

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 15 March 2023 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Mr N Dixon (Chairman)	Ms L Withington
	Mr P Heinrich	Dr V Holliday
	Mr N Housden	Mr C Cushing
	Mr P Fisher	Mrs S Bütikofer
	Mr J Toye	
<b>Other Members Present:</b>	Mrs W Fredericks (Observer)	Mr J Rest (Observer)
	Mr T Adams (Observer)	
<b>Officers in Attendance:</b>	Democratic Services and Governance Officer - Scrutiny (DSGOS), Chief Executive (CE), Democratic Services Manager (DSM), Director for Communities (DFC) and Director for Resources / S151 Officer (DFR)	

### 143 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr E Spagnola.

The DSGOS noted that unfortunately the PCC had also had to give his apologies at short notice and would not be in attendance for the Crime and Disorder Update.

### 144 SUBSTITUTES

Cllr J Toye.

### 145 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

### 146 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### Questions and Discussion

- i. The Chairman noted that there were a number of outstanding issues from the previous meeting that warranted discussion. He added that since the last meeting there had been several developments with Serco staff, and asked if officers could provide an update. The DFC stated industrial action was being taken by members of Unison with regards to a pay dispute with Serco, which would affect both North Norfolk and Breckland waste Collections. He added that despite this, all but one round had been deployed, and whilst a number of rounds had not been completed in the preceding days, it was small number when placed in context. It was noted that collection crews were returning to missed collections for residual and trade waste, whilst missed recycling would be collected the following fortnight with additional bags

accepted. The Chairman asked whether collections were being undertaken by one loader rather than the normal two, to which the DFC replied that this was dependent on available resources. He added that crews were working effectively and covering each other, so there was limited service disruption on the whole. In response to a further question from the Chairman, it was confirmed that industrial action was scheduled to take place from 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> March, with no further action planned. The DFC stated that there was potential for further action, but no notice had been given at the current time. He added that he saw no problems with collections of additional recyclables in a fortnight's time, as weight was generally not an issue with recyclable materials. Cllr J Rest noted that there had not been any noticeable disruption with collections in the Fakenham area. Cllr S Bütikofer suggested that Serco staff be thanked for their efforts in continuing to make collections under the circumstances.

- ii. Cllr N Housden stated that he was unable to attend the previous meeting, but raised concerns that information relating to £400k uplift funding for the NWHS haz project had still not been provided. The DSGOS informed Members that he had raised a request for the information with officers, but had been informed that one tender had been delayed as a result of potential changes to the Loke works, and officers were therefore not able to confirm the cost of the works. Cllr N Housden stated that the information requested was for estimates, and he had made the original request several months ago. The CE stated that whilst he was unsure of the full details of the request, he was aware of potential changes to the plans for Black Swan Loke, and would seek to provide an answer in due course. The Chairman noted that the initial request had been made some time ago, and it was concerning that information had still not been provided. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that it would not be possible to publish information whilst tenders were being sought, though she accepted that the information could have been provided in purple papers, which the Chairman had made clear as part of the request.
- iii. The CE outlined the NWHS haz scheme and stated that the market place scheme had been complex due to the involvement of other authorities and stakeholders. He added that there had been various issues throughout the project such as an unexpected sinkhole, but these had been quickly addressed. It was noted that whilst materials had been bought in advance to ensure availability and control costs, labour inflation had taken its toll on the budget. The CE stated that whilst he did not have the full details of the estimates to hand, he would seek to provide the information in the coming days. It was noted that whilst limited information had been provided at the February meeting, this had not included any details of the Loke works.
- iv. The Chairman referred to recommendations made to GRAC regarding the NWHS haz project, and sought an update from the GRAC Chairman. Cllr J Rest stated that GRAC had reviewed the project's adherence to the project governance and management framework, and considered whether the risk register was adequate. He added that it had been determined that the risk register was misleading, as it contained both pre and post-mitigation risks. It was noted that lessons learned from the Reef project would be considered against all future projects by the CDU.
- v. Cllr J Toye stated that the NWHS haz was a dynamic project that would continue to change, so it would be interesting to see how the Lokes would change, which may explain delays in sharing the information. The Chairman

noted that whilst this may help to explain delays, there still needed to be justification provided for the additional £400k. Cllr P Heinrich noted that works in the Market Place were virtually complete with the area expected to reopen to the public imminently. He added that it was his understanding that the Loke works were being considerably reduced to meet the available funding, and it was expected that the Town Council may part fund the changes.

