

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 12 October 2022 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

Committee Members Present: Mr N Dixon (Chairman) Ms L Withington

Mr H Blathwayt Mr P Heinrich
Dr V Holliday Mr N Housden
Mrs E Spagnola Mrs S Bütikofer

Other Members Present: Mr T Adams (Observer) Ms V Gay (Observer)

Mrs P Grove-Jones (Observer) Mr J Rest (Observer)

Officers in Attendance: Democratic Services and Governance Officer - Scrutiny (DSGOS), Director for Communities (DFC), Project Manager North Walsham Heritage Action Zone (PMNW), Revenues Manager (RM), Environmental Services Manager (ESM), Economic Growth Manager (EGM), Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth (ADSG) and Democratic Services Manager (DSM)

Also in attendance: Serco Regional Director (SRD)
Serco Contracts Manager (SCM)

54 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Committee Members Cllr E Spagnola, Cllr S Penfold, Cllr A Varley, Cllr C Cushing, Cllr P Fisher and Cabinet Member Cllr R Kershaw.

55 SUBSTITUTES

Cllr N Pearce and Cllr G Mancini-Boyle.

56 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

Mr M Hicks made a public statement regarding concerns related to the North Walsham High Street and Heritage Action Zone Project, and encouraged Members to support free parking to increase footfall in the town.

57 MINUTES

Minutes from the previous meeting to be considered for approval in November.

58 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr V Holliday declared a pecuniary interest for agenda item 11, and informed the Committee that she had been granted a dispensation.

60 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

61 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

None received.

62 RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CABINET TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

The DSGOS informed Members that Cabinet had accepted the Committee's recommendations from the CCfA report on the Impact of Second Homes and Holiday Lets. He added that the related Bill was now on a second reading, and whilst the Council had missed the deadline for the consultation response, it was expected that the relevant Cabinet Minister would be contacted to request that any potential increase in Council Tax revenue should be retained by the District.

63 WASTE CONTRACT: SERCO BRIEFING - NEW COLLECTIONS MODEL UPDATE

The Serco Regional Director (SRD) and Contracts Manager (SCM) were in attendance to provide an update on the implementation of the new waste collections model and outstanding gap analysis tasks. It was noted that an updated gap analysis was yet to be discussed by officers, and was considered too premature to share with the Committee. It was noted that written reports would be preferred for future meetings. The DFC noted that officers maintained daily contact with Serco to address any issues related to the implementation of the new collections model such as missed collections. The SRD referred to the gap analysis and noted that of the six-hundred items identified, seventy to eighty were yet to be delivered, with approximately thirty percent of these given a date for implementation. He added that meetings had been requested with the three authorities of the joint contract to discuss the remaining items, in order to provide context and agree implementation timeframes, so long as they remained deliverable.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr S Bütikofer referred to the outstanding actions identified in the gap analysis, and suggested that when the contract agreed, Serco must have known its obligations. The SRD replied that many of the outstanding items were taken from method statements that had been put in for added value which were not universally clear. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that she still expected Serco to have understood the contractual requirements when entering into the agreement. The SRD replied that unfortunately the authors of the method statements were no longer working with Serco, and it was now down to officers to interpret and agree the remaining actions. The Chairman noted that it was the third time Serco had attended the Committee, and suggested that it would have been helpful to hear these concerns sooner.
- ii. The Chairman reminded attendees that the primary purpose of the briefing was to discuss the ongoing implementation of the new collections model, and noted that he and other Councillors had received a reasonable amount of feedback from the public on missed collections and other issues. He asked for Serco to give their perspective on how the implementation had gone to date, and what their understanding of the customer experience was. The

SCM referred to the new TOM, which had been introduced from the 5th September, and informed Members that it was the third implementation for the Norfolk Waste Contract, with Breckland and Kings Lynn both coming before North Norfolk. He added that North Norfolk's TOM was the largest change, with over ninety percent of collection days being changed across the District. It was noted that previously waste had been collected over zones, whereas the new methodology used a near and far model, which split days into far collections. The SCM stated that the reasons for this change were to reduce mileage and carbon emissions, and noted that with all major service changes there was a twelve week introductory period where disruptions were likely. He added that Serco were currently in week six of this period, with issues such as missed collections higher than expected, though the number was beginning to fall. It was noted that most bin collection crews were working in new areas, which would require a learning period. The SCM reported that to account for these issues Serco had increased the number of call handlers in the customer service centre, increased the number of waste collection vehicles, and sought to increase the number of drivers. He added that it had been difficult to recruit drivers as a result of national driver shortages, but the number of rounds being completed was still increasing, which showed that existing drivers were adapting to their new routes. It was noted that only three routes were reporting as incomplete, though they were achieving 98-99% completion, which should improve with increased local knowledge.

