

Scrutiny Panel - Environment & Quality of Life



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Date Not Specified

A meeting of **The Scrutiny Panel - Environment & Quality of Life** will be held in **remotely via Zoom** on **Thursday, 26 May 2022** at **1.00 pm**.

Emma Denny
Democratic Services Manager

To Councillors: Mr H Blathwayt, Dr V Holliday, Mr J Rest, Mr A Varley and Ms L Withington

Officers: Maxine Collis and Matthew Stembrowicz

For information to: all other Members



**If you have any special requirements in order
to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance**
If you would like any document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in
a different language please contact us

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A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

1 - 6

To approve minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2022.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

7 - 8

Members are asked at this stage to declare any interests that they may have in any of the following items on the agenda. The Code of Conduct for Members requires that declarations include the nature of the interest and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (see attached guidance and flowchart).

4. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

To determine any other items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

5. PUBLIC CONVENIENCE DESIGN, MAINTENANCE, AND COST-SAVING INITIATIVES

Scrutiny Panel to consider Property Services input on matters relating to:

- Key and/or recurring issues i.e. drains, equipment, vandalism etc.
- Potential for any cost saving and/or green initiatives e.g. grey water recycling, solar panels etc.
- Potential for standardisation of design and equipment.
- Any further matters of concern/enquiry.

6. PARISH & TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

9 - 12

To review the comments received from Parish and Town Councils on NNDC's public convenience provision.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To pass the following resolution, if necessary:

“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs _ of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.”

8. REVIEW OF ASSET REGISTER

13 - 14

To review and comment on the Council's public convenience asset register.

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SCRUTINY PANEL - ENVIRONMENT & QUALITY OF LIFE

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel - Environment & Quality of Life held on Thursday, 21 April 2022 in the remotely via Zoom at 2.00 pm

Committee Members Present: Mr H Blathwayt Mr A Varley
Dr V Holliday Mr J Rest

Members also attending: Ms V Gay (Observer)

Officers in Attendance: Director for Communities (DFC), Assistant Director for People Services (ADPS) and Democratic Services and Governance Officer - Scrutiny (DSGOS)

28 APOLOGIES

None.

29 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

31 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

32 QUALITY OF LIFE STRATEGY

The ADPS introduced the report with a presentation outlining the and context and key elements of the Quality of Life Strategy. She added that quality of life was one of six themes of the Corporate Plan, which presented a number of challenges to the Council as a result of the demographics and rurality of the District. It was noted that post-sixteen education was a particular concern, due to limited opportunities. The ADPS stated that the Council had made a commitment to maintaining and enhancing sports and leisure facilities, open spaces and tourist infrastructure including public conveniences, and supporting cultural events. She added that these were seen as having a direct impact on maintaining the mental and physical wellbeing of residents, and were therefore seen as a priority. It was reported that from these priorities, a range of actions had been developed to deliver on these commitments, of which a number were already complete, such as continued investment in public conveniences and changing places, a sports strategy, the new Reef Leisure Centre, supporting community projects, maintaining high quality open spaces, and the Mammoth Marathon.