- vi. Cllr C Cushing stated that the additional £400k funding request had come as a surprise to Members, and had subsequently been challenged on a number of occasions, but no further information had been supplied which was particularly disappointing. The Chairman agreed and noted that the Committee could only fulfil its role of providing oversight and assurance if it was provided the necessary information. Cllr N Housden suggested that it would have been far more beneficial to have the information at the time the funding request was made.

**147 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared.

**148 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None received.

**149 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None received.

**150 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER**

None received.

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

The DSGOS informed Members that the budget had been approved by Full Council, in-line with the Committee's recommendations.

**152 CRIME AND DISORDER UPDATE: POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER BRIEFING**

The DSGOS stated that in the absence of the PCC, Members may wish to propose questions that could be shared for a response.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr W Fredericks stated that it was disappointing not to receive an update on performance, especially on matters relating to domestic violence where significant improvements were needed to support vulnerable residents. She added that she would write to the PCC directly, if the Committee were not minded to direct a similar question.
- ii. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that she was the appointed representative for the

Police and Crime Panel and would be happy to take back any questions, or answer any questions if she could. She added that it was disappointing that a substitute was not available for the PCC, given that comments had been made about Members' attendance at the last Panel meeting. The Chairman agreed that for previous crime and disorder updates, officers attending had been more than capable of responding to questions on behalf of the PCC and it was unfortunate that it could not have been arranged on this occasion.

- iii. Cllr L Withington stated that she would have liked to have asked how the PCC would implement the up and coming online safety bill, as there was little within the Plan which addressed it. She added that one argument for removing PCSOs was to place more emphasis on tackling online crime and harassment, and it would be helpful to know if this had taken effect.
- iv. Cllr J Toye referred to safety for cyclists and walkers on rural roads, and noted that the PCC had previously suggested that more speed cameras would be used to address these concerns, and it would be helpful to receive an update.
- v. Cllr N Housden referred to a strategic review of policing and suggested that it would be helpful to have some idea of what future plans might include and whether any priorities had changed.
- vi. Cllr C Cushing referred to recruitment issues and noted that a number of veterans were known to be retiring, and it would therefore be helpful to understand what recruitment plans were in place to address any shortcomings. He added that it would also be helpful to know whether SNAP meetings would continue. The DFC noted that there was a consultation process underway in relation to the future of SNAP meetings, with an event planned on 24<sup>th</sup> March to discuss their future. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that Police officers no longer attended Parish Council meetings, and it was often suggested that Councillors could attend SNAP meetings instead, but with their future in question community engagement with the Constabulary was a real concern.
- vii. Cllr V Holliday referred to savings required with the Constabulary's budget, and stated that it would be helpful to know what these were and be given some assurance that services would not be compromised. Cllr S Bütikofer stated that she had asked a similar question during discussion of the budget, to which the PCC had replied that if the Constabulary had not received additional funding then cuts would have been made in 23-24, which was a real concern.
- viii. The Chairman referred to visible and trusted policing within the six pillars that formed the basis of the Police and Crime Plan, and noted that all Police forces were going through a re-vetting process, and it would be helpful to know where Norfolk Constabulary were in this process. Cllr S Bütikofer stated that she had recently attended a meeting where the vetting process had been discussed, and informed Members that all the necessary data had been collected and was awaiting review. She added that another issue was that Police officers were not re-vetted on a regular basis, and this meant that some concerns were overlooked. It was noted that the armed forces did have a re-vetting process, and this may be an appropriate consideration for the Constabulary, given the number of concerns raised nationally.

- ix. The Chairman referred to comments on the Constabulary's engagement with Town and Parish Councils, and suggested that without a commitment to this engagement, community confidence in the force may be challenged. He added that during previous discussions the PCC had indicated that he did not place the same value on these meetings. Cllr S Bütikofer noted that she had raised similar concerns, but had been told that the Constabulary did not have funds available to support this type of engagement.
- x. Cllr W Fredericks praised officers who had taken the initiative to engage with their local communities in public spaces.
- xi. The DSGOS summarised the questions raised and sought approval of the Committee to submit them to the PCC for consideration. Cllr L Withington suggested that the domestic violence question should make reference to all risks levels.
- xii. The questions were proposed by Cllr S Bütikofer and seconded by Cllr J Toye.