- iii. The Chairman noted that there had been feedback which claimed unfamiliarity with rounds, with significant areas missed, alongside of a shortage of resources to recover missed collections. He added that there had been positive comments received, and in the past two years satisfaction with the service had been very high even during the height of the Pandemic. It was noted that dissatisfaction with the service had only begun as a result of missed collections related to the introduction of the new TOM, and the Chairman asked whether Serco were cognisant of this issue. The SCM replied that Serco were acutely aware of the issues and missed collections that had occurred, though not all customers had experienced these issues, though over ninety percent of residents had seen changes. He added that heat maps were being produced to better understand and resolve these issues, but Serco continued to struggle to recruit drivers. It was noted that Serco's Customer Services Team would also take a more proactive role in following-up on issues to ensure that they have been resolved to improve customer perceptions.
- iv. Cllr N Pearce agreed that the service had performed well prior to implementation of the new TOM, but stated that he had concerns regarding failures, with customer feedback suggesting that the customer service response had been worse than the waste collection service itself. He added that the recent bank holiday had resulted in many missed collections, with no answers or replies given to resolve these issues, and asked what percentage of customer had experienced problems. It was reported that the percentage failure rate, or number of missed collections taken as a whole against the number collected stood at 0.0067% of approximately 55K bins, which meant that Serco had successfully collected 99.9933%. The DFC stated that whilst in context this was a reasonably good collection rate, the service must continue to aim for 100%. He added that Serco had been asked not to work on the bank holiday announced for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, as this was deemed to be inappropriate and no disposal points would have been

open. It was noted that whilst this did have an impact on service delivery, crews had agreed to work on Saturday to catch-up missed collections.

- v. Cllr V Holliday referred to Serco customer service and suggested that the number of staff and training appeared to be lacking, with the service often not meeting customers' expectations. She asked whether there was an efficiency element to the new TOM, and noted that whilst collections staff were exemplary, they appeared to be rushing. The SCM replied that there was an efficiency and carbon reduction element of the TOM, which meant that Teams were doing less driving. He added that where Teams were learning rounds it was possible that there was a sense of urgency among staff. In reference to the customer service issues, the SCM stated that he had taken time to listen to call recordings and had reviewed call data which did not appear to show the level of dissatisfaction described, but suggested that he would be happy to address issues if specific examples could be provided. The DFC added that as the service delivery improved, the Team would have more time to devote to addressing complaints.
- vi. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that every household in the District required bin collections, and this was likely the reason that even small issues caused big problems. She added that whilst she accepted that mistakes happened, Members needed reassurance that customers' problems would be resolved efficiently and effectively. Cllr S Bütikofer sought clarification on whether Serco operatives in North Norfolk had different contractual terms to those in neighbouring Districts. The SRD replied that Serco operatives across the contract were on equitable contracts, though some minor conditions varied as a result of items carried over from previous employment contracts. The SCM referred to customer service issues and stated that improvements were in progress, with complaint follow-ups made a priority. He added that efforts were also being made to improve the missed collection service by providing more specific information about when these would be resolved. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that it was reassuring to hear that efforts were being made to address these issues, but it was important to ensure that trade waste customers were provided with the same level of service.
- vii. Cllr P Grove-Jones stated that operatives and service provided in the Stalham area were excellent, but noted that she was aware that some residents had complained about the customer service when reporting missed collections. She added that some residents had been told to contact NNDC in this case, which had not been well received.
- viii. Cllr T Adams stated that he was disappointed with the service provided in the past two weeks, taking into account a four week settling-in period in which teething issues could be expected. He added that the potential for disruption had been expected, but it had now been going on for some time. It was noted that approximately eighty percent of missed collections appeared to be taking place in lokes, alley ways and unadopted roads, which could be considered difficult to find locations, but missed assisted collections and commercial collections were a significant concern. Cllr T Adams stated that it was difficult to understand why these issues persisted when detailed information on the location of collections was readily available. As a result, he asked whether the required level of resource was in place, how long it would take to resolve the issues, and whether full details of assisted and commercial collections had been passed to the collection teams. The SCM replied that major service changes generally took twelve weeks to implement and settle into regular

