

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 17 July 2024 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

Committee	Cllr N Dixon (Chairman)	Cllr S Penfold (Vice-Chairman)
Members Present:	Cllr J Boyle Cllr M Hankins Cllr W Fredericks Cllr J Toye	Cllr C Cushing Cllr L Vickers Cllr L Shires Cllr L Withington

Officers in Attendance: Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny, Director for Resources / S151 Officer, Chief Executive, Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth and Economic Growth Manager

166 SUBSTITUTES

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

167 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Martin Batey, Philip Bailey, Andrew Fletcher, Victoria Holliday, Nigel Housden and Roy MacDonald.

168 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

There were none received.

169 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on held on 17 April 2024 and 8 May 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

170 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

171 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

172 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

173 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

None received.

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

The Committee noted the current tracker of its recommendations to the Cabinet.

175 EAST OF ENGLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

The Committee heard from Thomas Barker, Head of Collaborative Response, East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust that the Trust was innovating with its partners to do the right things for its patients. An example of this was a Community Wellbeing pilot in Bedfordshire, Essex and Cambridgeshire that tackled response, prevention and protection to create additional capacity to achieve Category 1 life threatening incidents being responded to on average within 8 minutes.

Mr Barker added that a collaboration with Norfolk Fire and Rescue service had seen six fire stations, with an additional three in the pipeline, that are able to provide emergency medical response to patients that suffer cardiac arrest. It has seen in quarter one 55 calls responded to with the Fire and Rescue Service arriving ahead of the Ambulance on 68% of those calls with an average of an 8-minute earlier arrival time.

Mr Barker stated that there were currently 220 Community First Responders in Norfolk and last month provided 4,000 hours of voluntary support to the Ambulance service. The Trust was advertising for additional volunteers in those areas where they were needed.

Mr Barker commented that the Trust's approach was to increase its capacity through these different approaches to seek to reduce the response times for category 1 incidents as well increasing recruitment in full time staff. In this financial year it was seeking to recruit an additional 152 staff in Norfolk and Waveney.

Mr Barker advised that this regional collaboration work had been recognised by the Home Office as good practise.

Councillor Vickers, along with other committee members, thanked the Ambulance Service and the Fire and Rescue Service for the work that they do and asked if there were plans to expand these schemes for other category 1 incidents and whether there was funding to continue the work beyond the pilot.

Mr Barker stated that the ambition was to expand to a dual crewing model to enable a more innovative way of delivering the service into target areas where response times were historically longer.

Councillor Hankins asked how closely the Ambulance Trust worked with primary care especially when dealing with emergency calls.

Mr Barker advised that as part of Trust's new Clinical strategy it had created six new unscheduled care coordination hubs that were multi-disciplinary teams including primary care so that 999 calls that were not an emergency could be passed via a portal to other care providers to pick up those calls and provide swift replies. The

Trust was looking at adding other providers into the hub including palliative care services.

Councillor Cushing asked whether there were gaps in North Norfolk with no Community First Responders (CFR) and what help could be given to local communities to help get funding for training and equipment for the responders.

Mr Barker stated that the Trust had recently completed a mapping exercise of CFRs across the region and that could be shared with the council to assess where some more local support would help. In terms of funding the Ambulance Trust funds the initial equipment and training. There has been grants from the Trust's charity to Parish and County Councils to help with further costs.

Mr Barker added that the role of CFRs was not yet particularly well understood by the public and the Trust was running engagement campaigns to raise the profile of CFRs. Over the last 12 months there has been a drive to pay CFRs expenses for responding to 999 calls.

Councillor Dixon commented that local Councillors attended Parish and Town Councils and could pass on that information about the role of CFRs.

Councillor Penfold asked what information would be available to Councillors to enable them to do this.

Mr Barker advised that he would be happy to meet Councillors to explain what the role was and could arrange some direct engagement sessions with CFRs. There was a local management team who could link in with Councillors and there was a range of different communication materials that could be shared.

Councillor Boyle asked about delays at the hospitals and where there was anything additional that could be tried to improve those waiting times.

Mr Barker stated that there was work ongoing with other care providers to explore all other possible options that could be taken to ensure that the right patients were being taken to hospital at the right time. The service was seeking to improve its performance at both the front and back end.

Councillor Dixon asked about the golden hour and with the benefits early intervention had on patients' recovery, the use of all the Fire and Rescue Service stations and whether CFRs could be a considerable resource for early intervention.