Questions and Discussion

- i. The ADPS stated that existing research had been utilised to develop a basis for the Strategy and clearly define what quality of life meant for the Council. She added that the centre for thriving places index had provided data for comparisons with other regions and the England average. It was noted that the Co-op community wellbeing index had also been helpful as it focused on community level data.
- ii. Cllr J Rest stated that the Quality of Life foundation suggested that people living in North Norfolk were the least anxious in the County, which was a credit and likely the result of excellent services and assistance provided to the public.
- iii. Cllr V Holliday asked whether wellbeing was the same as quality of life, as the definitions were slightly different, and asked whether the Council were treating them as such. The ADPS replied that this would be covered at a later point when reviewing the Strategy.
- iv. The ADPS stated that the Quality of Life Foundation Framework was an important piece of work that had been used to triangulate the Council's understanding of quality of life, by identifying common themes between various studies. These common themes included environment, health, education, employment, transport, housing, culture and participation. The wider determinants of health were discussed and it was noted that research had shown that quality of life, and health and wellbeing were inextricably linked, and would therefore both be addressed within the Strategy. The ADPS noted that health inequalities were continuing to widen, and the Council had to take this into account.
- v. Cllr V Holliday referenced a report referenced within the Strategy and noted that North Norfolk's health issues were more related to gentrification than deprivation, which suggested the report may not be 100% relevant to the District's demographics. She added that she was also not convinced that quality of life and health and wellbeing were the same issue. The DFC replied that officers had made considerable efforts to ensure that the Strategy had additional breadth beyond health and wellbeing, to focus on wider issues relating to quality of life. He added that opportunities and access to services beyond health were a primary example. It was noted that the Council also had to be careful not to replicate work that would be undertaken by the new Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The Chairman noted that access to NHS dentistry would have significant impact on residents' quality of life, and suggested that health was particularly relevant to the Strategy. Cllr V Gay stated that she felt that the breadth of the Strategy was appropriate, and suggested that whilst some aspects of studies referenced may not be entirely relevant, there were many aspects that remained important to understanding quality of life. She added that access to dentistry would be an excellent first point of discussion for the new Health and Wellbeing Board.
- vi. The ADPS referred to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and noted that the role of the District Council had changed as a result of the Pandemic, which had moved its interventions further to the bottom of the hierarchy pyramid. She added that she was unsure whether these actions would need to continue, but residents were still struggling, and the Council would remain focused on support.
- vii. The ADPS reported that the Thriving Places Index had been used to identify

where the Council was not achieving England average performance, which acted as a guide to direct service improvements. She added that the key challenges facing North Norfolk had also been considered including energy use, education, community participation, transport, mental health and housing. The DSGOS noted that previous discussions held by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had considered the impact of poor transport links and isolation, which was outside of the Council's responsibilities, and asked how this would be approached. The ADPS suggested that the approach to addressing these issues would be covered during discussion of the action plan.

- viii. Cllr V Holliday suggested that it was interesting to make comparisons in the Thriving Places Index, where it was evident that mental health was a real concern for North Norfolk, even though the provision of services would be very similar to South Norfolk. The Chairman cautioned that this could be the result of demographic differences, and asked whether new residents were given any guidance on where to access services in the District. The ADPS replied that this had not been done previously, though something similar was being established for Ukrainian refugees as a programme of wrap-around support. She added that there could be benefits in making this information more readily available. The DFC noted that all new residents would receive a Council Tax bill, and this contained NNDC website information, which would provide a range of information for the public.
- ix. The ADPS stated that ongoing issues effecting quality of life in the District were the ongoing recovery from Covid, the cost of living crisis, the unknowns of the levelling-up agenda and supporting those effected by the Ukraine crisis. She added that working in partnership would be vital to responding to these issues.
- x. The ADPS stated that the action plan contained a summary of actions related to issues discussed, with sustainability issues relating to delivery of the Net Zero Strategy and maintaining the District's Blue and Green flags public spaces. She added that actions had been focused on areas that the Council could influence directly, though opportunities to influence partners on matters such as education had been included where possible.
- xi. Cllr V Holliday referred to the outcomes listed in appendix 7, and asked whether it would be possible to include more tangible outcomes. The ADPS replied that it would be difficult to determine outcomes in relation to quality of life, though data from the ONS annual population survey could be used to help develop this. Cllr V Gay noted that discussions had taken place on achieving outcomes, but at this early stage the Strategy focused on implementing actions to improve quality of life, with refinements possible in the future. Cllr H Blathwayt suggested that trends on quality of life issues across Norfolk all appeared to show a decline, apart from in Breckland, and asked if the reasons for this were known. The DFC replied that it was possible that downward trends in data could be skewed by the Pandemic, and this was a key reason the quality of life survey had not been pursued. He added that he would also seek input on where metrics and measures could be most useful, with Cllr V Holliday open to assisting with the development of these metrics.
- xii. The ADPS referred to the Community Engagement Strategy that was in development, and suggested that it would be crucial for gathering feedback

from residents on the Quality of Life Strategy, and other services provided by the Council. She added that it was also important to encourage community participation, which projects such as the North Walsham High Street and Heritage Action Zone were actively promoting.

