

CABINET WORKING PARTY - PROJECTS

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Working Party - Projects held on Wednesday, 19 January 2022 in the remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

**Committee
Members Present:**

Mrs S Bütikofer

Mrs A Fitch-Tillett

Ms V Gay

Mr R Kershaw

Mr E Seward

**Members also
attending:**

Mr N Dixon

Mr N Lloyd

Mr J Toye

**Officers in
Attendance:**

The Chief Executive, the Planning Policy Manager, the Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth, Project & Programme Manager (MC), Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Business Manager and Programme & Projects Manager (KR)

7 APOLOGIES

None received.

8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2021, were agreed and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

10 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

11 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS OF THE WORKING PARTY

The Chairman asked members to consider how frequently the working party should meet. It was agreed that bi-monthly meetings would be the best way of maintaining oversight of the projects coming through. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to look at dates and circulate them to Members.

12 REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Democratic Services Manager informed the Working Party that the terms of reference had been reviewed by the Council's Internal Auditor and it was suggested that they were revised to be consistent with the style and layout of other committees, sub-committees and working parties. The previous version and the updated version were provided for comparison.

Cllr V Gay sought clarification on the publication of the minutes of the working party. The Democratic Services Manager replied that the minutes were reported through to Cabinet and also published on the website.

It was proposed by Cllr S Butikofer, seconded by Cllr R Kershaw and

RESOLVED

To approve the revised terms of reference for the Cabinet Working Party for Projects

13 LARGE PROJECTS - REPORTS AND UPDATES

The Chairman invited Portfolio Holders to introduce the projects in turn:

1. North Walsham Heritage Action Zone

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, began by saying that the project had progressed since the last meeting. The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) was now out to consultation and details and data were provided on the 'social pinpoint' site for North Walsham. He commended the Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth and the Economic Growth Manager for working with Historic England and the New Anglia LEP regarding increased flexibility for the grants which had been tied to very tight timescales previously.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that the TRO wasn't yet out for consultation but it had been drafted. Cllr Kershaw said that the Police were supportive of the proposed changes and it seemed to address most of the concerns of the residents of North Walsham, so he was hopeful that the consultation would receive positive responses. Cllr Kershaw said that he would like to start the communications programme regarding the work that was being done. He added that he was very pleased with the placemaking scheme and he felt that this would be received positively by residents.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that the project was moving from the design and development stage to the implementation stage and several critical actions were being undertaken within the next few weeks. Work would start on the placemaking scheme on the ground within the next month. He said there had been some local 'lobbying' regarding the retention of the GoGo Hare in its current location. This could potentially lead to some remodelling to incorporate it in situ and reconsideration of the design for Black Swan Loke.. He then spoke about New Road car park, which was progressing well and work on Cedar House was due to start soon.

The Project Manager for North Walsham Heritage Action Zone reiterated the previous comments and said that the project was moving into the implementation stage. It was anticipated that contractors for Cedar House would be appointed shortly. Regarding the Building Improvement Grant (BIG) she said that a lot of

expressions of interest had been received and these were now being prioritised.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that the team would continue to keep a close eye on any additional funding that may be forthcoming.

The Chairman said that she would like to see a clear set of criteria in place, outlining why one project was selected over another to avoid any challenge in the future.

The Chief Executive referred members to the summary outlining the significant work that had been undertaken on this project to date. In terms of risks, he said that they were currently around issues of supply and the awarding of contracts. He said that it might be possible to go back to Historic England regarding further funding to support the Building Improvement Grant scheme.

The Chief Executive then said that he had recently visited North Walsham with the Director for Place and Climate Change, who had not previously been to the town. He had commented that there was nothing visible to show that the programme was coming. He acknowledged that the process had been iterative so far and that there hadn't been a fixed project programme to show to date. However, there was now a need now to build community confidence and a communications strategy should move away from the detail and promote instead the catalyst that this project would deliver and highlight the huge amount of funding that was being invested in the town. This could be done via information boards throughout the town. This included promoting the benefits of the re-siting of the bus stands to the New Road car park.

The Chairman said that consideration should be given to ensuring that erecting information boards was not seen as the Council having already made decisions ahead of the consultation phase being completed. The Chief Executive agreed, saying it was an issue of balance but he felt that the time had come to be bold now and engage constructively and add value to the programme moving forward.

