

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 27 March 2024 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:	Cllr T Adams	Cllr P Bailey
	Cllr M Batey	Cllr K Bayes
	Cllr H Blathwayt	Cllr J Boyle
	Cllr S Bütikofer	Cllr C Cushing
	Cllr N Dixon	Cllr P Fisher
	Cllr A Fitch-Tillett	Cllr T FitzPatrick
	Cllr A Fletcher	Cllr W Fredericks
	Cllr M Hankins	Cllr C Heinink
	Cllr P Heinrich	Cllr V Holliday
	Cllr N Housden	Cllr R Macdonald
	Cllr P Neatherway	Cllr L Paterson
	Cllr S Penfold	Cllr P Porter
	Cllr J Punchard	Cllr C Ringer
	Cllr L Shires	Cllr J Toye
	Cllr K Toye	Cllr E Vardy
	Cllr A Varley	Cllr L Vickers

Officers in attendance: The Chief Executive, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Director for Communities and the Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory)

126 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs D Birch, A Brown, G Bull, G Mancini-Boyle, R Sims and E Spagnola.

127 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st February were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

128 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

129 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr L Shires declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 12. She was a member of the Victory Gym in North Walsham.

130 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman spoke about recent civic events that they had attended:

- 25th February – Civic Service hosted by the Mayor and Mayoress of Wisbech
- 17th March – the High Sheriff of Norfolk, Service of Youth and Hope, Kings Lynn Minster

The Chairman thanked everyone for taking part in the bake sale and Easter raffle on 19th March. £515 was raised for her charity, which was a huge amount.

131 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader began by saying that in Cllr Brown's absence, he wished to apologise on his behalf for the comments that had been made regarding a planning application in Happisburgh. He explained that Cllr Brown had previously supported a deferral of the application at Development Committee and it was certainly not his intention to upset anyone.

He then went onto speak about the RNLI Museum in Cromer. He said that the meeting scheduled for 11th April had been brought forward to 28th March and an extension to the existing lease would be discussed.

The Leader thanked staff and the contractor involved in the works at Black Swan Loke, North Walsham. It had recently been completed and looked really good. Finally, he wished all members and officers a restful Easter break.

132 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

133 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES & OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader, Cllr T Adams, announced the following changes to committee appointments:

- Licensing Committee (Regulatory & Premises and Gambling) – Cllr D Birch to be appointed as Vice-Chairman
- Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party – Cllr M Hankins to be appointed as Chairman
- Standards Committee – Cllr J Boyle to be appointed as Chairman
- Cabinet – Cllr J Toye to be appointed as Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth

134 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman advised members that the report for the Sustainable Growth portfolio was missing from the agenda pack due to an administrative error. It would be circulated after the meeting.

The Chairman invited questions from members:

Cllr C Cushing asked the Leader about the number of Cabinet members. Neighbouring councils had seven Cabinet members, compared to the nine appointed at NNDC. He asked why NNDC had so many, saying that a reduction to seven would be a substantial cost saving over the next three years. The Leader replied that he had no intention currently of reducing the number of Cabinet members, adding that NNDC had the addition of a Coastal Portfolio Holder unlike some councils. He said that other demands such as housing pressures and the Council's Net Zero commitment, were reflected in the portfolio structure. He

concluded by saying that all Cabinet members were extremely busy and he felt that it wouldn't be helpful to spread the workload more thinly, adding that the situation may change in the future.

Cllr K Bayes commented on the Council's Outlook magazine, which was produced in-house and circulated to all residents of the district. He said that there was no mention at all of his ward, Stalham, and asked if future issues could reflect all of the district's market towns to ensure even and fair coverage. The Leader replied that Stalham would be covered in the next issue and that the magazine focussed on relevant topics. He welcomed Cllr Bayes comments that it was an important way of communicating with residents, particularly those who struggled to access the internet and digital services.

