

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 17 November 2021 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:	Ms P Bevan Jones	Mr D Birch
	Mr H Blathwayt	Mr A Brown
	Dr P Bütikofer	Mrs S Bütikofer
	Mr C Cushing	Mr N Dixon
	Mr P Fisher	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
	Mr T FitzPatrick	Mr V FitzPatrick
	Ms V Gay	Mrs P Grove-Jones
	Mr P Heinrich	Dr V Holliday
	Mr R Kershaw	Mr N Lloyd
	Mr G Mancini-Boyle	Mr N Pearce
	Mr S Penfold	Mr J Rest
	Mr E Seward	Miss L Shires
	Mrs E Spagnola	Mrs J Stenton
	Mr J Toyne	Mr E Vardy
	Ms L Withington	

Also in attendance:

100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllrs T Adams, W Fredericks, G Hayman, C Heinink, N Housden, G Perry-Warnes, J Punchard, C Stockton, A Varley and A Yiasimi

101 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

102 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

103 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

104 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

Cllr P Grove-Jones, the Vice-Chairman, was chairing the meeting in the absence of the Chairman, who was unwell. She provided a short update to Members on two civic events that she had recently attended. She said that she had been very proud to lead the ceremony for the laying of wreaths at the Council's poppy memorial and was pleased to see how many members of staff had attended. She said that the Chairman's civic reception at Fakenham racecourse in early October had been very enjoyable.

105 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader said that as she had been absent following a family bereavement, she was going to hand over to the Deputy Leader, Cllr E Seward.

Cllr Seward began by updating Members on Greenbuild, which had been held remotely this year due to the pandemic. He said that a series of online talks and briefings on the theme of climate change had been run concurrently with COP 26. There had been many excellent speakers and over 600 participants. The sessions were still available to view online so this number would continue to increase. He thanked the Council's climate change team for being so innovative in their approach.

Cllr Seward then handed over the Cllr V Gay, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, to make an important announcement.

Cllr Gay said that she was delighted to announce that the Council's new leisure centre in Sheringham, the Reef would be opening on Tuesday 30th November. A short video of the new centre and its facilities was then played to members.

106 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

The Chairman said that there were two statements from members of the public. She invited Mr D Russell to address members. Mr Russell said that he was a former elected member and former Chairman of the Council and he thanked members for allowing him to speak. He then spoke about two former councillors, Phillip Kemp and Des Hewitt, who had both recently passed away. He asked Members to join him in a minutes silence in their memory.

The Chairman thanked Mr Russell for attending the meeting. She then read out the following statement from Elaine Addison, which was in support of Agenda Item 16, Motion 2:

'I have been appalled by the reckless and near total disregard for water safety by the privatised water companies in England, and successive government failure to enforce investment in water infrastructure. Coupled with the disastrous cut to the funding of the Environment Agency by two-thirds since 2010, it seems the electorate are being taken for mugs, whilst water company shareholders are creaming off profits. To note that more than 70% of England's water industry is owned by foreign 'investors' Anglian Water is owned by a consortium of international investment funds. These include Colonial First State Global Asset Management (Australia) IFM Investors (Australia) and 3i (UK). Over 30% of the company is owned by the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board, a pension fund owned by the Canadian state.

Of course, we need to protect rivers, the Norfolk Broads and coastal waters for recreational swimming, water sports and to protect the wildlife reliant on the clean environment. However, I was also interested to read a report in yesterday's Observer newspaper, and wondered how Anglian Water's approach is affecting our seafood industry in North Norfolk? It seems that e-coli in our drinking water has increased recently across the South East, which is suspected to be caused by a failure in the water cleaning process. This put simply is untreated sewage flowing into our rivers. We have also seen cases of norovirus increasing during the summer months, quite out of season. Whilst it is difficult to pinpoint the source of norovirus, it should be noted than norovirus can 'live' in water for months. This is an extremely unpleasant virus, but it could also be catastrophic for our seafood industry. The

Observer includes a report from an oyster company in the South East, stating that norovirus incidents had recently occurred after eating oysters. This resulted in Public Health England closing the company down, until they had put in place testing for norovirus and e-coli.

I certainly support NNDC's engagement with Anglian Water, but would also support NNDC in urging our government to tighten up restrictions and bring forward tougher legislation. I'm afraid the fines are cheaper than investment in infrastructure. Government agencies such as the EA, and DEFRA are no match for these companies in their present form, and privatised water companies have no incentive to go further than the absolute minimum required by law. Investment in infrastructure must be part of their service level agreement.