- xiii. On transport and connectivity, the ADPS noted that Council's Community Transport Fund continued to target services to vulnerable residents and those in need of assistance. She added that personal transport remained important to residents and promotion of active forms of travel would form a key part of this work, in collaboration with Active Norfolk. It was noted that lobbying partners could also influence transport providers, though this was not included in the action plan at this stage. Cllr J Rest referred to electric vehicle charging points, and stated that unfortunately electric vehicles were too expensive for the majority of residents, though they did offer an opportunity for use by tourists. The ADPS acknowledged the cost of electric vehicles and vehicles in general, and noted that the Council did have support options available for those that were particularly isolated.
- xiv. The Chairman asked whether the Council held figures for high speed internet connectivity, and whether there were any plans for further improvement. The DSGOS replied that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had reviewed plans of the Better Broadband for Norfolk scheme, to which NNDC had contributed £1m, to improve high speed internet access across the County to approximately 90%. Cllr H Blathwayt stated that this was positive news, given that there was likely a connection between internet access and quality of life.
- xv. The ADPS referred to mental health and isolation within the action plan, and noted that whilst the Council were not able to directly influence mental health services, officers were aware of issues and would explore options to improve services through the newly formed Health and Wellbeing Board. On housing, the ADPS stated that the Council did have the ability to control and influence these issues, with the Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy already in place.
- xvi. The ADPS stated that the cost of living crisis would generate new issues, and various programmes were being developed to help residents cope with this. She added that as part of the levelling-up agenda, the Council would undertake an audit to ensure that residents had equitable access to services and make improvements where necessary. Cllr J Rest suggested that levelling-out would be a better term to ensure that areas were not missed. The Ukrainian refugee settlement scheme was discussed, and it was suggested that sustainability had to be taken into account, due to limited resources and issues such as the rurality of the District. Cllr H Blathwayt asked whether any Afghan refugees had been received, to which the ADPS replied that the area was not deemed suitable due to the lack of language and relevant religious services available. It was noted that in many cases, urban areas were deemed more practical for refugees, due to the accessibility of various services.
- xvii. The ADPS reported that the first Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board meeting would take place in the coming weeks, and it would be necessary to determine whether the Council needed to pursue its own strategy, or whether this could be addressed County-wide. She added that the Council would also continue to work in partnership with Active Norfolk and the Norfolk

Community Safety Partnership to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of residents.

- xviii. The DSGOS informed Members that the Strategy would go to Cabinet for consideration in May, and the Panel were therefore required to make a recommendation on whether they were supportive of the Strategy in its current form, or whether any changes were required.
- xix. Cllr V Gay thanked officers for their work developing the Strategy and noted that Public Health were satisfied with the content. She added that it could be made explicit in response to Cllr V Holliday's suggestion, that outcomes could be further developed to include metrics relevant to North Norfolk.
- xx. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership was discussed and it was reported that it would remain an external organisation, therefore any information would be communicated as part of portfolio holders' updates. The DFC noted that once the transition to the new arrangements had settled, some changes could be expected in how the Integrated Care scheme and Health and Wellbeing Boards would operate. He added that he was confident that good governance was in place, and he expected good communication going forward.
- xxi. Cllr V Holliday stated that the Strategy itself was very broad, and asked whether there would be any form of prioritisation. The ADPS replied that prioritisation was not planned, but the Strategy had been focused on areas in which the District was performing below the England average. She added that several actions had already been completed, which meant that remaining actions should be achievable within a relatively short timescale. The DFC noted that the action plan would remain a live document, so that actions could be added as required.
- xxii. It was suggested that the Panel could recommend approval of the Strategy, subject to consideration of more measurable and demonstrable outcomes. The DSGOS confirmed that this would only mean that these outcomes should be in development, and that they would not need to be in place prior to Cabinet approval. The recommendation was proposed by Cllr A Varley and seconded by Cllr J Rest.

