Federation) had now completed their term of office and are willing to be re-nominated.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Stone

That Councillor Garrod, Mrs G Doyle and Mrs L Stroud be re-appointed to serve on the Great Yarmouth Seaman's Trust for a further period of four years.

CARRIED

**(c) Appointments to Outside Bodies****(i) Area Museums Committee**

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Castle

That Councillors Cook, Page and B Taylor be nominated to serve on the Area Museums Committee.

CARRIED

**(ii) Citizens Advice Bureau**

The Leader reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau had indicated that they required only one nominated representative from the Borough Council to serve on the CAB.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Castle

That the Borough Council's nominated representative on the CAB be Councillor Smith, with Councillor Page as substitute.

CARRIED

**(d) Annual Governance Statement**

Council considered the Head of Financial Services' report on the Annual Governance Statement. Members were advised that the Council is required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement instead of a Statement of Internal Control with effect from 2007/08. The purpose of the statement is to report on the authority's governance arrangements and is therefore wide ranging and more holistic. It is to be published with the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2007/08 in place of the Statement of Internal Control, having subsumed the Statement of Internal Control as a result of the changes. Council was informed that the Annual Governance Statement should be an open and honest self-assessment of the Council performance across all of its activities, with a clear statement of the actions being taken or required to address areas of concern.

Proposer: Councillor Ames

Seconder: Councillor B Coleman

That the Annual Governance Statement 2007/08 be approved.

CARRIED

(e) **Statement of Accounts 2007/08**

Council considered the Head of Financial Services' report on the Statement of Accounts for 2007/08. Members were advised that the Statement of Accounts is a detailed financial document which serves to summarise the financial performance of the Council for the year and includes:-

- An explanatory forward which provides an understandable guide to readers of the accounts on the most significant matters contained within the statements. It also assists in providing an interpretation of the accounting statement themselves.
- Statement of Accounting Policies which explains the basis for the recognition, measurement and disclosure of transactions and other events in the accounts.
- Statement of responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts which sets out the respective responsibilities of the Council and the Section 151 Officer for the Accounts.
- The Core Financial Statements.

Proposer: Councillor Ames

Seconder: Councillor B Coleman

That the Statement of Accounts for 2007/08 be approved, noting that the Statements will then be subject to audit.

CARRIED

(f) **Large Casino Licence**

Council considered the Head of Central Services' report with regard to the Large Casino Licence. Council was reminded that the Great Yarmouth Casino Stakeholder Advisory Panel had been established in 2006 to assist with the Large Casino Licensing process. Since the Panel last met in March 2007, not only has the large casino for Great Yarmouth been approved, but the regulations and guidance for conducting the licensing process had been established. The terms of reference and membership of the Panel ought now to be reconsidered in the light of these documents.

Council were now advised that, before the formal licensing process was commenced, there was a need to amend the Statement of Gambling Policy so as to incorporate the criteria the Council will apply in determining the successful applicant. Once this has been completed then an invitation to apply for the licence could be published. It was hoped to begin this process straightaway with a view to having the amended policy in place by early 2009. The amended policy will include a more detailed timetable for the licensing process.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Seconder: Councillor Castle

- (i) That the membership of the Great Yarmouth Casino Stakeholder Advisory Panel should comprise the Leader (Chairman), Cabinet Member (Regeneration and Tourism) and Shadow Leader, the Manager of the CAB, and representatives from the Police, The Town Centre Partnership and The Tourist Authority and should be increased to include representatives from the faith community and from organisations representing children and vulnerable people.
- (ii) The Panel to have the power to co-opt additional members, in consultation with the Head of Central Services.
- (iii) The remit of the Panel be to help in the formulation of the amendment to the Statement of Gambling Policy.

CARRIED

## 5. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

### (a) Council – 12 and 15 May 2008

The Mayor presented the minutes of the Council meetings held on 12 and 15 May 2008.

### (b) Cabinet – 21 May and 25 June 2008

The Leader presented the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 21 May and 25 June 2008.

With regard to item 5(a) (Town Hall Re-roofing and Associated Works Project) Councillor Walker expressed his concern with regard to the arrangements for the works carried out to the Town Hall and recommended that this issue should be the subject of review by a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

In connection with item 7 (Large Casino Licence) Councillor M Taylor sought clarification with regard to the timescale on this issue, and the Head of Central Services confirmed that the Casino Licence would be issued by April 2010.

### (c) Scrutiny Committee – 2 June 2008

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 June 2008.

With regard to item 5 (Work Programme) the Chairman asked Members to give consideration to cross cutting issues that could be the subject of consideration by the Scrutiny Committee and he asked Members to advise the Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer of any issues they would like to be raised at future Scrutiny Committee meetings.

### (d) Audit and Risk Committee – 3 and 23 June 2008

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meetings held on 3 and 23 June 2008.