Having written to Duncan Baker MP several times on this matter, it seems that government are going to await water companies reports on future plans before they make any further decisions, kicking the can down the road, on such an important matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.'

Cllr Seward thanked Ms Addison for her comments and said that he hoped that the issues she had raised would be addressed when the motion was debated later in the meeting.

107 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

The Group Leaders did not have any appointments to make at this time.

108 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE EMPLOYMENT & APPEALS COMMITTEE

The Chairman invited nomination for Vice-chairman of the Employment & Appeals Committee.

Cllr E Seward nominated Cllr A Fitch-Tillett. This was seconded by Cllr S Butikofer.

There being no other nominations, it was put to the vote and

RESOLVED that Cllr A Fitch-Tillett be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Employment & Appeals Committee.

Cllr Fitch-Tillett thanked members for their confidence in her.

109 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman said that as full written reports were included in the agenda, Cabinet members were only expected to provide a short oral update on any matters that had occurred since the agenda was published. There being none, she invited members to ask questions.

1. Cllr C Cushing asked the Deputy Leader, Cllr Seward, for an update on the motion on social care which had been supported at the meeting of Full Council on 16th December 2020. He said that he had not heard about it since and wondered if any of the agreed actions had been implemented. Cllr Seward asked Cllr Gay, as Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing to respond. Cllr

Gay said that she had provided updates on this matter in previous portfolio holder reports. She had also provided a reply to Cllr Dixon on this. She said that it was a County Council led project and it was difficult for the District Council to make a contribution. That said, there had been some actions, including the introduction of the ' carers' employment scheme'. Regarding designated positions, she conformed that she was the lead member and that the Early Help & Prevention Manager was the lead officer. Cllr Cushing asked if a further update could be provided at the next meeting of Council. Cllr Gay agreed and said that she would also share the previous written updates with Cllr Cushing.

2. Cllr E Spagnola asked Cllr Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for Coast, if she could confirm when work would commence on the sea defences at Cromer. Cllr Fitch-Tillett replied that the Coastal team had been out to local liaison groups and the contract was now being finalised ahead of going out to tender in the new year. She said the intention was to start the work after the summer holiday season in 2022. She concluded by saying that as the materials were being brought in by barge, it was hoped that it would be a tourist attraction.
3. Cllr J Rest said he wished to put a question to Cllr Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing. As she was not in attendance, he said that he would accept a written response. He referred to page 19 of the agenda and the section on affordable homes, commenting that the first two figures (71 and 92) and the second two (73 and 91) added up to 164. He asked for clarification on where the additional number came from as it was not clear.
4. Cllr S Penfold asked Cllr Seward (in the Portfolio Holder's absence) for clarification on the Council's position regarding shared ownership schemes. Cllr Seward replied that the Council welcomed and encouraged such schemes as a source of affordable housing and which was an effective means of enabling lower income households to purchase a home. He went onto say that the housing market was currently broken. Recently there had been a number of household situations where they had not been able to access affordable housing and they had not been eligible for a mortgage. Following discussions with the Council's housing officers, it became apparent that if a grant was provided to housing providers, then suitable homes could be provided in these particular cases. By converting some shared-ownership homes to affordable rental homes, some families which were facing homelessness were able to be accommodated. He concluded by saying that the Council remained supportive of shared ownership and it would continue to play a part in housing schemes that were coming forward for development in the next 12 months.
5. Cllr G Mancini-Boyle said he wished to ask Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environment, a question. He referred to the recent COP26 summit and the decision to phase out fossil fuels and the Government grant scheme which the installation of alternative heating systems. He asked whether the Council would be actively encouraging developers to phase out the installation of gas boilers and would consideration also be given to using a green alternative for the running of the waste contract fleet of vehicles. Cllr Lloyd replied that the Council had been encouraging developers to switch to green heating systems for some time. He referenced the 350 houses being built by Hopkins Homes in North Walsham and said that they were all having ground source heat pumps installed. Regarding the waste collection fleet, Cllr Lloyd said that Serco had been trialling this and the outcome of this was awaited. He added that they were using electric vehicles now for grounds maintenance and the cleansing of public conveniences.
6. Cllr N Pearce asked Cllr R Kershaw for his views on a recent report in the

Eastern Daily Press, which stated that the naturalist Chris Packham had said that in order to help save the environment, NNDC should close its car parks to restrict vehicle movements. He said that not only would this impact heavily on the Council's income it would also deter visitors to the District. Cllr Kershaw replied that he did not believe this was what Chris Packham had said. He said that it was not an approach that the Council would be adopting.

