

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 6 November 2023 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Cllr W Fredericks (Deputy Chair)	Cllr L Shires
Cllr T Adams (Chair)	Cllr A Brown
Cllr H Blathwayt	Cllr P Heinrich
Cllr C Ringer	Cllr A Varley

Members also attending:

Cllr C Cushing
Cllr A Fitch-Tillett
Cllr J Toye

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Democratic Services Manager, Assistant Director for Environment & Leisure, Director for Place & Climate Change and Director for Resources / S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Cllr L Withington

61 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

62 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

Mr G Hermer attended the meeting, in place of Cllr J Copplestone and asked the following question:

'The planned development of North Walsham West indicates the population will increase to 18,000, making it by far the largest town in North Norfolk with the poorest road connection to the economic & cultural capital, Norwich, via the B1150.

Living in a rural county there is a reliance on cars & HGV's for our transport requirements, in Coltishall we already experience unacceptable levels of heavy traffic, with the road operating at capacity during peak times.

So far, no traffic mitigation measures have been suggested to protect public safety. The road is already dangerous with HGV's mounting pavements daily, and no solution has been suggested to improve the width restraint at the River Bure Bridge, nor to improve safety at existing junctions as traffic levels increase further.

Coltishall B1150 Group has been examining crash map data and alternative routes for HGV's, ultimately, we need a relief road to avoid the narrow river bridge and remove dangerous levels of traffic from our village as North Walsham expands in population.

Do you agree that the traffic situation in Coltishall is already dangerous, and will your Cabinet agree to make the road safer in order to protect the public, by committing sufficient funding at the planning stage to facilitate this?’

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Chairman of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party thanked Mr Hermer for his question. He said that Norfolk County Council was the authority responsible for highways and as far as he was aware, they had not declared that the highway network was unsafe in Coltishall. He said that it was acknowledged that there were concerns about volumes of traffic and the narrowness of the road in the village. He added that the outcome of a traffic impact assessment was still awaited and this would advise whether the impact of the North Walsham West development could be mitigated. Cllr Brown went on to say that the development in North Walsham was governed by NNDC’s planning policies but also by the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF stipulated that the impact caused by a development had to be severe. However, if the development had mitigation measures included then this would be sufficient in planning terms. The Council’s Local Plan had measures that would provide some mitigation but they could only go so far and the Highways Authority would need to be involved too. Cllr Brown said that it was anticipated that the results of the TIA would be ready by late November and the Council planned to visit Coltishall and hold a public meeting in early December so that the full facts could be shared with everyone. There would then be a consultation with local residents on the likely impact of the development on Coltishall.

Mr Hermer replied that he wanted confirmation regarding when the TIA would be available to the public. Cllr Brown confirmed that the Council was planning to meet with Broadland District Council on 27th November and then the public in early December.

63 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

64 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

65 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised members that they could ask questions as matters arose throughout the meeting.

66 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET WORKING PARTIES

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Chairman of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party introduced this item. He said that the Working Party considered this at its meeting on 9th October. He was very pleased to see this particular neighbourhood plan coming forward. It was unique in that it was the first coastal town to contain a policy restricting the use of any new dwellings to being primary residences for people living or working in Blakeney or live in adjacent parishes to Blakeney or have relatives living in the village.

It was proposed by Cllr A Brown, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED

1.
 - a. The Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan be made (brought into force) as part of the statutory Development Plan for North Norfolk in accordance with section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) as soon as practical and within the 8 week statutory time frame
 - b. The issuing of the Decision Statement required under Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in order to bring to the attention of the qualifying body, the people who live, work and or carry out business in the Neighbourhood Plan Area is delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning in conjunction with the Planning Policy Team Leader;
2. Acknowledge that the required consequential amendments to the adopted policies map and the required minor consequential changes to the referendum version of the neighbourhood plan through delegated powers to the Planning Policy Team Leader

67 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no recommendations made to Cabinet at the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

68 CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027 - ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2024/2025

The Chairman introduced this item. He began by thanking officers and members who had contributed to the development of the Annual Action plan. A lot of work had been done pulling everything together. He said that he was confident that the targets that had been set could be delivered, with the resources available and within the constraints of external factors such as the County Deal, changes to waste collections nationally and financial challenges. The Council's was committed to delivering projects that would enable it to meet its Net Zero target, the commencement of coastal schemes in Mundesley and Cromer, the Local Plan and a greater focus on rural communities and businesses.

The Chairman said that the Annual Action Plan detailed broadly commitments to every locality and town, with everything from play equipment to affordable homes. He was confident that it set out clearly the Council's intentions for the coming year.