Cllr P Fisher asked the Leader about proposed changes to holiday let tax relief and whether he believed that they would have the desired impact. He also asked for an update on second homes council tax premiums. The Leader replied that the Council had no involvement with capital gains tax changes to holiday lets and he was concerned that holiday let owners had not been consulted. He said that NNDC continued to push for locally controlled taxation and registration. Ultimately, none of these changes would benefit the residents of North Norfolk. Regarding the second homes premium, discussions were ongoing with other Norfolk councils. There had been a change in Government guidance, regarding the use of second a home for the purposes of work. These would now be excluded, which was probably a positive outcome. A business plan would be produced setting out how the Council intended to use the revenue generated from second homes council tax and this would be shared in due course.

Cllr M Taylor asked Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Assets, about the Council's decision to issue a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the former Shannock's Hotel site in Sheringham. He asked whether the Council would consider looking at sites in Stalham that were considered to be an eyesore, such as the old Highways depot. He asked whether purchasing such sites was now a policy and if so, whether Stalham could be considered. Cllr Shires suggested that she accompany Cllr Taylor on a tour of Stalham to visit the sites that were causing concern.

Cllr N Dixon asked Cllr Shires about ongoing discussions with the Marrams' Bowls Club in Cromer. He said that it was some time ago since a report was presented to Cabinet regarding the Council potentially spending a significant amount of money on the site. The project had been put on hold pending further information and he asked for an update on the current situation and if any progress had been made. Cllr Shires replied that the Council had offered another design option to the Marram's and it was hoped that they would be able to contribute to the cost of this.

Cllr M Batey asked Cllr L Shires for an update on the Albert Street toilets in Holt. She replied that the contract has been awarded for the demolition and rebuild. The structural engineer designs for the footings had been completed and the party wall notices had been issued, signed and returned. The next stage was for the contractors to provide a start date and if UK Power Network needed to be involved an expected 2 - 4 week lead-in time was needed. Anglian Water also needed to be contacted regarding the sewer diversion. The Town Council had also been contacted and updated on the project's progress.

Cllr L Paterson asked Cllr Shires about the anticipated revenue budget deficit of £250k which had been discussed at the previous meeting on 21st February. He

asked whether the savings had been identified and agreed and a balanced budget achieved. Cllr Shires replied that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been advised that regular updates on the savings would be provided as part of the Budget Monitoring reports.

Cllr J Boyle asked Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing, for information on the findings of the recent project looking at home efficiency efforts in Stalham and how any benefits could be applied elsewhere. Cllr Fredericks said that the trial was very successful. Residents were mail-dropped and then followed up with door knocking. Consequently, she was pleased to confirm that 40% of the Norfolk Warm Homes Energy grant went to North Norfolk residents. In total 41 properties in North Norfolk received grants and 31 one of them were in Stalham. She concluded by saying that the next round of grants was commencing soon and she was hopeful that North Norfolk would receive a substantial amount. She thanked the local ward members for their support.

Cllr L Vickers asked the Leader about nutrient neutrality credits and whether any credits had been purchased by developers across the District. The Leader replied that in the absence of the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Brown, he would seek to provide an update to all members on the current situation.

Cllr K Toye asked Cllr L Withington for an update on the Community Connector team. Cllr Withington replied that she was pleased to inform members that new contracts had been given to all six community connectors.

Cllr Dr A Fletcher asked Cllr A Varley for an update on the Council's Net Zero projects. Cllr Varley replied that the next project would be a solar panels/sustainable green energy initiative at the Victory Swim and Fitness centre in North Walsham and would help the Council achieve its Net Zero ambitions. He added that the Council awarded £174,725 from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund, which was to be welcomed. He thanked the Climate Change & Environmental Policy Manager for her hard work in obtaining the funding.

Cllr Dr V Holliday asked about a Portfolio Holder report for the Sustainable Growth. Cllr J Toye replied that this would be issued to all members as soon as possible. He apologised that it had not been included in the agenda.

Cllr M Taylor asked whether Cllr J Toye would like to visit Stalham to meet with local business owners and discuss their concerns regarding the recent road closures in the town and this impact on their businesses. Cllr Toye confirmed that he would be happy to join the local members in attending any meetings.