7. Cllr Dr V Holliday asked Cllr Lloyd for an update on the installation of electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) at parish level. Cllr Lloyd replied that the Council had just completed installation of the final EVCP in North Walsham. He said that there was an action in the Corporate Plan to review car park EVCP provision in the wider areas of the District. He said that the Government had not been very forthcoming about providing support for this. The Council had been successful in obtaining an OLEV grant for the initial rollout but this was limited to populated areas. He added that there was the additional problem of the electricity supply not being able to support EVCPs in some areas. He concluded by saying that the Council was one of the first to instal EVCPs in its car parks. Cllr Dr Holliday thanked him for his comments and said that the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk were rolling out a scheme to some parishes where the cost was borne by other parties and perhaps consideration could be given to such an approach. Cllr Penfold informed Members that the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund had received some applications for funding for EVCPs and consideration was still being given as to how to respond to these as it was anticipated that more would be coming forward.
8. Cllr A Brown asked Cllr Lloyd about the Council's Tree Planting Strategy and whether he welcomed its adoption. Cllr Lloyd replied that he was very pleased with the progress being made by the tree planting programme. It was hoped that 40,000 trees would be planted in the coming months – during the planting season. He thanked the officers for their hard work in supporting the project. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Tree Planting Strategy had been to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for pre-scrutiny and would be coming to Cabinet soon for formal adoption.

110 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 04 OCTOBER 2021

1. Determination of Council Tax Discounts 2022/23

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr R Kershaw and

RESOLVED

That under section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and other enabling powers one of the following applies:

Recommendation 1

- (a) The discounts for the year 2022/23 and beyond are set at the

levels
indicated in
the table at
paragraph 2.1.

- (b) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 24 months) is set at 100% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
- (c) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 60 months) is set at 200% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
- (d) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 120 months) is set at 300% of the Council Tax

- charge for that dwelling
- (e) To award a Council Tax Hardship Discount of 100% as per the policy attached at Appendix B, under the provisions section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended)
 - (f) To continue to award a local discount of 100% for eligible cases of care leavers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).
 - (g) That an exception to the levy charges may be made by the Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio holder for Finance, on advice of the Revenues Manager in the

circumstances laid out in section 3.6 of this report.

Recommendation 2

- (a) those dwellings that are specifically identified under regulation 6 of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings)(England) Regulations 2003 will retain the 50% discount and;
- (b) those dwellings described or geographically defined at Appendix A which in the reasonable opinion of the Head of Finance and Asset Management are judged not to be structurally capable of occupation all year round and were built before the restrictions of seasonal

usage were introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, will be entitled to a 35% discount.

In accordance with the relevant legislation these determinations shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating in North Norfolk before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determinations.

111 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 13TH OCTOBER AND 10TH NOVEMBER

Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee confirmed that there were no recommendations from the committee to Full Council.

112 APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2021-2026 AND THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT POLICY 2022-2025

Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, introduced this item. He explained that both policies were due for review in order to comply with statutory requirements. The revised documents took into account any recent legislative changes and case law. A six week period of consultation had been undertaken with statutory consultees, with only one response being received. The revised policies had been considered by the Licensing & Appeals Committee in September and the committee recommended adoption to Full Council.

It was proposed by Cllr N Lloyd, seconded by Cllr P Butikofer and

RESOLVED

To approve the Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-2026 and the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act Policy 2022-2025

113 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None received.

114 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

The following item of Opposition Business had been proposed by Cllr N Dixon and seconded by Cllr C Cushing:

'There's mounting concern that this Council isn't doing enough in terms of supporting the growth of sustainable economic development across the District to retain and grow jobs within existing businesses and to attract inward investment, either for infrastructure or from the arrival of new businesses to areas with the greatest socioeconomic deprivation. Although at least two strands of its Corporate Plan

should be capable of delivering new better paid and higher skill career opportunities at scale this Administration is failing to deliver.

In particular, the District, isn't achieving the creation of new sustainable, high skill career jobs within existing, or new businesses, in proportion with housing growth nor is it attracting infrastructure investment to help support internal growth or to attract new businesses. There's very little evidence of multi-agency work with adjoining Districts, the County Council, the New Anglia LEP or direct with central government; over the past two years there's nothing significant to show it has the determination to strive and drive to deliver on these commitments.