Cllr A Brown, referred to page 21 'Meeting our Housing Need' and the second action to promote to greater take up of neighbourhood plans. He said that the target of two a year was unlikely to be achievable and therefore suggested that the word 'two' was removed. He proposed this as an amendment. The Director for Place and Climate Change confirmed that this change in wording would be welcomed by officers.

The Chairman said that he supported the amendment.

Members voted on the amendment and it was supported unanimously.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

RESOLVED

To approve the Corporate Plan Annual Action Plan for 2024/25, subject to one minor

amendment in 'Meeting our Housing Need' section 3 (removal of the word 'two')

Reason for the Decision:

Sound management of the authority's staff, property and financial resources to deliver projects and initiatives which support improved service delivery and positive outcomes aligned to the previously agreed Corporate Plan themes.

69 BUDGET MONITORING P6 2023 - 2024

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Assets, introduced this item. She began by saying that she hoped that the report was more accessible than previously. There were six recommendations and she referred members to the relevant pages which outlined the reasons for each. She said that she wanted to highlight the impact of increased levels of homelessness across the District – both on local residents and communities and on the Council's finances as it tried to support a sharp rise in requests for support. She asked Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing, to provide more detail on this.

Cllr Fredericks said that she had been asked to speak at a National Temporary Accommodation Summit the previous week, along with four other councils, presenting to 110 councils. The aim was to ask to Government for more financial support to deal with the issue of homelessness. She said that the main reasons for the increase in homelessness were domestic abuse, private lets coming to an end – often because the properties were being sold or because they were being turned into holiday lets. The original budget was between £600-700k a year and it was likely to be £1.2m in the next financial year, which was a huge increase. Many families were placed in bed and breakfast establishments, usually out of District and away from family, work and school. She said that this was a nationwide problem and all councils were asking for financial support from Government.

The Director for Finance said that the Council was experiencing more pressure on its budget and there was a forecast overspend for the end of the year. Service managers had been asked to look at savings. The Chairman acknowledged that this was a challenge and thanked officers for their hard work.

Cllr C Cushing referred to the recent staff pay award and asked for clarification on the impact on the budget figures. The Director of Finance confirmed that it was £1925 for the majority of staff. She said that this would create a budget pressure of £120k and agreed to update the report to Full Council to reflect this.

Cllr Cushing then referred to page 32 of the report and the concern about not being fully reimbursed for £1.6m of housing benefit. He asked if this was factored into the anticipated deficit of £0.5m. The Director of Finance confirmed that it was. He then asked about having to pay interest for borrowing. He said that going forward, it may be a better approach to have money set aside for such occasions. The Director of Finance said that it was offset by the high level of interest received on investments, so the net position was not so severe. She said that she had spoken to the Treasury Officer and the Council would be looking to reduce the level of borrowing in future.

Cllr Shires concluded by thanking the Housing Team for all their hard work in supporting residents.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED

To recommend to Full Council that it

- 1) Approves an additional capital budget of £58k so that the work for the refurbishment of the Red Lion roof (Cromer), the Art Deco Block roof and handrails (Cromer) and the Chalet Block at Sheringham can be awarded as one contract. And that approval be given to fund the additional expenditure from the Asset Management Reserve.
- 2) Approves an increase to the DFG capital budget of £118k and approves that it is funded by the additional grant received for this purpose from the Government.
- 3) Approves the provision of a new play area at the Lees in Sheringham and approves a capital project budget for this of £65k and that funding for this should come from the Delivery Plan Reserve.
- 4) Approves the capital spending of £11k on the Morris Street Car Park Boundary Wall and that it be funded from the Asset Management Reserve.
- 5) Approves that the £85k of the Car Park refurbishment capital budget is reallocated to the Public Conveniences so that the outstanding works can be carried out and complete the scheme.

Reason for the decision:

To update members on the current budget monitoring position for the Council

70 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REPORT 2023/24

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets, introduced this report. She began by saying that key information was set out on pages 70 and 71. On the whole, income remained healthy due to increased interest rates.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED

To recommend to Full Council that the Treasury Management Mid Year Report 2023/24 is approved

Reason for the decision:

Approval by Full Council demonstrates compliance with the Prudential Code to ensure adequate monitoring of the capital expenditure plans and treasury management activity.

It is a requirement that any proposed changes to the 2023/24 prudential indicators are approved by Full Council.

71 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS & PREMIUMS DETERMINATION 2024-25

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets introduced this item. She highlighted recommendation 9 which referred to the introduction of a second homes

premium of 100% from April 2025. She added that there would be discussions with Norfolk County Council on how more of that additional income could be returned to North Norfolk to benefit its residents. She then spoke about the care leavers discount (recommendation 5) which was funded by the County Council.