Cllr E Seward referred to material supply issues and the availability of contractors. He said that it was hard to plan for - short of building in a contingency fund. There was an additional challenge regarding the very tight deadlines set by the funding bodies. This was not unique to the North Walsham scheme, many other Heritage Action Zone projects were similarly affected. Regarding information boards, he said that once the designs were finalised, it would be able to share these at key locations such as the Shambles, the bus terminal and Black Swan Loke. He concluded by saying that local members were aware of the pressures regarding the time limits of the project. In conclusion, he asked whether the Project Board could be kept informed regarding the appointment of a contractor for Cedar House.

Cllr V Gay said that local members had reported on the scheme to the best of their ability - to local papers and meetings whilst remaining mindful of the outcome of the consultation process. She said that narratives that focussed on particular places and seized peoples' imaginations would be really beneficial, adding that the Shambles was a good starting point for 'telling the story' of the town. Regarding the hare, she said that she understood why people wanted to retain it in its current position.

Cllr Kershaw acknowledged the Chief Executive's comments regarding information boards in the town. Once the consultation was complete then the boards could be erected.

2. Fakenham Roundabout

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Planning, introduced this item. He said that responsibility for overseeing the project would be moving from the Director of Resources to the Director of Place and Climate Change. He thanked him for his work to date. He said that he had some queries regarding the work that NCC Highways was responsible for but would ask the Project & Programme Manager (MC) to elaborate.

The Project and Programme Manager said that she has some concerns that the agreements had not been signed. It was important that the legal teams for the different parties came together to resolve the outstanding issues such as liability and covering areas such as over / underspend. In addition, there had been a change the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the project and it was currently going through the hand-over stage, whilst he acquainted himself fully.

The Chief Executive said that the paper prepared for CLT listed the consenting conditions around the S106 agreement. The scale of development meant that the roundabout must be provided before any other infrastructure or housing was developed. It was important that the conditions met the landowner's (Trinity College, Cambridge) expectations whilst not exposing the Council to any unacceptable risk, as well as allowing for early delivery of the roundabout which would be via a section 73 Highways Agreement. It was hoped that this would give Trinity College the confidence to step back from quite onerous s106 conditions. He said that the works could not commence before October 2022, as this was outside the peak tourist season.

The Programme and Project Manager said that Norfolk County Council (NCC) was currently working on the design elements of the roundabout. The contract had been awarded to Tarmac and they would price accordingly in June 2022. The outcome of this could impact on the delivery of other aspects of the work – such as the widening of the exit at the Shell Garage roundabout.

The Chairman said that the roundabout was critical to the development of the area. Cllr Toye added that potentially there were issues arising in the coming months but the Council was aware of these and would address them.

3. Sheringham Reef

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cllr V Gay, said that the Reef Leisure Centre was now open and being enjoyed by the public and membership subscriptions were rising. She said that not all work had been completed. Final reconciliation of accounts still needed to be completed and there were some minor snagging jobs that needed to be done. In conclusion, Cllr Gay said that it was a very successful project for the Council.

4. Tree Planting

Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environment, introduced this item. He said that since the last meeting of the Working Party, some additional risks had been identified, mainly around competitors. He referred to the County Council's 1m tree project and the recent contact they had made with every parish and school in Norfolk. He said that he would like to suggest that the Council worked in collaboration with other partners to ensure that the target was met. In addition to the

NCC project there was also the Queen's Canopy fund and the Government scheme which was offering payments to farmers for planting and maintenance. As it currently stood, the Council was due to plant 55,000 trees this winter – about 5,000 less than it had aimed to plant at this stage. He said that there was a huge amount of community engagement going on and this was to be lauded, however, it should be acknowledged that a small planting scheme of a few hundred trees took just as much effort and planning as a large scale scheme.

Cllr Lloyd said that he wasn't sure how to address the issue of competitors. One option would be to agree an arrangement with the County Council to ensure that there was no 'double counting' of the trees planted. An alternative option would be for the District Council to purchase a plot of land specifically to plant trees on.