In fact, there are good reasons to suggest the socioeconomic deprivation gap across the District is widening mostly because those at the bottom end are becoming more deprived and disadvantaged. When is this Administration going to recognise that situation and what is it going to do, other than drawing up plans devoid of effective action and tangible outcomes, to actually deliver beneficial change to local economies, improve social mobility and community wellbeing?

This motion calls on this Administration to redouble current efforts to:

1. Speak up for North Norfolk to win inward investment and create high skill career jobs on a scale comparable with our neighbouring Districts.
2. Work with partners and others agencies creatively so that North Norfolk isn't left out of the funding support streams that our neighbouring Councils seem to tap into.
3. Get alongside local businesses keen to grow and expand and cultivate the tentative enquiries from businesses seeking to migrate into North Norfolk.'

Cllr Dixon began by setting out the context behind the motion. He said that local economies were the wealth and revenue creators essential to sustaining the people and fabric of the District. He said that his experience was based on the east of the District but that it was likely to be equally true in relation to the west of the District. He said that while agriculture, tourism and the care sector made up a large part of the district's economy, there was a reliance on specialist businesses to create well paid, highly skilled work with career opportunities. It was these jobs which raised socio-economic standards, reduced deprivation and improved quality of life. He said that much had been done recently to improve education in schools and raise ambitions amongst the district's young people. However, many left the District to find quality, well paid jobs once their education was completed. If the Council was to meet the aspirations of such young people, more had to be done to retain specialist businesses and to help them grow. Some needed infrastructure improvements and others needed pump-priming to help them turn ambitious plans into reality. It was also necessary to convert more of the tentative enquiries from businesses wishing to relocate to North Norfolk from outside the area. By doing more, businesses would want to come to North Norfolk and career-minded young people would want to stay. Cllr Dixon the said that boosting business growth was a key strand of the corporate plan which underpinned the success of several other strands. He concluded by saying that he was bringing this matter forward now as it was past the mid-point of the administration. He said that several major housing schemes had been delivered and now the priorities needed to be balanced with investment and support being provided to quality, sustainable businesses. Otherwise the district's towns would become dormitories with high commuter carbon footprints and low socio-economic performance.

Cllr Cushing reserved his right to speak.

The Chairman then invited Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth,

to respond. Cllr Kershaw began by asking whether Cllr Dixon had considered the changing of two words in the motion which he had proposed prior to the meeting. Cllr Dixon replied that he had but he felt that he could not accept them as they negated the meaning of the motion.

Cllr Kershaw said that over the previous two years the Council had worked with the Norfolk and Suffolk economic plan and improved the relationship with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and secured funding for the North Walsham Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), Fakenham infrastructure projects, funding to help with withdrawal of water abstraction licences in the Bure Valley and funding to help relocate agro-tech businesses. However, it was evident with the recent draft of the Norfolk and Suffolk economic plan, that growth and investment was being focussed around the Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge triangle, in line with the levelling up agenda. This was the competition faced by the Council. It had to be acknowledged that the District faced constraints regarding digital and physical infrastructure, transport and training. The growth in offshore electricity production highlighted the shortage of deep harbours needed to sustain such operations. He went on to say that take-up of land at the Broadland Business Park had been slow and that manufacturing had been undermined by retail and food outlets were yet to take up properties. Cllr Kershaw said that throughout the pandemic, the Council had been engaged with a wide range of businesses and had not yet seen the empty shops in the District's town centres that many other areas such as Norwich had seen. In the 2020/21 Business Rates outturn report, North Norfolk had the third highest levy which indicated business growth. Cllr Kershaw said that the contact that the Council had had with businesses had shown that the future lay with climate change and sustainability. He said that over 25% of jobs in North Norfolk were in the tourism and hospitality sector and there was a growing need in the care and agricultural sectors. There was growth in the digital sector but it was impacted by the slow rollout of broadband and poor mobile connectivity. He concluded by saying that the Council had engaged with the hospitality sector to improve the offering and he outlined recent successes in this sector. Options were also being explored with several partners to look at improving eco-tourism in the District.

Cllr J Rest said that he would have liked to have seen some suggested projects listed within the motion. He added that the reference in recommendation 2 'to work with partners', could include other members of the Council. He also asked that if the main opposition group was ever in a position to take any such projects forward that they assessed any long term risk and longevity.