Cllr Fredericks welcomed the 100% levy on second homes and even though a years' notice was required before this could be implemented, she felt that more could be done to bring the date of introduction forward. She then spoke about empty homes and said that the Council's Empty Homes Officer had brought 92 properties back into use between May and October this year.

The Director of Finance confirmed that the legislation relating to second homes had now been passed and the report would be updated to reflect this prior to going to Full Council for approval.

The Chairman asked whether the Care leavers discount was time limited. Cllr Shires replied that it appeared to be a County Council decision and further conversations would be needed to clarify the situation.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED

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 2024-25 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 3.1.
- 2) To continue to award a local discount of 100% in 2024-25 for eligible cases of hardship under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended). See the associated policy in Appendix B.
- 3) That an exception to the levy charges may continue to be made by the Revenues Manager in the circumstances laid out in section 3.2 of this report.
- 4) The premiums for the year 2024-25 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 4.2.
- 5) To continue to award a local discount of 100% in 2024-25 for eligible cases of care leavers under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).
- 6) 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 2.1 of this report.
- 7) Those dwellings described or geographically defined at Appendix A which in the reasonable opinion of the Revenues Manager 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.

- 8) The long-term empty-property premium of 100% is brought forward to increase from 12 months rather than 24 months from 1 April 2025, subject to the necessary legislation.
- 9) A new second homes premium of 100% as detailed in paragraph 4.3 is applied from 1 April 2025, subject to the necessary legislation.

Reason for the recommendation:

To set appropriate council tax discounts and premiums which will apply in 2024-25 and to raise council tax revenue.

72 FUTURE OF EMERGENCY PHONES

The Chairman invited the Assistant Director for Environment & Leisure to introduce this item. She began by explaining that there were currently emergency phones at 22 locations along the North Norfolk coast. They had become redundant and usage data showed that none of them had been used for a documented emergency for many years. BT have announced their move to digital by 2025 raising uncertainty about the future viability of the emergency phones. Unfortunately BT have been unable to say one way or another whether an alternative option will be available following the change.

The cost of keeping these phones operational is over £30k per year. The necessity of providing these phones has now vastly reduced and an opportunity to consider their future now exists. She referred members to page 102 of the papers and advised them that line rental would now increase to £135.57 a month. This meant that the overall saving of removing these phones would now be £57,028.

She concluded by saying that the proposal was to remove the phones from these locations. Officers had tested that mobile phones could make an emergency call from every site. They had also contacted the RNLI and the Coastguard and neither had raised concerns about the removal of these phones. She concluded by saying that although their removal resulted in a saving, the main reason for the proposals was because the technology no longer supported their use.

Cllr L Shires referred to page 103, s12.2 and said that it set out clearly that the reasons for the proposals were due to BT not able to provide assurances that an alternative to analogue lines would be available to keep the emergency phones operational post digitisation.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt and

RESOLVED

To agree to remove all Emergency Phones in the District

Reason for the decision:

- 1.1 It is proposed that the necessity for Emergency Phones is no longer as important as it once was. Their lack of use and the imminent move by BT to go digital mean that we believe the requirement for these phones no longer exists.
- 1.2 BT are unable to provide assurances that an alternative to analogue lines will be available to keep the emergency phones operational post digitisation.

However they have given assurances that mobile phone signal is being targeted for improvement throughout the district.

- 1.3 The Council could make a financial saving of over £30k per annum by removing this service.
- 1.4 It is not deemed that removal would cause significant community safety issues. Partners such as the RNLI have been consulted and raised no concerns either.

73 STALHAM SPORTS CENTRE

The Chairman invited the Assistant Director for Environment & Leisure Services to introduce this item. She explained that Stalham Sports Centre was one of three dual use community sports centres operated on behalf of the Council by Everyone Active as part of the current Leisure Contract. It had consistently been the least well attended of the three sites and last calendar year only received a little over 5000 visits. The Council budgeted £17k per annum for its share of maintenance and utility costs as per the dual use agreement in place.

A proposal had been made for the incumbent trust – Synergy Multi Academy Trust – to take the operations of the site back in-house. Everyone Active had indicated that they were open to this transfer taking place and the Leisure Contract contained a clause allowing it to happen. Stalham Sports Centre’s facilities included a social area/reception, four court sports hall, four tennis courts and a small artificial MUGA. As per the dual use agreement in place for the site, these facilities were available to hire by the public from 6pm-10pm weekdays, 8am-5pm weekends and all day during the school holidays. The Synergy Trust was confident that it could continue to provide facilities for the benefit of the community.