RESOLVED

To recommend approval of the Quality of Life Strategy, subject to consideration of the inclusion of demonstrable and measurable outcomes.

33 BUSINESS FOR NEXT MEETING

The DSGOS informed Members that the next meeting would likely take place on 26th May, with discussion returning to public conveniences.

The meeting ended at 3.57 pm.

Chairman

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Declarations of Interest at Meetings

When declaring an interest at a meeting, Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting.

Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.

Does the interest directly:

1. Affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position?
2. Relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner?
3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council
4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own
5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.

Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

Does the interest indirectly affect or relate to any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?

If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.

Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be another interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.

Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.

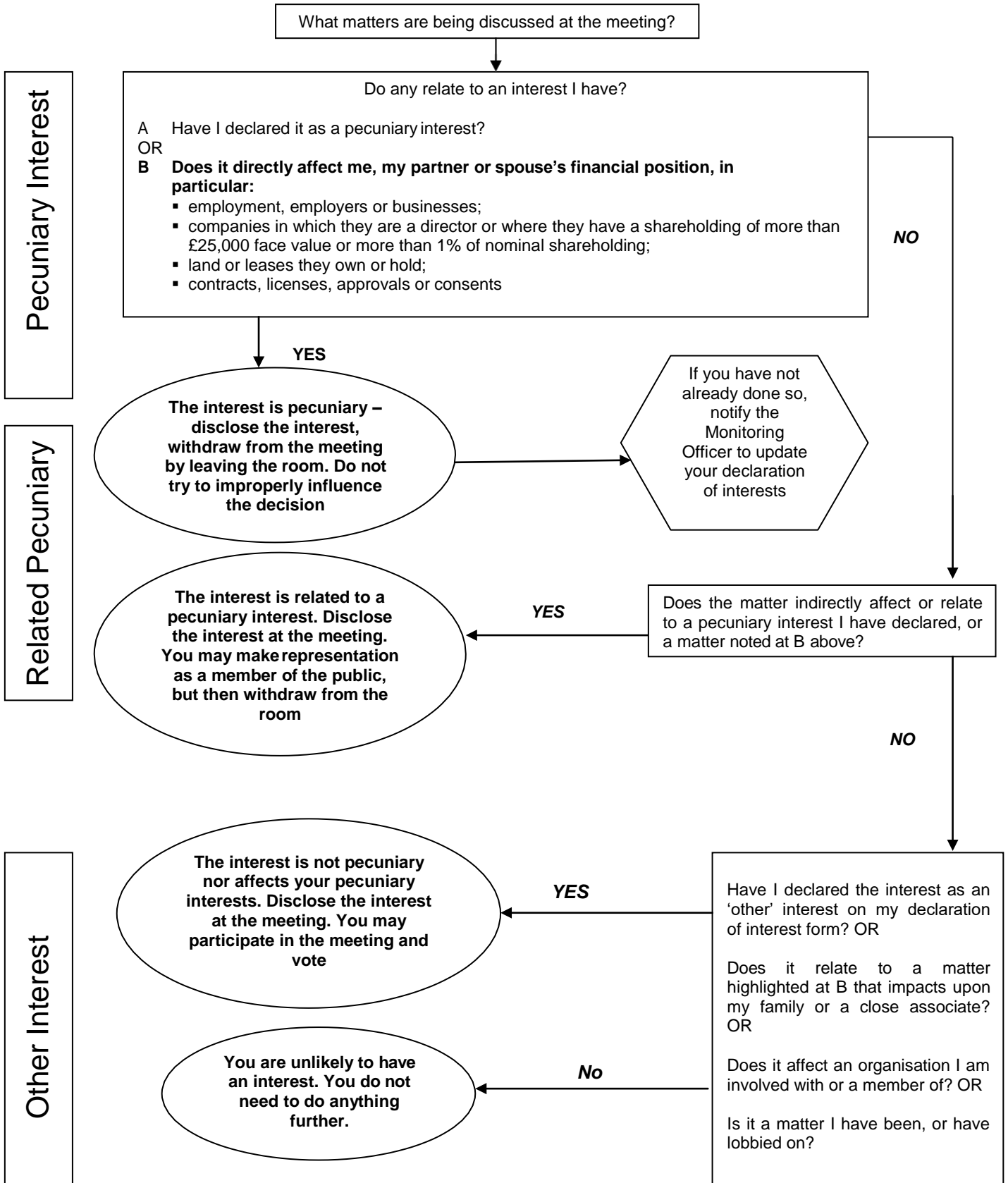
FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF

PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST INSTANCE

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS SHOULD ALSO REFER TO THE PLANNING PROTOCOL

Declarations of Interest at Meetings

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



NNDC PUBLIC CONVENIENCES – CALL FOR COMMENTS FROM PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

Blakeney:

- NNDC public toilet block on Quay in Blakeney is a huge asset to the village. It serves the locals and visitors, whether out walking, on the water, day trippers etc and Parish Council are most grateful for it. The toilet block in the main is serviced very well and this tourism hotspot could not manage without it.

Briston:

- Public conveniences are absolutely vital and if NNDC wish tourism to continue and grow in the area there must be sufficient public toilets at beaches, parks, towns and anywhere else that is used by visitors.
- Briston have public toilets operated by Briston Parish Council on the Recreation Ground and they are well used by the public and also by people whose work involves travel.

Fakenham:

- The Town Council strongly supports the provision of the toilets in Fakenham and the North Norfolk District.
- Councillors commented that the toilets are well looked after, and they are greatly appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

Holt:

- Everyone should have access to a suitable public toilet when visiting a town, popular tourist area or resort. It is an expectation from both residents and visitors that such a service should exist and be available. The Town Council feel that in Holt there are currently no suitable Public Toilets available.
- NNDC own a block of Public Toilets in Albert Street Car Park, the Town Council feel that these toilets have fallen into disrepair with the disabled toilet out of order for some time. The Town Council suggest that this means Holt does not have a disabled public toilet or baby change facility available to the public.
- The Town Council note that the only other public toilets in the town are located on Church Street and owned by the Town Council, following purchase from NNDC to save them from closure. These toilets do not have disabled facilities or hot water and are currently deemed unsafe for use. Holt Town Council have plans to change the toilets, to incorporate a disabled facility and upgrade the toilets to a suitable standard. The proposed works have been costed and the Town Council continues to fundraise for the works. The Town Council note that Holt's Albert Street toilets did not form part of the recent NNDC toilet refurbishment programme, and Cllrs question how the funding programme was prioritised. As such the toilets, which sit in NNDC's most profitable Car Park are now partly shut and not fit for purpose.
- The Town Council noted that the provision of toilets was addressed in the local press which suggested that Holt needs 15 toilets but only has 8 available. Cllrs believe this allocation includes toilets which are located out of town, in Holt Country Park and therefore do not form a true reflection of what is available for use in the town centre. It

was noted that Stalham, North Walsham and Holt all had less than the required amount available. The Town Council have looked at installing a Changing Places toilet at their Church Street site, architect plans and full costings have been undertaken. Unfortunately, the costs were deemed excessive due to the current roof not being suitable for the hoist needed, and as such Cllrs have been looking for an alternative site in the town to offer the much-needed facility.

- The Town Council would welcome an opportunity to have Albert Street Toilets inspected so Members can be made aware of their poor condition. If possible, Cllrs would like to see a Changing Places toilet installed, so that Holt is able to welcome everyone, no matter their disability or age to the town.

Horning:

- Horning PC noted that although the WCs are great, and open, and clean, the parking spaces are often used as free parking for the village rather than for the WCs.

Ludham:

- At the recent Parish Council meeting the Council was generally complementary of the WCs within the village.

North Walsham:

- North Walsham has two sets of public toilets and are pleased that Vicarage Street is to be rebuilt and New Road refurbished. A frequent complaint from public is that these are both outside of the town centre. Would like to see a small facility, even a single cubicle, in the centre. This might be on edge of Bank Loke car park, or even within the disused building between the car park and Eastern Carpets.