Cllr E Seward said that he supported the aspirations of the motion regarding economic growth but that they must be grounded in evidence and fact. Businesses needed customers to survive.

He then countered the suggestion that there was no evidence of multi-agency work with adjoining districts, saying that he had attended a Norfolk Leader's meeting earlier that year when Great Yarmouth submitted a bid for the regeneration of the town centre and NNDC had readily supported that bid. The Council recognised that the district would see the benefits of growth in neighbouring areas as it would be bringing jobs and residents nearby towns and villages.

In response to the assertion that there was little evidence of work with the New Anglia LEP, Cllr Seward said this wasn't true. The LEP had contributed £1.3m to the North Walsham HAZ scheme. Regarding the County Council, he said that the Council was working closely with them to support the infrastructure around the large housing scheme in Fakenham. There was also ongoing work at county level on a

new bus interchange in North Walsham.

Cllr Seward said that in terms of the 'growing gap' and 'tangible outcomes', the Council had had to step up during the pandemic and provide support to businesses. Over £126m was distributed to businesses quickly to 5000 small businesses. It was so successful that the Council was congratulated by a Government minister and received a national award. It was in recognition of this achievement that the Government awarded a further £760k recovery and resilience grant to the Council to help support small businesses as they came out of the pandemic.

Cllr Seward said that earlier that day he had attended a briefing with the Norfolk & Suffolk LEP on their economic plan. He reiterated Cllr Kershaw's earlier comments that North Norfolk needed more help to resist the pull towards the Norwich/Thetford corridor.

In conclusion, Cllr Seward said that this was an ongoing challenge and effort that didn't begin and end with one administration. He said that when he was elected in 2007 there were three empty sites in North Walsham that were designated for employment land. They remained empty today. This showed the struggle that had gone on for many years and more help was needed from Government to stop the hoarding of land.

Cllr S Penfold said that he had attended several meetings in the past with the Leader of the Opposition, where policy documents and statements had been pulled apart for not being clear and concise. Referencing phrases such as 'mounting concern', 'reasons to suggest' and 'get alongside', Cllr Penfold said that these were vague and not supported with any data or evidence. He felt the motion was poorly worded.

Cllr H Blathwayt referred to Cllr Dixon's ward of Hoveton, where the boat building industry was thriving. All of them currently had full order books.

Cllr L Shires said that she wanted to talk about some of the data. She said that compared to the England and Norfolk averages, North Norfolk had a higher percentage of residents in employment and a higher percentage in self-employment. The percentage of maths and science apprenticeships was also higher as was the figure for residents working over 45 hours a week. Cllr Shires said that there was an issue regarding the distance of residents from accessing further higher education. The number of residents within 30 minutes travel time was the lowest in Norfolk and this was the same for residents within 60 minutes of education facilities. This was a problem that must be addressed if young people were to get the education they needed to achieve the careers that they deserved.

Cllr Cushing then spoke as seconder of the motion. He said that his view hadn't been changed by the comments that he had heard. He still believed that the Administration wasn't doing enough. It was the role of the opposition group to challenge those in control. The Corporate Plan set out clearly the ambitions of the Administration and it was interesting to look at the actions relating to 'Boosting Business Growth'. Actions such as 'Growth Sites Delivery Strategy', 'develop a mechanism for providing support for business start ups' 'Economic Growth Strategy' and 'work with partners to identify skills deficiencies and monitor apprenticeships' were all listed as being delayed due to Covid.

He then spoke about the success of neighbouring councils where investment was

much larger and said it was clear that they worked closely together, whilst North Norfolk seemed to remain isolated and disengaged. He acknowledged the investment that was going to North Walsham but questioned that this was evident in other parts of the District such as Fakenham.

Cllr Cushing said that this was the third anniversary of the Liberal Democrat administration taking control of the Council and their achievements were poor in relation to other Councils – he referenced the failure to benefit from the Community Renewal Fund, which was extremely disappointing. In conclusion, he said that Covid was mentioned a lot as a reason for not taking action, yet other local authorities had achieved a lot and they did not use it as an excuse.

The Chairman then invited Cllr Dixon, as proposer of the motion, to close the debate. He said that this was a strategic motion and he felt that it was not appropriate to be drawn into the detail on some of the matters raised. He said that he did not underestimate the enormity of the task, adding that he recognised the efforts and results that were being achieved. It was also not about the distribution of government grants to businesses. It was about quality job creation and business growth in order to address the pockets of deprivation and the socio-economic problems that accompanied them. He asked members to support the motion.