Cllr L Shires said that she had spoken to Cllr M Taylor, one of the local members for Stalham and he had indicated his support for the proposals.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED

To agree to hand back operations of the Stalham dual use sports centre to Synergy Multi Academy Trust and instruct the Leisure and Locality Services Manager to undertake this process.

Reason for the decision:

The Council have been approached by the Synergy Multi Academy Trust to operate Dual Use Centre.

The Council has put a lot of resource into this site over a number of years, both in-house and through a Leisure Operator. Neither have been overly successful and therefore it is believed to be a good option to allow the Academy themselves to operate the site for community use

74 ANNUAL UPDATE - REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

The Chairman invited Cllr C Ringer, Portfolio Holder for IT, Environmental & Waste Services to introduce this item. He explained that the Council was required to have a

policy for the use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and members were requested to review this on an annual basis.

The Director for Communities added that this was being brought forward in line with Home Office guidance. He said that officers had reviewed the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Policy and Procedures document and made a number of minor changes. These changes reflected references in the document to relevant Codes of Practice and removed references to a guidance document which had been withdrawn and not yet replaced. Officers had reviewed the Internet & Social Media Research & Investigations Policy and identified that no changes were necessary at this time.

The Chairman sought clarification that there had been no significant changes within the last year. The Director for Communities confirmed that there had not been. He said that a previous piece of guidance had been withdrawn and not yet replaced so all references to this document had been removed from the Council's documents.

It was proposed by Cllr C Ringer, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED

To approve

1. That the amendments to the revised Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy and Procedures, set out at Appendix A, be accepted.
2. That Members note that there are no amendments required to the Internet & Social Media Research & Investigations Policy
3. That Members note the activity undertaken under RIPA.

Reason for the decision:

The Council is required to have an up to date policy/procedure in order to exercise its powers.

Members are required to be aware of the RIPA activity undertaken by the Council.

75 NET ZERO FAST FOLLOWERS PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Jonathan Ward from the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership to give a presentation on 'Norfolk Net Zero Communities'. He outlined the background to the project and explained that it was a two-year Innovate UK funded scheme. He explained that the approach was focussed on finding the right options for people and the place they lived in, at the right times and in the right form to make the net zero transition work for them and their community. He outlined project governance and delivery and then handed over to NNDC's Climate & Environmental Policy Manager to talk to members about the selection of Stalham as the chosen community for North Norfolk to take part in the scheme. She explained that Stalham met the criteria for selection in terms of population and had a demographic and housing mix which complemented the other areas chosen. There was a high degree of electric and other off-gas heating and pockets of fuel poverty. She added that it was important that it was a community that was keen to engage with the project and it fitted in well with various other ongoing schemes in the town and surrounding areas.

Mr Ward concluded his presentation by outlining the next steps for the project. He empathised the importance of community engagement and support from parish and town councils.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ward for his presentation and invited members to ask questions:

Cllr W Fredericks said that the Council's Energy Officer was currently 'door-knocking' in Stalham to offer help to residents through the 'Norfolk Warm Homes' scheme. In addition, leaflets regarding the Early Help Hub were being widely distributed in the town so that holistic support was being offered.

Cllr A Varley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Net Zero thanked Mr Ward for his presentation. He said that when the Council was looking to achieve its ambitious target of Net Zero by 2030, it was important to remember that the biggest emissions were outside of the Council's control so projects such as this were fundamental to driving the Net Zero programme forward.

Cllr C Ringer said that he welcomed the project. He said it was important to highlight the co-benefits of dealing with climate change. It could be a challenging issue to 'sell' to local communities but if it could be demonstrated that making homes more energy efficient could help residents save money as well as benefitting the environment, then real progress could be made. He added that he welcomed the opportunities to work with local businesses, particularly hospitality, and he was interested to see how the project progressed. He concluded by asking how other communities could learn from Stalham as the scheme was rolled out.

Mr Ward replied that the intention was to highlight the benefits of the Stalham scheme and others across Norfolk and share those with other communities so they could learn from it. Parishes would be advocates for this so they could speak to others. He concluded by saying it was a fast-changing landscape and everyone was learning all the time.

Cllr J Toye commented that climate change had been a documented issue since 1896. In 1988 it was first taken seriously and in 1994 the first legislation was introduced. He asked what would be achieved by this project that hadn't been done before. What was different this time. Mr Ward replied that nationally concern about climate change was very high. There had always been two gaps – turning concern into action and intention to act into being able to act. This second one presented a key challenge and showing people how to act and demonstrating that it was not too complex would bring about change.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ward for his very informative presentation.

76 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

77 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.

Chairman