service provision, and at present Serco were approximately halfway through that process. He added that all information on commercial, assisted and regular collections was passed to crews, but many operatives were having to learn entirely new areas which created a learning curve. On resources, the SCM noted that the only resource Serco had struggled with was recruiting drivers, as call centre and collection operatives had been increased for the implementation. Cllr T Adams replied that whilst he hoped it would not be the case, twelve weeks of missed bins for the same individuals or businesses would be completely unacceptable, and stated that all efforts had to be made to ensure that repeated missed collections were resolved in advance of the twelve week deadline.

- ix. Cllr N Housden noted that whilst he had not personally been negatively impacted by missed collections, he accepted that this was a significant issue for many residents throughout the District. He referred to the methodology, and suggested that if issues persisted, this may need to be reconsidered. Cllr N Housden noted that he had raised the issue of strategic planning at a previous waste briefing, and asked whether there had been any changes to Serco's strategic planning to address driver shortages. He noted that Serco had also been reported to have inadequately invested or sought to innovate its services to meet contractual demands, and sought assurances that this would not be the case in Norfolk. The SCM replied that references made to the new collection methodology were not necessarily cut and paste as District's varied, and this was why the twelve week settling-in period was an important aspect of the implementation process. Cllr N Housden suggested that strategic issues such as national driver shortages would not be resolved at the end of the twelve week period, and Serco would need to innovate and invest to resolve these more strategic issues. The DFC noted that there had been significant strategic planning undertaken in advance of the implementation, such as delaying the change until September, taking into account the impact of the tourism season. He added that the pre-existing inefficient collection methodology also had to be replaced at the earliest opportunity, which was expected to present a challenge with the number of rounds increasing from ten to thirteen. The DFC agreed with comments that Serco had not been as innovative as they could have been to improve driver recruitment and retention, but it should be noted that they were working within the confines of a local authority contract. It was noted that competitors in the private sector such as large supermarket chains had previously offered up to a £2k recruitment bonus, which Serco were unable to compete with beyond raising basic pay to market comparable rates. Cllr N Housden stated that he appreciated the difficulties recruiting drivers and suggested that maybe NNDC needed to help Serco innovate in that respect. He added that a contract agreed two years ago may need to be revisited to ensure that it remained viable.
- x. Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked whether Serco had anticipated issues during implementation and sought to mitigate these with additional staff and training. He added that an NNDC app may make it easier for customers to raise complaints, and asked whether customers seeking to report a missed bin collection should contact Serco directly, or NNDC. The DFC replied that customers could report via the NNDC website via an online form, after which a report would be automatically sent to Serco. He added that there was also a telephone number for customers to contact Serco directly during office hours, but the web forms provided twenty-four hour accessibility. The ESM noted that customers calling the NNDC customer service number would be

automatically redirected to the Serco customer service line. The SCM confirmed that issues had been anticipated and the number of call centre staff had been increased to account for this.