## **RESOLVED**

**To pose the following written questions to the Police & Crime Commissioner:**

- 1. Has the number of domestic violence related crimes reduced, or is there any evidence of consistent improvement across all cases with varying levels of risk?**
- 2. With respect to the Online Safety Bill, how will the OPCCN adapt to these changes, given that previous justifications for the removal of PCSOs was to place greater emphasis on tackling cyber-crime?**
- 3. Is an update available on plans to improve safety for cyclists and walkers on rural roads by increasing the number of speed cameras or by other means?**
- 4. What specific savings have been identified within Norfolk Constabulary's 2023-24 budget?**
- 5. At what stage is Norfolk Constabulary at in the re-vetting of all Police Officers, and are there any plans to do this on a routine basis going forward?**
- 6. The Committee commends Beat Manager engagement with Town & Parish Councils to greatly enhance the visibility of Policing and its connections with communities, in addition to SNAP meetings; does the PCC support Beat Managers sending short reports and briefly attending T&PC meetings, as operational priorities allow?**

## **153 BUDGET MONITORING P10 2022-23**

Cllr T Adams – Council Leader introduced the report and informed Members that inflationary pressures had made a significant contribution to the forecast overspend. He added that mitigation measures had been implemented in response to fuel and

energy inflation, such as switching to LED lighting. It was noted that some costs would be recovered from service charges and rent. Cllr T Adams stated that Members would also be aware of the impact of staff inflation, which had been partly mitigated through vacant posts. He added that building and maintenance costs had also been challenging, but materials were purchased in advance where possible. It was noted that vandalism had also contributed to the overspend, with repair costs in the region of £30k. Cllr T Adams stated that work to identify further savings would form an essential part of financial planning going forward, but the Council remained in a relatively good position to deal with the current level of inflation.

#### Questions and Discussion

- i. The DFR noted that the current year-end deficit was approximately £600k, however the previous year's underspend of £616k had been placed into reserves to offset this figure.
- ii. Cllr C Cushing referred to redundancy payments outlined in the report and asked whether any redundancies had been made, given the number of vacancies. The DFR replied that these were for fixed-term contracts where employees had accrued over two years service, and would therefore be entitled to redundancy pay.
- iii. Cllr N Housden referred a unbudgeted variance of £355k within the Communities Directorate, and asked for further details. The CE replied that this was the result of payments made in advance for programmes such as the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which would be spent in due course.
- iv. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr L Withington and seconded by Cllr P Heinrich.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. To note the contents of the report and the current budget monitoring position.**
- 2. To recommend to Full Council that any outturn deficit is funded by using the General Fund Reserve.**

#### **154 MANAGING PERFORMANCE Q3**

Cllr T Adams – Council Leader introduced the report and informed Members performance was positive across the Council, with objectives reached such as the Council's tree planting goal, and taking further steps towards decarbonisation. He added that the Council had also made significant efforts to support residents through the cost of living crisis, whilst the High Street Task Force had begun work in Stalham. It was noted that there had been challenges, such as losing blue flag status at three beaches, though this was beyond the control of the Council and efforts were being made to address issues as quickly as possible to regain blue flag status in 2026. Cllr T Adams reported that performance of changes to Benefits had significantly improved, and staff had risen to the challenge.

#### Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr V Holliday stated that she had been advised of the loss of blue flag beaches by the relevant Cabinet Member, but asked if further details could

be provided as she felt the issue may not have been pursued as aggressively as required. Cllr T Adams replied that NNDC representatives had met with AW and the EA, and reported that there had been issues identified at the Gimingham Combined Sewage Overflow facility, and whilst sewage outflow events could not be directly related to the facility, significant improvements were required. He added that the EA planned to DNA test the water in order to provide some indication of the cause, but consistent results would be required to regain blue flag status. It was reported that meetings had also taken place with NCC highways, though it was very unlikely that highways drainage was the source of the issue. Cllr T Adams stated that efforts had to be made to push for investment in drainage and sewage networks across the Country, as issues were not unique to North Norfolk.

