

# Greater Norwich Growth Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Monday 25 November 2019

**Time:** 2.00pm

**Venue:** County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR12DH

## **Present:**

### **Board Members:**

#### **South Norfolk Council:**

Cllr John Fuller (Chair)

#### **Norwich City Council:**

Cllr Mike Stonard

#### **Norfolk County Council:**

Cllr Andrew Proctor

#### **New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership:**

### **Officers:**

Trevor Holden  
Helen Mellors

Graham Nelson

Vince Muspratt

Chris Starkie

## **In attendance:**

Joe Ballard

Grace Burke

Matt Tracey

Harvey Bullen

Sebastian Gasse

Jonathan Pyle

Greater Norwich Project Team

Greater Norwich Project Team

Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council

South Norfolk District Council

One member of the public was also in attendance.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received on behalf of Douglas Field, Cllr Shaun Vincent and Cllr Alan Waters.

## **2. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

## **3. GREATER NORWICH GROWTH – PLANNING FOR SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The report provided the Board with an update on the projected shortfall between developer contributions and the capital costs to provide new schools in Greater Norwich. It then proposed a methodology to address the financial risks and outlined the current new school and school expansion projects in the Norfolk Schools Capital Programme.

The County Council had a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for children of school age. Financial mitigation of pressure on places as a result of new housing was made in the form of Section 106 Agreements and, in those authorities which had adopted it, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Appendix 1 was an extract from the Schools' Local Growth Investment Plan, which showed current local provision in areas of growth in Greater Norwich and the impact of housing growth and the proposed response to this in terms of school provision.

Appendix 2 showed all school expansion and new school development schemes in Greater Norwich as of January 2019. In addition to this there were further schemes planned including schools in Blofield and Cringleford.

The Board was asked to agree to consider further requests for the allocation of CIL receipts for education infrastructure going forward.

The Chairman noted the projected shortfall of £73.8m for the provision of new school places to 2026/27, which would not be covered by all of the expected CIL income to this period and he questioned if the provision of Free Schools was being pursued to help meet the shortfall.

In response, it was confirmed that the County Council was looking at all options to meet the shortfall. However, it was clear that CIL was to become the primary source of education infrastructure funding; replacing S106 income.

It was confirmed that it had been suggested that Hethersett Old School could be bought to meet education needs, but it had been rejected due to its status as a listed building and the risks associated with this. The Chairman emphasised that opportunities for windfall sites should be seized if possible, as they could make significant contributions to educational provision.

The Chairman also stressed that housing projections should be as accurate as possible, as some of the forecasts were unlikely to come forward in the timescales suggested, which would in turn reduce pupil numbers.

It was also suggested that a programme of financing setting out clearly how schemes would be delivered, would be a useful guide for Members.

It was noted that there could be a choice to be made between using CIL for extending schools and the County Council borrowing to fund new schools. However, it was accepted that this could present difficulties as the greatest growth in education provision was through new schools.

It was confirmed that new school sites had already been identified in most growth areas or if not an agreement for educational provision was in place with the developer. The unfunded sums set out in the report for new school development were for build costs only.

It was noted that there were no further requests for CIL funding for education infrastructure above those that were already in place in the report and it was, therefore, AGREED that recommendation (ii) be amended to consider further requests as and when they were submitted.

In summing up the Chairman emphasised that the County Council must be as creative as possible to address the challenge of school provision.

## **RESOLVED**

to:

- (i) note report and the need to address the potential shortfall for education infrastructure spending; and
- (ii) consider further requests to allocate CIL receipts for education infrastructure, as and when they were submitted; and
- (iii) take full account of the resource needed for new school places when CIL is reviewed as part of the Greater Norwich Plan.

## **4. INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT FUND PROCESSES UPDATE**

The report provided the Greater Norwich Growth Board with an update on the new Infrastructure Investment Fund processes, forms and guidance, which had been adopted in November 2018. This was provided to the Board for information only.