Overstrand:

- The public conveniences are an important provision and being free of charge and open for as long as possible is good for visitors coming to the village / beach. The Parish Council would hope they continue as they are. Should there be appropriate funding they would welcome extra provision of Changing Places standard.

Stalham:

- Vital to retain public services in the Town of Stalham. It is a Town rather than a village, with visitors and considerable through traffic. The toilets are well used and a lack of facilities would cause a real hygiene issue.
- The Town has an ageing population, and is subject to development over the next few years of supported living accommodation blocks, there are no other open facilities in the Town except for the private toilets for the customers of Tesco.
- The toilets in Stalham are poorly signposted, difficult to find, and accessed via an unmade private roadway, or a private footpath – albeit they are on the registered right of way FP1. The Town Council feel the location is far from ideal.
- Toilets are a key part of the community, there are no disabled facilities, and no baby changing facilities in the public toilets, which the Town Council feel is unacceptable.
- Whilst the provision of public toilets was seen as a vital provision, the Town Council felt that the current toilets were not ideal in terms of location, condition, and facilities

provided – given the choice, a more central location with good signage and improved facilities for both young, old and disabled would be preferred.

Sheringham:

- STC welcomes the refurbishment of the 'Marble Arch' toilet block.
- STC welcomes the potential of increased toilet accessibility provided by automatic locking.
- It is important that NNDC consider the facilities available across a whole town/community when assessing provision and need.
- That dementia accessibility in toilets should be included as part of a standards scheme for new toilets.
- Consideration of a changing coastline because of our geology and climate change should be included in discussions regarding future provision and strategy.
- NNDC should ensure the future provision of public toilets at the Station Approach site beyond the contract currently scheduled to end in 2026.

Trunch:

- Parish Councillors in agreement that they are needed in coastal villages and Market Towns for visitors and shoppers and should be maintained- would go further to say that they should be improved and/or renovated on a regular basis as well as cleaned/maintained daily as a reflection of the district.
- Some areas charge a small amount to use and have someone on duty to clean the toilets and they feel a very small amount (20p) paid at a turnstile would be acceptable to maintain them, especially at coastal locations during summer season.

Upper-Sheringham:

- More WCs needed in general. The ones on the esplanade are often out of action, particularly the disabled one.
- The WC built into the arch leading down to the esplanade may need to be spruced up, but must be conserved as part of Sheringham's cultural heritage.

Walcott:

- Public conveniences in the area are quite good and always seem to be clean, however there is a mis-match of facilities available and many, like those in Mundesley are out of date and need modernising.

Walsingham:

- The Public Conveniences in Walsingham are essential and are used by visitors, pilgrims and locals throughout the year.
- One parish councillor commented: We are 'blessed' having public conveniences in Walsingham. We would be in trouble without them, especially on the bigger pilgrimage days.
- The public conveniences are also used by regular visitors to the Abbey, people taking a day trip out from Wells on the Railway, and other tourists, walkers and cyclists who stop off in the village.
- The Parish Council trusts that the District Council will maintain these public toilets which provide a vital facility in the village. It is also hoped that they will be considered for refurbishment in the near future.

Wells:

- Public toilets are essential to Wells, which is one of the major tourist destinations on the North Norfolk Coast. On any day there can be several hundred visitors to the town and during the height of the season several thousand.
- The existing provision provided by the district is adequate and certainly shouldn't be reduced.
- The toilet block on the Beach Road is by far the busiest and often has large queues.
- The block on the Stearmans Yard Car Park mainly provides for those using the car park.
- The toilet block at Newgate Lane is alongside the town's main bus stop, which is the exchange hub for the Coasthopper service. The Newgate Lane block also serves the Buttlands and Staithe Street.
- Currently the Stearmans Yard toilets are being replaced and the other toilet blocks would benefit from some improvement or modernisation.
- The provision of toilets is emotive but it is a basic human need. We all need to use them and it is not an option to ignore the bodies basic functions. Many people come to Wells for the day and will need to use the facilities while here. The provision within many of the cafes and restaurants is very limited and many eat alfresco.
- Many would support the introduction of a pay to use system.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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