- ii. Cllr L Withington referred to local homes for local need, and noted that whilst the number of affordable homes delivered was positive, affordable housing remained unaffordable for many. She added that it would be helpful to understand how many social housing projects were delivered, alongside exception sites used to deliver more affordable homes. Cllr W Fredericks replied that once the nutrient neutrality mitigation measures were in place, the Council should be able to move forward with delivering more affordable and social housing. She added that an update could be provided on the Housing Strategy and emerging plans once mitigation was in place. The DSGOS suggested that this update could be proposed as a potential item for the 23-24 work programme.
- iii. Cllr J Rest referred to boosting business sustainability and growth and noted that he had been contacted by several businesses regarding significant increases in business rates with no warning or explanation, which had caused some businesses to cease trading. He added that high rates were putting off new businesses, and asked whether the Council had any plans to address concerns. Cllr T Adams replied that whilst NNDC did not set business rates, the Revenues Team were available to help businesses and offer guidance. He added that whilst some relief had been offered, businesses were encouraged to check whether they were entitled to any further discounts.
- iv. Cllr N Housden stated that businesses in his ward had seen their rateable value increased, which had caused their business rates to rise by up to eighteen percent. He added that he had written to the District Valuer to seek an explanation, but was yet to receive a response. Cllr N Housden stated that he also had concerns regarding water scarcity, and whilst it was not the responsibility of NNDC, he asked whether any Planning considerations could be relaxed to help increase the number of reservoirs for agricultural use. The CE replied that the issue was an acute concern and NNDC were working with local MPs on plans to bring water to the region from outside the County, though this would not be in place until 2030. He added that aquifers in the region were already low and urgent action was required from AW to address the issue, whilst EA were also withdrawing a number of extraction licenses. It was noted that efforts were being made to help streamline the process for developing new reservoirs, but this may take time to implement. Cllr N Housden asked whether the Council would be free to approve reservoir plans, or whether guidance would still be required from DEFRA. The CE replied that reservoirs sat within the Planning process, but remained subject to the agreement of statutory consultees who may have competing interests and concerns. The Chairman noted that the water cycle was under

considerable pressure, and whilst officers appeared to be supporting future reservoir applications, it was a lengthy process with many factors to consider. He added that it was also important to consider whether the level of planned development in the County was deliverable, within the confines of the current infrastructure. Cllr P Heinrich noted that this was a particular concern for the development plans in North Walsham, as existing supplies had been designed for a population of five thousand, rather than the planned eighteen thousand residents.

- v. The recommendation was proposed by Cllr J Toye and seconded by Cllr P Fisher.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the report and endorses the actions being taken by Corporate Leadership Team detailed in Appendix A – Managing Performance.**

## **155 PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING AND CONTEXTUAL MEASURES**

The CE introduced the report and informed Members that whilst the preceding Performance Report focused on the Corporate Plan and its objectives, this did not allow for comparison with other authorities. As a result, considerable efforts had been made to measure the Council's performance against others on key areas of service delivery, and this report was the continued development of that work.

### Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr C Cushing referred to data that showed that the level of household recycling had deteriorated, and asked how much it had declined, the reasons for this, and any actions taken to address this. The DFC stated that the Council sought to improve recycling rates as much as possible, with lower levels of contamination than many neighbouring authorities. He added that despite this, improving recycling rates remained a challenge, with higher rates at neighbouring authorities often the result of food waste collections, which would have a significant carbon footprint for NNDC. It was noted that food waste collections also had a significant cost implication, and it would be cheaper to promote recycling and the reduction of food waste.
- ii. Cllr T Adams noted that neighbouring authorities had similar or in some cases worse recycling rates, and it was unfortunate that overall the County did not perform well in recycling. He added that there may be Government funding available in the future for food waste collections, but for now, more emphasis had to be placed on promoting recycling and reducing contamination.
- iii. Cllr W Fredericks noted that supermarket food waste was declining, and whilst this was positive it meant that more food was required for food larders to support those in need.
- iv. Cllr N Housden referred to total expenditure for central services by head of population, and noted that the Council appeared to be spending above average, and asked if there was any reason for this. The CE replied that data was not yet available for 21-22 as the external audit had not been completed, but comparisons were being made to better understand this metric and why



NNDC ranked above average in terms of expenditure.