Scott Norman, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, explained that the falls service was being explored as something that could offer some real value to help people who have fallen to prevent them going into a state that needs more emergency care. In North Norfolk, the co-responding service was provided from the stations that covered the areas around North Walsham, Cromer, Sheringham, Hunstanton, Heacham, and Dereham, with Aylsham, Mundesley and Sandringham about to be used. If any Councillor wanted to visit any of these stations to let him know.

Councillors Shires had visited the North Walsham station who had been very positive about this work and asked how the teams had responded to co-responding and with changes to a number of systems whether there was an opportunity to educate the public as to whose does what.

Mr Norman stated that the service had undertaken a large trial on emergency

medical response in 2017/18 to measure the health and wellbeing impact on the crews and the service had introduced a support package to support the new co responding service.

Mr Norman added that the service was designing its community risk plan to provide a risk assessment of the service for the next 3 years, but more work was needed to be done to better communicate the work that is being done and a new communications team had been established.

Mr Barker commented that EEAST were planning on attending public events over the next year and would promote East Heart a community awareness campaign along with training sessions for life support.

Councillor Fredericks advised that there was an open day coming up at the Mundesley station and asked whether it would be possible to undertake some shared communications.

Mr Norman stated that it would be an opportunity to get some good engagement with the public and to get a more collaborative approach through the use of CFRs.

Councillor Withington commented about working together on a prevent agenda and as Chair of the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership invited both organisations to come to the partnership to share the good work that is being done and to link up with members of the partnership.

Mr Barker stated that he would be happy to do that to work on developing a forward-facing strategy to increase visibility and ensure joined up messages.

Recommended that the Council –

(A) Request the East of England Ambulance Trust to provide

(1) the mapping of CFRs in North Norfolk to establish where any gaps in the numbers of volunteers are

(2) communication materials for members of the council to use when talking to their respective Parish and Town Councils about the co-responding and the role of CFRs

(B) the Council

(1) works with the Norfolk Ambulance Trust to help promote its Campaign on Community First Responders and co responding by signposting members of the public towards the Ambulance Trust's Community First Responders <https://www.eastamb.nhs.uk/join-the-team/volunteering-and-volunteers/community-first-responders>

(2) encourages the members of the council to talk to their respective Parish and Town Councils on the importance of the work being done by Community First Responders with the aim of increasing the understanding of these roles and seeking to achieve more volunteers to apply for these roles.

**176 NORTH WALSHAM HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE PROGRAMME:
END OF PROJECT REPORT**

Councillor Dixon reminded the Committee that there had been a site visit prior to the

committee meeting to take a look at all the different parts to this project.

Councillor Vickers asked what further evaluation there would be of the economic benefits of the scheme that could be used for similar schemes in other towns in the district.

Councillor Toye stated that the Council was always looking for economic benefits but there needed to be ongoing cultural and other activities to continue to draw people to the towns. The real opportunities come now as the project laid some good foundations which are starting to be built on with the arrival of new businesses and visitors to the town.

The Assistant Director Sustainable Growth (ADSG) commented that the ongoing evaluation of the market towns was vital to assess North Norfolk's economy and it would be worthwhile putting in periodic checks to assess the drivers for change in the towns.

Councillor Toye added that there was some measurables such as footfall, but you could often tell by walking into a town how the town is working. Regular engagement with businesses was also important. At this stage it was not intended to do any measurement in a structured way.

The Economic Growth Manager added that the key to the scheme and the biggest learning experience to unlocking the funding was finding local champions for the scheme.

Councillor Penfold thanked officers for their work in getting the scheme delivered and there had certainly been an improvement in a feeling of pride and ownership of the town. It was surprising though that there had been no measurable objectives put into the project at the outset and it would be good for objectives such as footfall and transport use to be measured and come back to the committee in twelve months time and asked what evaluation Historic England had asked for.

The ADSG advised that Historic England were a very late entrant to the project and their evaluation template which was largely about the financial spend was after the work on what evaluation was needed had already been considered. For this type of project, it would be good to have some objectives that were clearly measurable, could provide a project baseline and be monitored to provide evaluation. It is built in other schemes that are happening now such as the Coastwise project, but in this project it didn't happen which were largely down to resources which were extremely stretched for this scheme.

Councillor Toye stated that it could come back in twelve months' time but it may be information as there was a lot of collaboration and it may be difficult to measure.

Councillor Penfold added that it was looking at the scheme in a holistic way rather than just how the council performed and asked whether there was additional funding from Historic England to do this.

The ADSG stated that he was not aware of such funding, but town centre health indicators included footfall, vacant shops and rents/yields. That data was reasonably available, and the council had purchased software to measure footfall.