## **RESOLVED**

To note that Infrastructure Investment Fund processes have been reviewed and revised forms and guidance issued.

## 5. LEP UPDATE

Chris Starkie, the Chief Executive of the New Anglia LEP, advised the meeting about the aims set out in the LEP Delivery Plan 2019/20.

The Delivery Plan set the following four priorities for the coming year:

1. The delivery of the Economic Strategy and the publication of the new Local Industrial Strategy, which focused on Clean Energy, Agri-Food, ICT and Digital Creative.
2. The promotion of Norfolk and Suffolk by investing in branding activity to develop and implement a new inward investment strategy to maximise investment and trade opportunities and continue to lobby Government for funding.
3. A LEP Review to ensure that its governance was strengthened.
4. A drive of local growth by stretching targets for all LEP funded and LEP delivered programmes and ensure alignment with the Economic Strategy and to manage the impact of wider economic and political changes such as Brexit.

Projects supported included: A Growth Deal award for the A140 Hempsall roundabout; funding toward the Digi-Tech factory at City College and a pilot with Aviva for transferring unused apprenticeship funds to other employers.

The LEP was also encouraging new technologies being developed within major tech clusters around Ipswich and the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor.

The Chairman noted that if Brexit happened the Board would need to be ready to work with the LEP to access money from sources such as the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Members were advised that it was not yet clear if the Government would allow the Shared Prosperity Fund to be in a single pot to allow capital and revenue investment at the same time.

The Chairmen suggested that the Board should learn from other areas such as Oxford, which had attracted very significant infrastructure funding. He proposed that incorporation of Greater Norwich might be a way to access larger sums and should be considered again by the Board.

It was **AGREED** that a special meeting of the Board would be arranged to explore the best ways of leveraging in more resource to Greater Norwich and what structures should be put in place to facilitate this e.g. the possibility of incorporation.

Vince Muspratt confirmed that he would liaise with Trevor Holden to arrange the meeting.

## **6. GREATER NORWICH JOINT FIVE YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN**

The report presented the Draft Five Year Infrastructure Plan 2020/25, for review by the Board prior to the report being considered by individual Cabinets and Councils in January 2020 before returning to the Board in March 2020.

Appendix A set out the projects which had been put forward to be funded by CIL in the 2020/21 Annual Growth Programme for Greater Norwich.

A paper was tabled, which identified 12 projects totalling £2.85m to be supported through the Infrastructure Investment Plan. Expenditure for the proposed programme in 2020/21 was £2,644,842. Interest and loan repayments against borrowing agreed for the Broadland Northway was included in the balance sheet together with forecast repayments to support the Long Stratton bypass.

The Chairman reiterated that the income from CIL was not enough to meet the ambitions of the Board.

It was confirmed that to date, £40m of the borrowing allocated via the City Deal has been drawn down to support the Broadland Northway. Borrowing allocated to the Local Investment Fund (LIF) had not been drawn down from central Government because the amounts required had been dispersed and not been high enough to justify signing a long-term loan agreement. The amounts required to support the LIF had instead been provided directly from NCC reserves.

Vince Muspratt advised Members that there was some confusion about how the City Deal and CIL elements were incorporated into the Growth Programme. He suggested that a specific paper clarifying how they worked together be brought to the next meeting.

The Chairman advised Members that the Board should also be presented with a balance sheet which clearly set out how much resource was available to the GNGB to drive forward the local economy.

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) To comment on the Draft Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2020-25;

- (ii) To instruct officers to update this draft to reflect changes since its preparation before consideration at Partner's Cabinets and Councils in January 2020;
- (iii) To agree to recommend the proposed 2020/21 Annual Growth Programme for approval at each Partner's Cabinets and Councils;
- (iv) That a special meeting of the Board would be arranged to explore the best ways of leveraging in more resource to Greater Norwich and what structure should be put in place to facilitate this.
- (v) That the Board should be provided with a paper at their next meeting that confirms the full picture of the financial resource available to them.