



## **Cabinet**

### **24 June 2009**

#### **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 1 June 2009**

- 1. Councillor Call for Action Submission – Councillor Jim Thorndyke Stanton Grundle Flooding Remedial Action**
- 1.1 Under the provisions of the recently adopted Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) Protocol in the Council's Constitution, Councillor Thorndyke submitted the above CCfA to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its last meeting.
- 1.2 The information provided to the Committee, which was illustrated by a presentation from Councillor Thorndyke, was that the Stanton Grundle, a heavily wooded wide drainage channel, was prone to flood at certain times of the year. As the floodwater picks up leaves and other debris, these are trapped by three grids running along the Grundle, but some gets through to block the inlet screen to the underground pipe which drains the Grundle, resulting in water lapping up to the walls of some cottages in The Street, Stanton and making access difficult. As the landowner for the Grundle could not be established, volunteers, together with Borough Council officers, cleared the grids as necessary, however, Councillor Thorndyke considered this was a dangerous job, and that a more long term solution to the issue was required.
- 1.3 Councillor Thorndyke had met with various officials from the Borough Council, County Council and Environment Agency, and wished to bring these parties together under this Councillor Call for Action to discuss potential long term solutions to the flooding.
- 1.4 The Committee's remit at this point was to decide whether it wished to take this matter further, to a CCfA hearing. The main criterion supporting this decision was whether the Committee, in holding a hearing, had the potential to produce recommendations which could realistically be implemented and lead to improvements. Members questioned Councillor Thorndyke and the Council's officers on a number of areas, including potential solutions to the issue, and agreed to take the issue forward into a CCfA hearing. The hearing will take place as the first item of business at the meeting of the Committee on 8 July 2009.

## **2. Approval of 2009/2010 Work Programme**

- 2.1 At a special informal meeting of Members of the Committee in April 2009, Members discussed a list of potential new items of work for inclusion on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2009/2010. The meeting resulted in a ranked list of these potential new work topics based on public interest, the value that could be achieved from carrying out a particular topic, and whether it involved partnership working or external scrutiny.
- 2.2 Members found that this development of the previously used 'PICK' analysis (Public Interest, Impact, Council Performance and keep in context) had been very successful in identifying those areas of work which had the potential to make recommendations which could lead to real improvements, and ten new areas of work were added to the Work Programme for 2009/2010, alongside the previously agreed ongoing work of the Committee. These pieces of work had been timetabled and added to a draft Work Programme, which was adopted by the Committee.

## **3. Nominations to Working Groups and Suffolk Joint Scrutiny Committees**

- 3.1 The Committee considered its requirements for 2009/2010 and re-appointed to its own working groups. The Committee also received an annual report from Councillor Beckwith, the Council's nominated representative on the Suffolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on the work of that Committee over the past year.
- 3.2 The Committee also made the following nominations to the three Suffolk Joint Scrutiny Committees, which are required to be appointed by full Council. The Committee **RECOMMENDS that full Council be asked to appoint:-**
- (a) **Councillor Beckwith to the Suffolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2009/2010;**
  - (b) **Councillor Thorndyke to the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel for 2009/2010 (with Councillor Oliver as substitute Member); and**
  - (c) **Councillors Mrs Levack and Price to the Joint Scrutiny of Flooding and Flood Risk Working Party for 2009/2010.**

## **4. Annual Report of the Cabinet: 2008/2009**

- 4.1 On 22 April 2009, Members of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Policy Development Committee had the opportunity to provide input into the Cabinet's Annual Report for 2008/2009 and the updated document, which took into account comments and suggestions made by Members at that meeting, was presented to the Committee by the Leader of the Council.

4.2 The Committee examined the updated document, and questioned the Leader on the Report's contents, and whilst acknowledging that the Report had already been significantly amended following the meeting held in April 2009, made a small number of further suggestions for improving the document. The Committee expressed its broad support for the document and the priorities of the Cabinet for 2009/2010.

## **5. Cabinet Forward Plan – June to September 2009**

5.1 The Committee examined the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period June to September 2009, but did not ask for any further information or involvement on this occasion.

## **6. Staff Survey Action Plan Update**

6.1 In September 2008, the Committee received a report outlining the Council's proposed response to the 2007 Staff Survey. It was agreed that a cross-cutting staff group be established to help prioritise and develop the actions identified in response to the survey. At its last meeting the Committee received an update on the progress which had been made since September 2008, including a presentation on the work of the Staff Organisational Development Group given by five members of that 16-strong group.

6.2 The presentation covered the key issues which had been picked up by staff through the survey, and planned initiatives to address these. These included a number of potential ways to develop new managers, cross-departmental working opportunities and identifying and publicising career pathways. The potential to widen the range and choice of benefits offered to staff was also discussed, including an employee recognition scheme and the buying and selling of annual leave.

6.3 Members said that they had found the presentation very informative, and questioned the officers on a number of areas, including some issues that Members themselves had picked up from staff since the move to West Suffolk House, such as hot desking, and the opportunities afforded by working in the same building with Suffolk County Council colleagues.

6.4 Finally, Members were advised that all staff in the building were currently being surveyed on how they felt the move went, and how they were getting on working at West Suffolk House. The results of the survey will be made available to Members in due course.

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