Councillor Penfold added that some form of residents' satisfaction survey would also be useful.

Councillor Cushing asked about the lessons learned from this scheme for a similar

scheme in Fakenham as well as other towns that a clear set of measurables could be used as a baseline at the start of such a project.

Councillor Toye advised that there was always continuous learning and the lessons had been built into the Coastwise scheme and the economic development team would use them to help seek funding for future schemes. It was important though to find the key players who wanted to help improve their town.

The ADSG added that the biggest success had been the relationship building and it was anticipated that the Town Council was going to carry on with some additional measures to build on the foundation the council's scheme had created.

Councillor Hankins commented that a number of stalls in the weekly market had survived and that should be used as a measure of the success of the scheme.

Councillor Shires advised that the market was run by the Town Council and had shrunk for a while but there were now four new stall holders along with new pop-up stalls and a number of different market events being established.

Councillor Dixon explained that the Committee had sought to focus its consideration of this item into three areas of finance, evaluation and stakeholder engagement to assess what had worked and what hadn't. An update in twelve months' time would help the committee to pick up on those points.

Recommended that –

A set of criteria be established that could be used to further evaluate the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone Programme in twelve months' time and that could be used in bidding for funding and establishing baselines for similar projects in other towns in North Norfolk

177 2023/24 OUTTURN REPORT

Councillor Cushing referred to discussions at the recent Governance, Risk and Audit Committee (GRAC) meeting on the delay in getting the Council's 21/22 and 22/23 accounts externally audited and that it could mean a variance of up to a £1m in the council's accounts.

The Director of Resources (DoR) stated that the position on the accounts may change but it would be a surprise if the general fund changed a lot as the budget adjustments were normally to do with capital and valuations which don't greatly affect the revenue position. The accounts though won't be full audited but there will be some checks on those two years of accounts.

The DoR added that the timetable was for the 21/22 and 22/23 accounts to go the GRAC meeting in December and the effects of the audit would only affect the reserve balances rather than the whole budget setting process for 2025/26.

Councillor Dixon asked about the level of underspends and overspends within the budget and what controls there were in place to assess these.

The DoR advised that service managers were being reminded of the need to achieve the budget savings and the intention for the September round of meetings is that the budget monitoring report will have a section on the achievement of the £975K savings that are needed as well as the additional £250K target.

Councillor Hankins asked what the reason was for the £492K variance in the waste management budget.

The DoR advised that this could be due to fluctuations in the waste prices to landfill, additional contractor costs, debt write off and performance clauses pay back.

Resolved – that the report is noted.

**178 REPORTING PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27
ACTION PLAN 2023- 24 - TO END OF QUARTER 4 - 31 MARCH 2024**

Councillor Cushing commented that the reporting period of the action plan was for three months ago and was it possible for a more up to date report to be produced. The Chief Executive (CEX) responded that it had not been possible to do that with the agenda deadline for this committee.

Resolved – that the report is noted.

179 PEER REVIEW ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Executive (CEX) advised that the Peer Review team was having a follow up meeting on 30 July to assess progress made so far although the action plan had a 18 month timescale.

Councillor Cushing referred to discussions at the recent Governance, Risk and Audit Committee meeting on staff shortages in the finance department and asked what progress was being made on the workforce development plan.

The CEX stated that appointments had been made into the accountancy team and had been strengthened. Generally, there were workforce pressures, recruitment challenges as well as affordability within the council's budget.

Councillor Fredericks added that a people strategy was being developed that would look at gaps in staffing provision.

Councillor Vickers asked what work had been done in assessing the gaps in services with statutory provision compared to those which were discretionary.

CEX advised that those were political choices, and the Corporate Leadership Team were having discussions with the Cabinet and would take advice across the political parties.

Resolved – that the report is noted.

180 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Committee considered the amended work programme and noted that there would be a transition period until all the changes took effect.

The Committee noted that the Homelessness Task and Finish Group had not finished its work programme in time to report to this committee meeting. However, it was scheduled to meet shortly. The Committee agreed that if that happened the committee would hold a special meeting on 13 August to consider its recommendations.

The Committee further noted that neither the Committee Chairman or Vice Chairman were available to chair the meeting on 20 September 2024 and the committee agreed that it be polled about whether to hold its meeting on that day or another suitable day when either the Chairman or Vice Chairman could attend.

Resolved – that (A) the changes to its future committee meetings be approved,

(B) an additional meeting of the Committee, if needed, be arranged for 13 August 2024, and

(C) Committee members are polled on whether or not to move the date of its next scheduled date of 18 September.

181 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.

Chairman