

# CABINET

**Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 8 January 2024 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am**

## **Committee**

### **Members Present:**

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

### **Members also attending:**

Cllr C Cushing  
Cllr A Fitch-Tillett  
Cllr J Toyne

### **Officers in attendance**

Chief Executive, Director for Finance, Monitoring Officer, Director for Communities, Director for Place & Climate Change, Policy & Performance Manager and Democratic Services Manager

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllr L Shires

## **1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS**

None received.

## **3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None received.

## **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

## **5 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

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

## **6 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET WORKING PARTIES**

The Chairman invited Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Enforcement to introduce this item. Cllr Brown explained that the recommendations related to the second of two conservation area reviews in the Glaven Valley. The first focussed on the villages and the second on the rural area covering the Glaven Valley. He thanked the officers for their hard work and also Purcell who had provided some external support to the process. Cllr Brown concluded by saying that he hoped that there would be more conservation area appraisals coming forward.

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

**RESOLVED**

1. To adopt the Glaven Valley Conservation Appraisal following the amendments itemised in the report, for statutory planning purposes and for the Appraisal document to become a material consideration in the planning process.
2. To agree the proposed boundary changes as recommended in the draft Appraisal document and those further changes detailed in this report, and that they be published in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
3. To agree the proposed Local Listings as identified within the draft Appraisal documents.

Reason for the decision:

To adopt the draft Conservation Area Appraisal

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, was unable to attend the Cabinet meeting. The Chairman informed members that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had made the following recommendations at the meeting on 13 December 2023:

1. Draft Revenue Budget 2024-2025 (Including MTFS)

**RESOLVED**

To recommend the following two stage process for scrutiny of the draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS):

1. Cabinet to identify areas for cost reductions from: efficiencies, service redesign, CP delivery plan budget, etc; and, income generation from: raising discretionary charges, new income streams, council tax, etc. This should include opportunities to invest to save schemes. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee to review Cabinet proposals at their next meeting in January.
2. Preparations for the 2025-2026 Budget and MTFS gap closure proposals to commence in early 2024 to ensure early engagement and input from Members and more implementation lead time.

2. Fees & Charges 2024 – 2025

To recommend that Cabinet supports the following recommendations to Full Council

1. The Fees & Charges from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 as included in Appendix A
2. That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and relevant Directors/Assistant Director

to agree the fees and charges not included within Appendix A as required (outlined within the report).

In addition, the Committee **resolved** to recommend that for those charges where the Council has the discretion to vary fees, Cabinet ensures they are reviewed with the following three key issues in mind -

- a commercial approach
- benchmarking
- market forces

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations.

## **8 DELEGATED DECISIONS SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2023**

The Chairman explained that the report set out the decisions taken under delegated powers from September to November 2023. The register of decisions was published on the Council's website.

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

### **RESOLVED**

**To receive and note the report and the register of decisions taken under delegated powers.**

Reason for the decision:

The Constitution: Chapter 6, Part 5, sections 5.1 and 5.2 details the exercise of any power or function of the Council where waiting until a meeting of Council or a committee would disadvantage the Council. The Constitution requires that any exercise of such powers should be reported to the next meeting of Council, Cabinet or working party (as appropriate)

Section 2.1 sets out the requirements regarding the reporting of conditional delegated decisions.

## **9 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2024 - 2025**

The Chairman invited the Deputy Leader, Cllr Fredericks to introduce this item in the absence of the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Shires. She began by saying that the report had already been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for pre-scrutiny.

The report set out the draft budget for 2024/2025 and its alignment with the Corporate Plan. The figures showed that the national and international economic situation continued to have a considerable impact. In particular, the war in Ukraine, rising interest rates and high utility and contract costs placed additional strains on the Council and its services. There was particular pressure on the temporary accommodation budget as increasing numbers of people presented themselves as homeless and there was a projected shortfall of £600k by the end of 2023/24 and this was likely to be even higher for the following year.

Cllr Fredericks referred to the table on page 29 and said that it showed the impact of the delay in the introduction of the second homes premium. This, together with other factors such as a higher staff pay award and a reassessment of business rates income mean that the forecast deficit for 2024/25 was £1.459m. She added that whilst the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) had been

announced on 18th December, it had failed to accurately reflect the impact of the last 12 months on local government. Cabinet would be meeting in the coming weeks to look at savings proposals which would then be presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration. In conclusion, she referred to section 4 of the report, which outlined the Medium Term Financial Plan for the Council and the implications for district councils of any future funding reviews. She thanked officers for their continued hard work.

Cllr C Cushing referred to section 3.3 of the report and asked whether the projected deficit of £1.81m was incorrect and should be £1.459m. The Director for Finance (DFR) confirmed that £1.459m was the correct figure. Cllr Cushing then referred to paragraph 4.5 and sought clarification that there were currently no proposals to reduce the number of officers at the Council. The DFR confirmed that this was the case and said that it should state 'To mitigate the impact of a reduction, officers of the Council'.