- v. Cllr J Rest asked why CIPFA items listed on p198 were blank, to which the DFC replied that it was intended for management commentary, but the CE would seek to determine why the information was missing.
- vi. Cllr V Holliday praised the report but suggested that paper copies for all data were not necessary if the information could be accessed online. The Chairman agreed and stated that recent additions had been very helpful for understanding the Council's performance, but it had added considerable weight to agendas. Cllr N Housden said that it would be preferable to access information online to give Members more time to review data. The CDA replied that a new intranet page had been set-up that would provide access to this information which Members could be directed to.
- vii. Cllr T Adams referred to the birth of businesses per 10k population measure, and suggested that it may not be particularly reliable, given that a high proportion of the North Norfolk population was over retirement age, and would no longer be economically active. The CE suggested that it would be helpful for the Council to consider this on release of anticipated ONS data, and noted that recent headlines that suggested that North Norfolk had the second lowest level of economic activity in the Country may be skewed by data including all residents aged 16 and over. He added that using data for those economically active between 16 and 65 would suggest that the District is mid-table in terms of economic performance, and this may be worthy of consideration by the Committee.
- viii. The Chairman summarised the recommendations and suggested that consideration would need to be given to changing the dataset outlined in recommendation 3 on the rate of births of new enterprises per 10k population. The DSGOS suggested that the Committee may want to amend dataset to include those aged 16-65, given the significant proportion of the population that were no longer economically active. He added that the Committee may also want to consider whether hyperlinks to datasets were adequate, as outlined in recommendation 5 of the contextual measures.
- ix. Cllr V Holliday referred to the birth of new enterprises and noted that CIPFA nearest neighbours performance was better, and the Council's lower performance should not be disregarded. Members agreed that it would be preferable to measure the rate of births of new enterprises amongst those of working age from 16-65, as opposed to 16 and over. It was agreed that this information should be provided on a quarterly basis, and that hyperlinks would be adequate for viewing datasets.
- x. The recommendations were proposed en bloc by Cllr S Bütikofer and seconded by Cllr J Toye.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. To receive and note the benchmarking information.**
- 2. That no further recommendations to Cabinet to investigate specific levels of performance and/or to take action are required on this occasion.**
- 3. To request that the dataset used to monitor business demography be**

amended, so that dataset CIPFA 9 - rate of births of new enterprises per 10,000 resident population accounts for those aged 16-65.

4. To receive and note the information in the Contextual Measures Report – first review.
5. That no further recommendations to Cabinet to investigate specific datasets and/or to take action are required on this occasion.
6. That the frequency of further reports remains quarterly alongside existing performance reports.
7. That no additional reports are required for different comparison groups
8. That hyperlinks will suffice instead of printed copies of additional attachments/data.

## 156 **AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES MONITORING**

The DSGOS introduced the item and informed Members that updated data had been shared in advance of the meeting. He added that whilst written commentary had been requested, this had not been received, though Cllr V Holliday had discussed the data with EEAST. It was noted that hospital turnaround times continued to have a significant impact on response times, limiting the number of available ambulances.

### Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr V Holliday stated that she had received a briefing note from the ambulance trust, who had informed her that considerable efforts had been made to reduce demand on hospitals. She added that these diversionary measures would help to reduce pressure on the NNUH, and reduce ambulance turnaround times. It was noted that the number of calls was lower than previous years, so it was clear that response times were being effected by delays at hospitals.
- ii. Cllr S Bütikofer asked why there was no data for the NR11 postcode, to which Cllr V Holliday replied that monitoring was focused on the coastal postcodes where response times were the greatest concern. She added that whilst data for the whole District had been reviewed previously, it was difficult to review such a large dataset. The CE suggested that given the concerns across the District, it may be wise to seek data for all postcodes to provide an all-encompassing picture of performance.
- iii. The Chairman stated that the Committee would need to consider how to proceed, taking into account the work of NHOSC and the resource available to request and review data at officer level. Cllr S Bütikofer stated that she would prefer to look at the wider dataset, even if this was on a less frequent basis, which could be used to refocus the Committee's attention. Cllr N Housden noted that Parish Councils were particularly interested in the Committee's consideration of ambulance response times, and it would therefore be helpful to review data for all postcodes within the District. The CE suggested that reviewing data for all postcodes would help to ensure that efforts to address issues in coastal parishes did not have a negative impact on other parishes throughout the District.

- iv. Cllr V Holliday stated that it had been useful to focus on a select few postcodes to see disparities, which was not the approach taken by NHOSC, and suggested it would be good to maintain this level of postcode specific detail going forward.
- v. The DSM noted that EEAST could provide a range of data, but a six week lead-in time was required.
- vi. It was proposed by Cllr N Housden and seconded by Cllr S Bütikofer to review ambulance response times data for all postcodes across the District as part of the next monitoring report.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. To receive and note the report.**
- 2. That future response times monitoring should include data for all postcodes within the North Norfolk District.**

**157 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The DSGOS informed Members that the Council was nearing the end of its term, and as a result there were no further Cabinet meetings planned until after the election, at which point a new work programme would be established.

**RESOLVED**

**To note the update.**

**158 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE**

The DSGOS stated that as with the Cabinet work programme, the Committee had effectively reached the end of its term and the 23-24 work programme was yet to be drafted. He added that certain items could be expected to follow the election such as the crime and disorder update.

**RESOLVED**

**To note the update.**

**159 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The meeting ended at 11.55 am.

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Chairman