When put to the vote, the recommendations were not supported, with 9 voting in favour and 22 against.

115 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

Two Notices of Motion had been received. The Chairman said that she would take them in order:

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Cllr J Rest, seconded by Cllr A Fitch-Tillett:

1. Remote meetings

‘We have long called for the ability to be able to attend and vote on line. Whilst we will always want councillors to be able to meet in person, there needs to be the provision for some to be online, for example if they are vulnerable, have caring responsibilities or difficulties with transport. It is also in line with reducing carbon emissions to zero by 2030. Northern Ireland recently agreed in its parliament to allow councils to meet and vote remotely, Wales and Scotland already allow this. England is being left behind.

This Council mandates the Leader to write to the new Secretary of State, to call for parity across the UK and enable councillors in England to meet and vote on line as they see fit.

This Council re-investigates the feasibility of hosting hybrid meetings in one room, such as the Council Chamber.’

Cllr Rest began by saying that during the last six months there had been several occasions when, if hybrid meetings could have been held, members who were unable to attend in person could have taken part in the debate and voted. He referred to the Chairman and at least one other member who were not in attendance at Full Council as they were isolating due to Covid. He went on to say that over the last 18 months, members had all mastered how to participate effectively in remote

meetings and Democratic Services had records to show that attendance had increased considerably at such meetings. He said that training courses had also been extremely well attended when held remotely. Cllr Rest said that with the future of local government services at a critical juncture, it was not the time to go back to old ways. Members needed to retain the ability to make quick decisions, which was the trademark of local authorities during the pandemic.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, seconded the motion. She said that allowing members to attend meetings remotely supported the Council's ambition of become carbon neutral by 2030. It also reduced claims for travel expenses. Some members had to travel long distances to get to the Council offices and this took time that could be better used by joining meetings remotely from home.

Cllr E Seward said that he supported the motion. More flexibility was needed around the holding of meetings. Hybrid meetings could take place in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales but not in England. He referred to a Cabinet member who was able to participate fully in a pre-Cabinet meeting yesterday but who could not attend the Council meeting to answer question or take part in the debate because she was isolating due to Covid.

Cllr J Toye said he was supportive because it greatly increased the engagement of elected members and the public.

Cllr E Spagnola said that as a mother of two disabled children, being able to attend remotely had made a huge difference as she did not have to find childcare, which could be challenging.

Cllr N Dixon acknowledged that the motion had many merits but unless it was bounded by specific grounds on why people weren't attending, it could be the 'thin end of the wedge' which could undermine the value of face to face meetings. He suggested that the Constitution Working Party should develop the proposals further and then bring them back to Full Council at a later date.

Cllr V FitzPatrick said that there was a lot in favour of online meetings but hybrid were different. They didn't fall into the category of remote or face to face and he had found that during hybrid meetings, those attending remotely were often ignored during discussions and less engaged. He felt that hybrid meetings were worse than both face to face and online meetings.

Cllr R Kershaw said that he supported the motion. He didn't agree with Cllr FitzPatrick. There had been some very successful hybrid meetings held in the Council Chamber recently. If they hadn't been hybrid then some of the attendees would have had to travel a long way to attend in person.

Cllr S Penfold said that he supported the motion and wanted to reassure Cllr Dixon that the second recommendation proposed 'reinvestigating the feasibility' which implied further exploratory work would be undertaken.

The Monitoring Officer advised members that the proposal to refer the matter to the Constitution Working Party was not feasible at the current time as there needed to be a change in the law to allow remote and hybrid meetings.

The Chief Executive reminded members that the Council could not lawfully hold meetings in the Chamber but the technology was in place to facilitate hybrid meetings.

Cllr Rest said that it was the issue of members debating and voting in a hybrid meeting that was the issue – not the technical set up. In response to Cllr Dixon's concerns about non-attendance, he said that the onus was on the Group Leaders to address such matters.

It was proposed by Cllr J Rest, seconded by Cllr A Fitch-Tillett and

RESOLVED that

This Council mandates the Leader to write to the new Secretary of State, to call for parity across the UK and enable councillors in England to meet and vote on line as they see fit.

This Council re-investigates the feasibility of hosting hybrid meetings in one room, such as the Council Chamber

9 members abstained.