- xi. Cllr H Blathwayt asked whether Serco had a contingency plan in place to deal with increased refuse in public waste bins during the peak tourism season, and noted that he received significant communication from residents on this issue. He added that reports suggested that public bins were not emptied as frequently by Serco as the previous contractor. The SCM replied that he was working with local collection teams to ensure that this issue was addressed in 2023, with contingency planning already underway. Cllr H Blathwayt noted that these issues also occurred outside of the summer season, on warm bank holidays and other seasonal public holidays.
- xii. Cllr L Withington noted that whilst the service change had gone relatively well in Sheringham, some issues had been seen on unadopted roads, and online form responses had not been adequate, with quick responses that stated missed bins would not be collected. She asked how long after a missed collection did Serco allow for a report to be considered, and at what point would it be deferred until the next collection date. The ESM replied that the time limit for reporting missed collections was midday on the second day after the missed collection, and noted that there had been increased flexibility exercised during the changeover. He added that the webform had been developed to send automatic replies to anyone that reported a missed collection outside of this timeframe. It was noted that the missed collections system was connected to in-cab software, and any bins not placed out for collection would be marked as such and not collected. Similarly it was noted that bins marked as exceptions due to contamination would not be collected, with missed collection reports automatically rejected. The ESM was able to dispute claims, and dust carts were fitted with 360 degree cameras to confirm or reject. Cllr L Withington referred to whole roads being missed, and noted that residents had still received the same messages. The ESM replied that there was an issue with webforms that needed to be addressed, as there was not a category to note that a street had been missed, and efforts were being made to correct this.
- xiii. The DFC stated that NNDC were seeking to address issues discussed as quickly as possible, and noted that he did not expect the same level of issues to be present at week twelve of the implementation period. The Chairman noted that waste collections were one of the Council's most public-facing services, and the Council had to maintain accountability for service failures. As a result, he suggested that it would be helpful to have a further update at the next meeting, in order to ensure that the issues discussed had been resolved.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the briefing.**

ACTIONS

- 1. To request an additional briefing be added to the Work Programme in November to provide a further written update on the implementation of the new collections model and progress made with actions contained in the gap analysis.**

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS DETERMINATION 2023-24

Cllr T Adams – Council Leader introduced the report and informed Members that hardship and care leavers discounts would be retained, and the Committee were aware of the planned premiums that would be placed on second homes. He added that a discount would be reintroduced for empty properties in need of major refurbishment, which had been impacted by labour shortages, which was expected to be a relatively low number. The RM noted that the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill referred to within the report required a year's notice to implement changes, as such Council Tax premiums would be introduced in 2024, subject to any further delays.

Questions and Discussion

- i. The Chairman noted that two items within the report were focused on Council Tax premiums, which should be reflected in the report title, alongside an acknowledgement that any changes to second homes Council Tax would not be implemented until 2024. The RM agreed with comments on the title, and noted that whilst they did fall within discounts legislation, he accepted that it would be more transparent to refer to the proposed changes as premiums. He added that proposed changes for second homes did require one years notice, hence the 2024 implementation.
- ii. Cllr V Holliday noted that she had received a representation from a local resident who felt it was unfair that second home owners should pay a differential Council Tax rate as opposed to the business rates payments and associated rates relief by owners of holiday rental accommodation. She added that they had also suggested that a similar minimum occupancy requirement should be implemented for second home owners. Cllr V Holliday then asked whether long-term rental owners would be liable to pay the increased Council Tax charges, which could dissuade owners from long-term lets. The RM replied that there was no existing minimum occupancy requirement for second homes, whereas holiday lets had to be available to let for 140 days or more per year. He added that the decision to charge Council Tax or non-domestic business rates was a decision made by the valuation office as part of HMRC. It was noted that the Government would be reviewing holiday let usage in 2023, with a requirement for these properties to be used for 140 days in the year, and it was therefore expected that some owners may seek to change categorisation of their property. The RM suggested that it was likely that many unused properties would switch to paying Council Tax in advance of the legislative changes.
- iii. Cllr L Withington suggested that properties let on a long-term bases were likely to have Council Tax charges paid by tenants as their primary residence, rather than by the property owners. She added that increasing Council Tax charges may therefore encourage second home owners to rent them on long-term letting contracts to avoid the Council Tax premium. It was confirmed that tenants would only pay the normal Council Tax charge as the property would be considered their primary residence.
- iv. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr P Heinrich and seconded by Cllr L Withington.

RESOLVED

1. To recommend to Full Council 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 that:
 1. The discounts for the year 2023-24 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 2.1.
 2. The existing 100% council tax hardship discount and associated policy (see Appendix B) remains in place for 2023-24.
 3. That an exception to the levy charges may be made by the Revenues Manager in the circumstances laid out in section 2.2 of this report.
 4. The premiums for the year 2023-24 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 2.3.
 5. A new second homes premium of 100% as detailed in paragraph 2.4 is applied from April 2024, subject to the necessary legislation.
 6. To continue to award a local discount Reasons for Recommendations: of 100% for eligible cases of care leavers under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).
 7. 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 as set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report.
 8. 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.