135 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 11 MARCH 2024

Local Economic Strategy & Action Plan

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth introduced this item. He said that it had been to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for consideration and the recommendations made by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were being worked on. He thanked the previous Portfolio Holder, Cllr P Heinrich for his hard work and support in producing the strategy. He reminded members that 40% of residents in the district lived in the rural countryside and he intended to focus on the benefits of the strategy for this demographic as well as the urban and coastal areas. Cllr C Cushing said that he wanted to reiterate the key points highlighted by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He began by mentioning the structure and length of

the document and said that it should be short and focussed so that businesses could access it easily. He added that there was good information in the strategy but separate sections for each economic sector in the district would be beneficial.

Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, reiterated Cllr Cushing's comments. He said that the inclusion of the case studies was very useful but that they didn't need to be attached to the strategy – they were helpful and enlightening on their own. He went onto say that the document was disjointed it should be succinct and focussed. He added that merging the strategy and the action plan was confusing and could even act as a deterrent for business owners.

Cllr Toye thanked members for their comments.

Cllr L Shires said that the language in the strategy was accessible and the action plan was substantial and set out delivery dates and outcomes. She thanked the officers and Cllr Heinrich for their work.

Cllr L Withington said that the breadth of businesses involved in the case studies was to be welcomed and she felt it would encourage businesses to invest in the district.

Cllr J Boyle said that it was a well-rounded document and easy to understand.

Cllr V Holliday said that Overview & Scrutiny Committee had also requested an analysis of the visitor economy and she was concerned that this had been lost, with the wider focus on a summary strategy document, Cllr Toye replied that this information was being prepared.

It was proposed by Cllr J Toye, seconded by Cllr P Heinrich and

RESOLVED

To approve the Local Economic Strategy & Action Plan.

Ten members abstained.

136 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 FEBRUARY 2024

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendation to Full Council at the meeting held on 14th February:

'To request that Full Council agrees to write to the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) setting out the evidence associated with the shortfall in allocation and the anticipated annual capital costs that the Council will incur in relation to food waste collection'

Members **resolved** to support the recommendation.

137 FAKENHAM LEISURE & SPORTS HUB

The Leader, Cllr Adams introduced this item. He explained that the report set out the Council's preferences in terms of procurement for the project and addresses the inflationary impact. He added that there was a risk element until the relevant Government department confirmed the funding provision. The project was worth

£11m of investment in the Fakenham locality and together with the roundabout project and the works to the Queen's Road car park public conveniences, meant that this was the largest sum of capital funding spent on any location in the district, including sea defence works since 2003. He said that the Council was proud to secure the funding and looked forward to working with the Town Council and Everyone Active, the Council's leisure provider.

Cllr L Withington, Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services, updated members on the outcome of recent meetings of the Fakenham Leisure & Sports Hub (FLASH) Steering Group. Recent design changes had been well received and it was agreed that a 4-lane pool was sufficient to. In conclusion, she said that everything was proceeding well and as stated by Cllr Adams, the largest risk was a delay to the allocation of funding.

Cllr C Cushing commented on the FLASH steering group meetings and said that they had been very productive and collaborative. He added that there was overwhelming support from local residents for the project. He agreed that the award of the funding was key to the project progressing on time.

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

RESOLVED that

- Progress on the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub Project to date is noted.
- Members note the predicted inflationary costs of £450,000 since the bid was submitted and agree to make budgetary provision to meet these additional costs not covered by the Levelling-up Funding.
- That Members note that no formal confirmation of funding has been received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- Members agree to the use of a Two Stage Design and Build procurement process for the delivery of the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project via a direct award to Contractor A through a Framework.
- Members agree to make additional budgetary provision in respect of the Framework fees to a maximum of £330,000
- Members delegate to the to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Finance, to make the award through the framework which it is felt delivers the best cost benefit, considering the cost of access and additional services provided.

138 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None

139 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None

140 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

None.

141 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

142 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 6.52 pm.

Chairman