2. Reduction of Sewage Discharges

The following motion was proposed by Cllr N Lloyd, seconded by Cllr E Withington:

The Council resolves to:

1. Request the Leader of the Council write to the Chief Executive of Anglia Water and seek the following information:
 - a) Report to the year-round figures for sewage discharges (including Combined sewage outfall) across the North Norfolk District Council area
 - b) Explain how this information shared with the public to help them make informed decisions as to water safety for recreational use
 - c) Explain what percentage of reporting of CSOs is live or from modelling?
 - d) Complete the process of identifying and classifying the performance (from both daily events and through extreme weather conditions) of CSOs in order to focus remedial action and investment across the district
 - e) Confirm which assets have been prioritised for investment and what plans are in place to reduce and prevent CSO events
 - f) Report on Anglian Water targets for reducing CSO events in the short term and longer Term
 - g) Report much money is being invested in infrastructure improvements in the area covered by North Norfolk District Council and what measures are being taking to ensure this infrastructure is climate resilient?
 - h) Explain what additional measures are being taken to reduce sewage discharges or other pollution incidents in those parts of the North Norfolk river systems including its canal and the coastal waters that lie within the area covered by North Norfolk District Council?

2. Request the Leader of the Council write to the Chair, Phillip Dunne MP, of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Select Committee stating :
 - a) This Council is in agreement with the Government U turn on supporting the amendment which will place a new legal duty directly on water companies to progressively reduce the adverse impacts of storm overflow discharges and provide enforcement of the duty by the secretary of state, or OFWAT (the Water Services Regulation Authority).
 - b) This Council considers it vital that in addition to setting targets for CSO prevention, the government places a legal obligation on the water companies to classify CSO discharge outlets according to their condition and subsequent performance and produce action plans for infrastructure improvement since there is currently no legal obligation to do so.
3. The Council Overview and Scrutiny committee consider including periodic review of sewage water discharge events in North Norfolk on their agenda's by engaging with Anglia Water and asking them to report to NNDC on the progress and investments being made.

Cllr Lloyd introduced the motion. He explained that national news reports had recently revealed the shocking levels of sewage pollution that plagued England's rivers and coastal areas. Public outrage was growing as they saw pollution events occurring in many ecologically important areas many of which sustained high levels of biodiversity whilst also being important in terms of recreation, well-being and tourism.

In September this year the Government told wastewater plants in England they may be able to discharge effluent that had not been fully treated because of disruption caused by "supply chain failure". When he had tried to find data regarding the amount of sewage discharge, there was none available on the Anglian Water website. The Rivers Trust, however, had collected information and published it. Cllr Lloyd said that all he was looking for was greater transparency from the water companies. The Government did not place enough emphasis on the water companies to take responsibility for reporting or for cleaning up such discharges. This was despite them making £500bn since privatisation was introduced. He said it was not about being political it was about cleaning up the local area and protecting the blue flag beaches and chalk streams.

Cllr E Withington reserved to her right to speak.

Cllr C Cushing said that he wished to propose an amendment. He said that his group wanted to support it. He asked that words 'U turn' were removed from recommendation 2a and that recommendation 3 was amended as follows:

'Request that the Environmental Health Department engages with Anglian Water to ensure that sewerage water discharge events, affecting North Norfolk, are reported

to NNDC, as they occur, together with details of action being taken to reduce and ultimately stop such events. This information is to be reported to Members at least annually to Full Council or to another forum or at a different frequency as appropriate.'

Cllr Lloyd replied that he was willing to remove 'u turn' but that he felt that it was the responsibility of the whole Council to embrace the issue not just the Environmental Health team and the vehicle for doing this was via Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He felt the amendment watered down the original proposition.

Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee said that he did not agree with Cllr Lloyd's comments. This was an executive function not a scrutiny issue. This should happen by dint of relationships at officer level and that the amendment went much further than the one proposed in the substantive motion. He said that the Council should be informed when such events occurred as there may be actions, in terms of mitigation, that should be taken. It wasn't effective to simply ask for periodic reviews of discharge events, this seemed too weak an approach. It was the role of Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the relationship between officers and an external agency was working effectively. He said that in principle there was cross-party support for the motion, it was just a question of how the reporting and work relating to it was undertaken.

The Chief Executive read out the terms of reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to members. He said that the amendment and Cllr Dixon's subsequent comments, raised a question regarding previous reports to Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding reporting from external partners and agencies – such as the East of England Ambulance Service and their response times. He felt it was a similar situation.