ACTIONS

1. That officers consider amending the title of the report to include 'and Premiums', to more accurately reflect the contents.

65 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

The EGM introduced the report and informed Members that it was intended to give Members early sight of the fund, the timescales involved and how the process would be taken forward. He added that the fund could be considered a top-up of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and would be available to local authorities across England as a successor to the EU model for rural funding. It was noted that the funding was intended for capital projects that would support either local business communities, or the communities themselves in order to help improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy. The EGM stated that the indicative funding allocation for North Norfolk was £1.457m, which was the second highest amount in Norfolk behind Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. He added that the first twenty-five percent of funding was expected in the first year, with the remainder released in the following two years. It was noted that the local partnership group model adopted for the Shared Prosperity Fund to determine funding allocations would be utilised with key representative groups and more rural partners. The EGM stated that the Council was required to

submit an addendum to the Shared Prosperity Fund outlining key rural challenges and priorities by 30th November. It was expected that the Council would hear whether this had been approved early in 2023, though the funding was guaranteed as it was not a competitive application process.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr N Housden asked whether the North Norfolk Sustainable Community Fund (NNSCF) would have any input in the process, or potentially receive additional funding. The EGM replied that the Council had indicated that it would use the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the NNSCF, and further funding may not therefore be necessary.
- ii. Cllr L Withington asked whether it would be appropriate for Members to consider the addendum before it was submitted to Government. It was noted that as a result of the tight timescale, it would not be possible for the Committee to review and provide feedback on the addendum, however a summary paper outlining the key priorities could be bought back for consideration in due course.
- iii. Cllr V Holliday suggested that she would be interested to see who the additional stakeholders would be, to which the ADSG replied that these would include rural business representative groups such as the NFU. He added that there was a broad range of rural issues that the fund could be used to address ranging from nature and conservation issues, to farm diversification projects. Cllr V Holliday suggested that it would be helpful not to place too much emphasis on tourism, as it was important to encourage economic diversity across the District. The ADSG agreed and stated that whilst support for tourism schemes had been addressed previously, it should be noted that many farm diversification projects could include some element of tourism.
- iv. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that the report suggested that more details on the fund were anticipated from Government, and asked whether this was still the case. The EGM replied that funds were often launched with a slim prospectus, followed by webinars and opportunities for questions that would help applicants better understand the process. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that this was a concern, as it appeared that Councils were asked to apply for funding without being given full details. She noted that the report suggested that some funding could be used for related staffing costs, which did not imply the light touch approach suggested elsewhere within the report. The EGM replied that the application itself would be relatively light touch compared to the levelling-up bids, and would only need to outline key issues and interventions. He added that despite this, it was important not to underestimate the level of resource and time commitment required, and in this case, no clear allocation had been made for this. It was suggested that Government may have assumed that Councils would use the existing allocation of approximately £50k from the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the process. The EGM acknowledged that this was a risk, but the Council were in the process of recruiting an Economic Programme and Funding Manager to support both bids going forward. Cllr S Bütikofer suggested that it may be helpful to inform Government that continuing to prematurely announce funds without full guidance and detail was not helpful and risked Councils not being able to make the most of funds. The Chairman agreed with concerns related to short timescales and lack of information, but

suggested that at this point the Committee should focus more on the efforts required to complete the application process.

- v. Cllr H Blathwayt suggested that the fund appeared to be a crossover with ELMS and also loosely associated with GIRAMS, and asked whether the fund would affect these projects, and whether local access forums could be involved in development. The AD SG replied that he could not comment too much on ELMS projects, but could state that the fund would be separate and focus more on developing the rural economy than on land management and farming practices. Cllr H Blathwayt stated that he had recently visited an active ELMS project on diversification of farm buildings and suggested that in this case, the two funding streams appeared to be similar. The AD SG said that he was not aware of the match-funding implications and suggested that consideration would need to be given to determine whether the two funds could be used together.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
- 2. To endorse the process for developing the REPF Addendum to the UKSF. It is proposed that this follows the same principles and processes that were adopted to develop the UKSPF Investment Plan and will be led by the Economic Growth Manager and Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth. An established Local Partnership Group, composed of a variety of key local stakeholders, is already in place and will help to inform and shape the final submission. However, given that this fund is more rural focussed, there is likely to be value in inviting additional stakeholders representing aspects of the rural economy.**