Cllr Cushing asked when the outcomes of the savings proposals would be shared with members. The Chief Executive replied that Cabinet was due to meet shortly to discuss them and then a report would be presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> January and Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> February. The DFR added that a paper on the capital programme would go through at the same time.

Cabinet NOTED the report.

## **10 FEES & CHARGES 2024 -2025**

Cllr Fredericks presented the report on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Shires. She said that it had been to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> December for pre-scrutiny. Section 3.2 set out three key reasons for any proposed increases in fees and charges. These included inflation, increase in fees where they were set by a higher authority (usually central government) and increases in fees which must be set on a cost recovery basis such as licensing fees and land charges.

Sections 3.4 to 3.10 set out where service areas had identified opportunities to generate additional income. She informed members that this report did not include changes to car parking charges, these would be reviewed at a later date.

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

RESOLVED

To recommend to Full Council:

- The fees and charges from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 as included in Appendix A.
- That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and relevant Directors/Assistant Director to agree the fees and charges not included within Appendix A as required (outlined within the report).

Reason for the decision:

To approve the Council's proposed fees and charges for 2024/25.

## **11 MANAGING PERFORMANCE 2019 - 2023**

The Chairman introduced this item. He explained that the report was the final managing performance report for the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023. It summarised

delivery against the Corporate Plan agreed by the Council in November 2019 and the Delivery Plan agreed by Cabinet at its meeting of February 2020. He said that it was important to acknowledge that the majority of the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 objectives were achieved despite the unprecedented circumstances presented by the Covid pandemic. He added that some of the objectives were ongoing such as the Changing Places programme. He concluded by thanking officers for their hard work and support.

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

**RESOLVED**

To receive and agree the report and acknowledge that the majority of the Corporate Plan 2019-2023 priorities and objectives for this period were achieved despite the unprecedented circumstances presented by the global COVID pandemic.

Reason for the decision:

To ensure the objectives of the Council are achieved and service performance monitored, and, as appropriate, improved so as to ensure the provision of good quality, value for money services to the District's residents, businesses and visitors and inform future corporate learning and improvement.

## **12 MANAGING PERFORMANCE Q2**

The Chairman introduced this item. He explained that the report provided information on the Council's performance during the second quarter of the year from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September and included a management response where any issues had been highlighted. He said that face to face customer contacts in this quarter were 2985 in comparison to 2511 at the Council's Cromer and Fakenham offices – an increase of 19% against the same quarter last year. Telephone calls to the Customer Contact Centre had also increased and were 13,376 for the quarter compared to 12,304 in the same quarter in 2022 (an increase of 8.7%) reflecting the Contact Centre taking on more frontline service calls including Benefits enquiries during that year. The Council's new chatbot service, Nelly, continued to perform well. He concluded by saying that planning performance had improved considerably and he congratulated the Planning team on their hard work. Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Enforcement echoed this.

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

**RESOLVED**

to note the report and endorse the actions being taken by Corporate Leadership Team detailed in Appendix A

Reason for the decision:

To ensure the objectives of the Council are achieved and service performance monitored, reviewed and, as necessary, improved.

to the Customer Services team. This resulted in the wait time for that month increasing to 13 minutes and 30 seconds. Therefore, the

average wait time for the whole quarter in 2022 was 6 minutes and 28 seconds. In the second quarter of 2023/24 the average waiting time is 5 minutes 59 seconds.

**13 ROCKET HOUSE BUILDING, CROMER - BUILDING REPAIR INVESTIGATIONS**

The Chairman introduced this item in the absence of the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Shires. He explained that following the previous report to Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023, a visit to the property and technical briefing was made available for members. It was proposed that the next step would be to commission detailed investigations into the fabric of the building to identify the cause of the damp problems and establish remedial options and any associated costs.

The Council's Surveyor explained the investigation work would be localised, mainly around the toilet block area. It was hoped that the cause of the damp would be found, which was thought to be replicated all the way around the back of the building.

Cllr C Cushing asked about timescales for the initial investigation work. The Surveyor replied that it was hoped that the sections that needed to be punched through would be identified by the end of the week and then any areas that needed to be prepared for specialist investigations would be ready by the end of January.

Cllr Cushing sought clarification on where the £50k funding for the investigation work was coming from. The Director for Finance (DFR) replied that it was from the £1m capital budget set allocated to the project.

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

**RESOLVED to**

1. Delegate to Officers to commission detailed investigations into the fabric of the building in 2 phases to identify the cause of damp, establish remedial options and budget costings.
2. A further report back to Cabinet with the findings.

Reason for the decision:

To respond to the need for essential repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to the building

**14 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**15 PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The meeting ended at 10.25 am.

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Chairman