Cllr H Blathwayt said that he believed that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was the right vehicle for this. These were not one-off events but regular, sometimes continuous discharge. He referred to Hoveton Great Broad and Knacker's Wood in Horning which had both been subject to foul water discharge. It was such an important issue that it could only be dealt with by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

Cllr N Pearce said that he believed that the amendment strengthened the original proposition by strengthening the interplay between officers and external partners.

The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, said that she prided herself on working cross-party. She said that she would like to propose the following alternative wording that might resolve the issue:

'This Council requests that all sewage water discharge events are immediately reported to the Council's Environmental Health department and then consolidated into periodic reviews to be undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. These reports should include a full review of all sewage water discharge events in North Norfolk and should require the Council and the Overview & Scrutiny to engage with Anglian Water and for them to report on the progress and investments being made.'

Cllr Cushing agreed to withdraw his amendment and for it to be replaced by Cllr Butikofer's amendment.

The amendment was proposed by Cllr Butikofer, seconded by Cllr Cushing and when put to the vote was supported unanimously.

The Chairman informed members that debate of the substantive motion would now commence.

Cllr E Withington, seconder of the motion, then spoke in support of it. She referred to the Duke of Wellington's amendment to the Environment Bill, which was supported by the water companies as they wanted the duty to reduce sewage discharge into the blue environment and that they wanted the target levels to be achieved and specific timescales to be set. So, rather than direct responsibility being placed on the water companies there was an indirect duty to mitigate the adverse impact of discharges. There was an enforcement system that had lost a lot of its capacity to inspect yet alone enforce. So, to request that Anglian Water engages with the Council and reports regularly to it, was a key step forward. She said that data on combined sewage outflow (CSO) for all year round was not currently available from Anglian Water and working with them on sharing this was crucial. Transparent, real time, all year round data was needed. Anglian Water was working towards this but it was the Council's responsibility to hold them to account. She concluded by saying that Anglian Water welcomed the motion and the opportunity to engage with the Council and provide ongoing accountability. They accepted that the Council needed to be confident about sewage outflow data and this motion was a key step in achieving this.

Cllr Lloyd, as proposer of the motion, spoke last. He said he was pleased to see that members had found middle ground on the issue.

It was proposed by Cllr C Cushing, seconded by Cllr E Withington and

RESOLVED unanimously

1. Request the Leader of the Council write to the Chief Executive of Anglia Water and seek the following information:
 - b) Report to the year-round figures for sewage discharges (including Combined sewage outfall) across the North Norfolk District Council area
 - c) Explain how this information shared with the public to help them make informed decisions as to water safety for recreational use
 - d) Explain what percentage of reporting of CSOs is live or from modelling?
 - e) Complete the process of identifying and classifying the performance (from both daily events and through extreme weather conditions) of CSOs in order to focus remedial action and investment across the district
 - f) Confirm which assets have been prioritised for investment and what plans are in place to reduce and prevent CSO events
 - g) Report on Anglian Water targets for reducing CSO events in the short term and longer Term
 - h) Report much money is being invested in infrastructure improvements in the area covered by North Norfolk District Council and what measures are being taking to ensure this infrastructure is climate resilient?
 - i) Explain what additional measures are being taken to reduce sewage discharges or other pollution incidents in those parts of the North Norfolk river systems including its canal and the coastal waters that lie within the area covered by North Norfolk District Council?

2. Request the Leader of the Council write to the Chair, Phillip Dunne MP, of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Select Committee stating :
 - a) This Council is in agreement with the Government U turn on supporting the amendment which will place a new legal duty directly on water companies to progressively reduce the adverse impacts of storm overflow discharges and provide enforcement of the duty by the secretary of state, or OFWAT (the Water Services Regulation Authority).
 - b) This Council considers it vital that in addition to setting targets for CSO prevention, the government places a legal obligation on the water companies to classify CSO discharge outlets according to their condition and subsequent performance and produce action plans for infrastructure improvement since there is currently no legal obligation to do so.

3. This Council requests that all sewage water discharge events are immediately reported to the Council's Environmental Health department and then consolidated into periodic reviews to be undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. These reports should include a full review of all sewage water discharge events in North Norfolk and should require the Council and the Overview & Scrutiny to engage with Anglian Water and for them to report on the

progress and investments being made

116 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

117 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.

Chairman