66 NORTH WALSHAM HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE - PROJECT UPDATE

The AD SG introduced the report and informed Members that the formatting issues on the risk register had been resolved, with budget and risk information also provided for each workstream. It was noted that officers and Cllr R Kershaw had met with the public speaker to discuss their concerns as a property owner in relation to the project, and it was apparent that their views did coincide with the overall aims of the project. The AD SG suggested that he could not comment on the public speaker's desire for free parking, as this was an issue for Councillors to consider, though it should be noted that the town remained accessible, with ample parking provided in close proximity to the centre. He added that the limited loss of on-street parking spaces had been compensated by free one-hour parking spaces in two town centre car parks, which would retain and enhance access.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr P Heinrich referred to parking spaces and stated that it had to be made clear that by the end of the project, the amount of free parking within two-minutes walk of the town centre would be greatly improved, alongside better access for older or disabled visitors. He added that shopping in small towns

was changing, and this had to be taken into account, with future habits likely centred around leisure, residential living and small specialist shops, which would all benefit from increased pedestrianisation. Cllr P Heinrich asked whether there was an expected completion date for work on the Cedars, whether the quality of existing work had been signed-off, and whether any progress had been made securing tenants. The ADSG replied that there had been variations to the Cedars improvements throughout the improvement works, such as changes to the heating system from gas to electric, and assessing potential tenants needs for future fittings. He added that officers were now working with contractors to develop a final programme, and once agreed this would include a snagging period, with the principle designer holding responsibility for ensuring the overall quality of the work. Cllr P Heinrich noted that he had seen issues with existing repairs that were supposed to have been completed, and noted that other work such as the renovation of windows would need to be done before winter, which was cause for concern. The ADSG replied that he would seek to confirm when these works would take place in writing, and noted that other issues would be addressed during the snagging period, with all works due for completion in November.

- ii. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that whilst it was important to take into account the comments made by the public speaker, it was outlined in the report that the level of free parking available would not be reduced, which was more than in many other towns. She added that it may help to increase signage to alert visitors where the free parking was available, as this was not clear to people who were not familiar with the changes. It was confirmed following a question from Cllr S Bütikofer that the Historic England area assessment study was listed as zero expenditure as a result of it being undertaken by an external body. She added that it would also be helpful to know what the attendance at events in September had been. The ADSG referred to the car parking signage question, and noted that Cabinet had agreed to offer free parking for the duration of the project to ensure that the town remained open for business. He added that the market had also been successfully relocated, and whilst more concessions parking was considered for Mundesley Road car park, the required resurfacing works had made this unviable. As a result the free parking allocation had changed to Vicarage Street until the resurfacing works were complete, though it was accepted that signage could be improved. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that Bank Loke car park signage needed improvement, as this was the closest to the town centre and easily accessible. The ADSG noted that these were permanent free parking spaces, and further messages and signage would be needed to make this clear. On the Historic England research, the ADSG noted that they had been particularly interested to learn more about the unknown history of the town, and were therefore keen to fund the research. The NWPM referred to September events and noted that whilst one event had been cancelled during the mourning period for Queen Elizabeth II, the first event had gone ahead with fifteen attendees to tour the Cedars and other buildings. She added that eighty children from two different primary schools had also visited the town, with a funding request made for purchase of digital cameras that would support future school visits. It was noted that concerts had also been held in the Church amongst other cultural events, with separate funding provided by Historic England and the Arts Council, managed by a consortium.
- iii. Cllr V Holliday referred to the risk register and noted a risk score change of

eleven after mitigation that related to stakeholder expectations, and suggested that she had not expected mitigation to be this effective. She added that there was also a risk relating to funding being committed within a given timeframe, and sought assurances that the residual risks were not too aspirational. The ADSG replied that the funding had been committed and the residual risk related to managing inflationary cost pressures to ensure that the scheme fit its budget. He added that in the previous year other HAZ projects around the Country had generated underspends, which allowed NNDC to bid for additional funding to meet additional cost pressures. On stakeholder expectations, it was noted that extensive engagement had been undertaken during the design stage of the scheme, where feedback had been very positive, and this would continue to be monitored going forward. The ADSG added that a stakeholder group was being established to improve project communication and monitor the impact of scheme implementation.