Cllr Lloyd concluded by informing members that the Council had been offered DEFRA funding for a 'Trees Outside of Woodlands' project which needed to be delivered by March 2022. The funding supported the delivery of three 'Miyawaki forests' which would be planted in Sheringham, Fakenham and North Walsham. A web page providing information on this project and the tree planting strategy would go live at the end of January 2022.

The Chairman said that she had concerns about the impact of the NCC project and she didn't want to mislead the public by double-counting trees. She said that she would be interested to know if the County Council were also targeting other areas of the county or whether they were focussing on North Norfolk as the District Council's scheme was well underway. She asked Cllr N Dixon, as a county councillor, whether he and other 'twin-hatters' could express their displeasure at NCC's approach.

Cllr Dixon said that he wasn't well-sighted on this particular project but he was aware of the challenges posed by competitiveness on projects. He said that he would do what he could.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that he felt that Norfolk County Council would welcome a collaborative approach. To date, there had not been an opportunity to discuss this. He added that an additional challenge was posed by carbon off-setting schemes. These were currently proliferating and they offered attractive incentives to landowners for planting trees. He added that it was important to have the right trees planted in the right places and hedgerows were a key part of this.

The Chairman said that it was important to acknowledge that trees were being planted. She agreed that hedgerows were vital and key to biodiversity.

Cllr E Seward said that the public didn't want to see local authorities competing, they just wanted to see trees being planted in the right place. If this meant planting more hedgerows then this should be considered and progressed. Regarding the Miyawaki forest, he said that it was an interesting initiative and asked that local members were kept informed of any tree planting projects in their wards.

Cllr Lloyd said that hedgerows were a key part of the strategy and several miles had already been planted. Regarding, the issue of the Council purchasing and ear-marking a piece of land for tree planting, he said that it could generate income via carbon-offsetting schemes. He concluded by saying that all options were being assessed and it was hoped by the end of March it would be clearer whether the final

target of 110,000 trees was still achievable.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth asked whether the acquisition of land was a serious proposal that would warrant further exploration. The Chairman said that she was not against it but it was a decision for the new Leader and Cabinet. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that it would be lower grade, agricultural land that couldn't be used for other purposes, such as houses.

Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing, said that she was looking to create a landowner forum and suggested that this could be an 'add-on' and landowners could be asked to consider planting trees too.

Cllr Seward said that he was open to exploring the option of purchasing land for the planting of trees. He suggested that a business case was worked up and brought to Cabinet for consideration.

5. Local Plan

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Planning, said that the Planning Policy team had worked incredibly hard through the Christmas period to meet the deadlines and deliver the project on time.

The Planning Policy Manager said that the Council was now out to Regulation 19 consultation which would run for the next six weeks. Representations had already been received and there had been some press coverage too. It was likely that the majority of responses would be received towards the end of the consultation. At the end of the six week period, the Planning Policy team would review the representations that had been received and identify any significant risks. It was anticipated that it would be submitted to the Planning Inspector by April 2022. The examination process and hearing sessions would then be set out. He added that there were many challenges ahead and there was still a lot of work to do.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Policy team for their hard work and acknowledged that they had faced many challenges. She asked whether 'bee bricks' were included as she had already been lobbied on this. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that they were and could be specifically reference if required.

Cllr Seward said that it had been such a lengthy process, involving several consultations. He said that it might be worth reminding people why the Council was doing this and the importance of having a Local Plan.

Cllr Gay said that she wanted to thank the Planning Policy team for their hard work.

Cllr Lloyd said that he was really pleased with how the Planning Policy team had embraced the Council's climate change agenda.

Cllr Toye said that he wanted to add his thanks to the Chairman of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party, Cllr Brown. It had been a collaborative process and the outcome was excellent.

14 PROJECT INFORMATION - SHORT DEMONSTRATION AND OVERVIEW

The Programme and Project Manager (KR) gave members a brief presentation on the new Corporate Delivery Unit's 'project directory' page on the intranet. She explained that the projects were categorised into small, medium and large and more detail could be found by clicking on the icons. All members could access this information via their council devices. There was also an archive of completed projects.

15 MEDIUM PROJECTS - EXCEPTIONS

There were no exceptions to report for medium projects at this time.

The meeting ended at 11.27am

Chairman