Proposer: Councillor B Coleman

Secunder: Councillor Stone

That the minutes of Council of 12 and 15 May 2008, Cabinet of 21 May and 25 June 2008, Scrutiny Committee of 2 June 2008, and Audit and Risk Committee of 3 and 23 June 2008 be received.

CARRIED

## 6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

In accordance with paragraphs 10.2 and 10.4 of Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Constitution, Council considered the following Members' questions:-

### (a) Questions from Councillor Castle

- (i) Can the Leader of the Council tell Councillors how many staff are at present engaged in the work of the leasing the Council's pay and display car parks in the Yarmouth Town Centre and Seafront area? What are the costs of employing these staff? What is the figure for car park receipts for the past year?

The Leader reported that the Council currently employ a total of ten staff in parking services who spend the majority of their time on policing and enforcing parking controls on the pay and display portfolio. The cost of employing these staff in total in 2007/08 was £201,285. It should be stressed that some of the staff spend some of their time on other related activities such as the running of other contracts. In addition, the Council also employed two seasonal members for additional cleaning duties at the Beach Coach Station. Furthermore, there are other staff in the team employed to perform the full range of duties under the contracts referred to above (enforcement of seafront on street pay and display for the County, enforcement for South Norfolk District Council and enforcement of resident permit parking zone for the County Council).

The Leader reported that parking receipts for 2007/08 were as follows:-

- Total pay and display income - £1,175,165.20.
- Total fines - £60,074.00.
- Total other income - £85,041.62.
- Grand total of parking income - £1,320,280.82.

The amounts in respect of the Seafront were:-

- Pay and display income - £441,108.26.
- Fines - £12,753.60.
- Court costs - £2,620.00.
- Rover tickets - £91.92.
- Total - £456,573.78.

The Beach Coach Station figures were as follows:-

- Pay and display income - £54,975.85.
- Lorries - £17,430.00.
- Coaches - £25,214.92.
- Left luggage - £242.55.
- Total - £97,863.32.

The amounts in respect of non Seafront were as follows:-

- Pay and display income - £498,618.85.
- Fines - £40,675.40.
- Court costs - £3,202.33.
- Season tickets - £32,732.25.
- Rover tickets - £3,507.65.
- Total - £578,736.48.

The total for the Palmers Car Park before the sharing arrangement:-

- Pay and display income - £180,462.29.
- Fines - £8,645.00.
- Total - £189,107.29.

The Leader also reported that additionally there are other significant costs of running the off street parking portfolio to the staffing costs indicated. Such issues as R&M, services, rates and departmental recharges result in an overall surplus position for the pay and display portfolio in 2007/08 at £217,230.00. This surplus is then applied to the provision of other service delivery. The off street free parking portfolio had an overall cost last year of £25,035.00. Finally, the Leader reported that the net income from the Seafront on street pay and display operation is passed to the County Council and is then applied on a variety of transport related activities in the Town, under the jurisdiction of the County Council, for example, the funding of the Zone A Residents Permit Parking, and a contribution to CCTV operations.

- (ii) Can the Leader of the Council tell Councillors how many staff are at present engaged in the work of policing the Zone A Residents Parking Zone in the central Seafront areas? What are the costs of employing these staff? What is the total figure for Zone A revenue receipts from both the sale of permits and fines levied?

The Leader reported that the initial estimate for the first Residents Permit Zone A, to carry out enforcement and administration, was £107,492.00 and included the following:-

- 2.75 inspectors (meaning two on a daily basis).
- One FTE administrative assistant.
- Contribution to existing resource of Parking Services Manager and Senior Inspector.
- Plus a further ten hours per week in administrative support.

The Leader reported that the scheme had in fact taken up far more time to administer than estimated. The County Council had been informed that the Borough Council's costs for at least the first year will increase by £25,000, meaning the total cost will be in the region of £132,492.

The Leader reported that the receipts for Zone A so far were as follows:-

- 2006/07 – permits £38,156.00 and fines £13,038.00.
- 2007/08 – permits £12,946.00 and fines £59,440.00.

- (iii) Can the Leader of the Council tell Councillors how many traffic wardens the Police currently employ to enforce parking restrictions in the Yarmouth Town Centre and Seafront areas?

The Leader reported that it was understood that the Police Authority currently employs four traffic wardens (three funded by the County Council) but added that they do have other duties than simple parking controls.

- (iv) Is the Leader of the Council prepared to establish a cross party “task and finish” group of Councillors and Officers to bring forward proposals for Cabinet with a view to ensuring that the Council and the public generally are able to benefit fully from the opportunities for developing a high quality but affordable regime of parking enforcement (under the new scheme for decriminalisation of parking regulation enforcement)?

The Leader reported that there was no need to establish a further cross party task and finish group as this issue would be the subject of consideration by the Economic and Environment Advisory Group. Members were also advised that the County Council had employed Halcrows to undertake a study on this issue.

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

The Leader advised that there were no urgent key decisions to be reported.

## **8. CLOSURE OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.