- iv. Cllr N Housden referred to delays caused by material and labour shortages, and subsequent cost rises in the risk register, and asked what the original contingency had been, and how this compared to the reprofiled budget. He added that funding was also time sensitive, and asked whether this had to be used in the calendar year, and what the business take-up of the scheme had been, given comments made by the public speaker. The ADSG replied that he did not have full details of the contingency for the place-making works, though it was estimated to be fifteen percent of the overall project cost. Cllr N Housden referred to rescheduling that took place in April and stated that he would like to know how this impacted the project contingency, to which the ADSG suggested he would provide a written response. The ADSG noted that the contingency would change throughout the project as it became clear how much, if any, would be required. The NWPM referred to time sensitive funding arrangements and informed Members that the Council was due to make its second funding claim to Historic England for the placemaking scheme by the end of October, which would complete spending ahead of schedule. She added that going forward all spending would be prioritised against the LEP funding to ensure that it was spent within the required timeframe. The ADSG replied that recent meetings with Historic England had suggested that they were very comfortable with the position and progress of the North Walsham scheme, with funding committed as a result of the pre-purchase of materials. On take-up of the scheme by local residents and businesses, it was noted that one landlord had suggested that they had recently had a good number of enquiries for vacant premises, with a pop-up planned that showed a level of optimism. The NWPM noted that some vacant properties that had taken advantage of the building improvement grant scheme had since been let, which was a positive sign the scheme was having an effect. The former Barclays Bank was given as a significant example, which now housed the Phoenix Project.
- v. Cllr G Mancini-Boyle noted that the project was nearing its end and asked if officers were conscious of how much officer time had been devoted to the project. The ADSG replied that it was difficult to quantify, but this had been considered during the application process, with the NWPM's post part funded by the grant received. He added that the aims and high profile of the scheme had meant that it did require significant officer resource, taking into account additional works such as the bus interchange and car park closures. It was noted that it had also been difficult to deliver the project during delivery of the Covid grant schemes.

- vi. The Chairman referred to the risk register and noted that a small number of objections had been raised in relation to one issue, and sought clarification on how many had been raised. The ADSG replied that this risk referred to a traffic regulation order (TRO) that had received six objections. The Chairman noted that two objections had been withdrawn and suggested that he assumed four remained, to which the ADSG replied that the TRO consultation was undertaken by NCC, who would have considered the objections in advance of approving the scheme.

RESOLVED

To receive and note the update.

67 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The DSGOS noted that the Engagement Strategy was listed for November, though this would be subject to completion of the consultation. He added that the Performance Management Framework would also go forward for approval in November.

RESOLVED

To note the Cabinet Work Programme.

68 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

- i. The DSGOS noted that the Reef Project review had been expected for some time as a result of the accounts closedown being delayed, and whilst the report was due to be completed in November, it was too soon to confirm when the report would come to Committee. He added that the Committee could expect an update from the Coastal Management Team in November, and the Beach Huts and Chalets monitoring report was expected in December.
- ii. Cllr L Withington referred to the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme briefing held recently, and asked whether this would be covered or could be considered as part of a future report. The DSGOS noted that he would be happy to receive suggestions for inclusion in the report.
- iii. Cllr S Bütikofer asked if the car park usage monitoring report was still expected in November, to which the DSGOS replied that this would be subject to availability of officers, given that it was a financial report and the Team were currently understaffed.
- iv. Cllr V Holliday referred to the anticipated ambulance response times update in February and asked if representatives from the ICB and EEAST could be asked to attend.
- v. In response to a question from Cllr N Housden, it was confirmed that Serco representatives would be in attendance at the November meeting.

RESOLVED

To note the update.

69 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 12.16 pm.

Chairman