

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 7 October 2024 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 C Ringer
Cllr J Toye	Cllr A Varley
Cllr L Withington	

Members also attending:

Cllr C Cushing, Cllr N Dixon, Cllr Dr V Holliday

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Director for Resources / S151 Officer, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets, Legal & Monitoring Officer, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager, Director for Place & Climate Change and Director for Communities

Also in attendance:

Public

34 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9th September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Cllr P Fisher to be recorded in the list of attendees.

35 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

The Chairman said that there was a member of the public in attendance to speak regarding agenda item 8. He would therefore invite them to speak at that point in the agenda.

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

37 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

38 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, said that he would hand over to Cllr DR V Holliday, Chairman of the Homelessness Task & Finish Group to introduce the first item.

Cllr Holliday began by reminding members of the scale of homelessness in North Norfolk and the misery it caused. It placed a financial strain on everyone's budgets including the Council. The emotional, mental and physical toll that it took on households was beyond comprehension and the Council's teams worked tirelessly and under great pressure. The Task & Finish Group (set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee) set out with the widest possible range of interventions to reduce homelessness and to produce practical solutions to relieve homelessness. She said that there was some overlap with the excellent work currently being carried out by Housing Team at the Council which above and beyond for residents, however, it was felt important to start with a 'clean slate'.

Cllr Holliday said that the Task & Finish Group had met with 8 external witnesses and 5 officers and the recommendations came from them. It was hoped that, if the recommendations were supported by Cabinet, they would help the Council to continue to provide the best outcomes for households across the district that were at risk of homelessness or who had become homeless. It was recognised that the recommendations were just the first step and that they needed to be explored in more depth once across. The Group did not see its remit as fleshing out proposals in detail. She added that Recommendation E(4) was now out of date and could be removed.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Holliday and the Task & Finish Group for their extensive work. He assured her that the recommendations would be considered fully. He then invited Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Benefits to speak.

Cllr Fredericks began by thanking the Task & Finish Group and everyone involved in the process. She said that homelessness was a big issue and it was pleasing to see cross-party support for tackling such a challenging problem. She said that there was a lot of information in the report and resulting recommendations that would need to be looked at in detail to understand the potential benefit and the cost implications. She went on to say that many of the themes in the report reflected those in the Housing Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Housing refresh, all of these were 'live' documents and there was an action plan in place too. These documents were all regularly reviewed and where there was an opportunity to incorporate any changes, then they would be updated.

Picking up on some of the themes identified by the Task & Finish Group, Cllr Fredericks said that she would like to highlight some of the work that was currently ongoing or planned. Last year information was sent out to all town and parish councils in the district highlighting the housing need in their area. This exercise would be repeated soon and additional information provided about empty homes and where to get help if anyone found themselves homeless. The Council had also been carrying out a consultation on the 'Your Choice, Your Home' scheme and members had had the opportunity to attend briefings on this.

Cllr Fredericks said that the Council had also been working with the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) to review the effectiveness of NNDC's temporary accommodation provision and additional options and avenues were

always being explored.

In partnership with organisations across Norfolk, a private rental sector networking event was taking place on 9th October and this was focussed on the theme of 'No homelessness in Norfolk'. NNDC's Housing Team were attending this event.

In conclusion, Cllr Fredericks said that these were just a few examples of the ongoing work to address this issue of homelessness. She thanked the Task & Finish Group for their valuable input.

The Chairman agreed that there was a constant stream of work ongoing in this area to explore all possibilities and tangible outcomes. Cllr Fredericks thanked all of the officers working in People Services for their continued hard work.

The Chairman invited members to speak:

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning, referred to recommendation E(4) 'Responds to the Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on the definition of affordability'. He said that the NPPF was constantly being reviewed and updated and since the General Election there had been a further push to change it again and a consultation with local authorities had been rolled out over the summer. The September deadline for responses had been challenging and he thanked officers and Cabinet members for their hard work in preparing a reply on behalf of NNDC. He said that one of the main responses provided was that the definition of affordable housing needed to be completely reviewed and it was the Council's view that affordable housing should be linked to local incomes and the ability to afford mortgages by capping it at three times a joint income.

Cllr J Toye said that regarding the issue of domestic abuse, he wanted to make members aware that he was the Vice-Chairman of the County Council's Police & Crime Panel and together with Cllr Withington, he had made contact with the new Police & Crime Commissioner to start working on this area.

Cllr L Shires thanked everyone involved in the Task & Finish Group's work on this issue. She said that Norfolk County Council (NCC) had £1.8m of funding as a Tier 1 authority to assess the need for accommodation for domestic abuse victims in their area and to use this funding to supply it. She asked for an update on how this funding was being used and whether the District Council had been having discussions with NCC as domestic abuse was now one of the main drivers behind homelessness in North Norfolk. Cllr Fredericks said that no funding had been forthcoming from the County Council to date. She agreed that it was important to start a dialogue with NCC as soon as possible and said that the Council would contact them and ask for an update on how the funding was being spent.

Cllr C Cushing asked Cllr Brown if the Council's response to the NPPF consultation could be shared with members. Cllr Brown said that he believed it was published on the Council's website but if this was not the case, he would certainly share it with members.

Cllr V Holliday asked if there would be a follow up at some point to see if the recommendations were being implemented.

The Chairman said that there was working ongoing regarding homelessness and key outcomes were continually monitored, however, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee may want to review this topic in the coming months. Cllr Fredericks

added that the Housing Strategy Action Plan and this covered the majority of the recommendations and it was good to have the affirmation that the right areas were being focussed on. She said that Overview & Scrutiny Committee was due to consider the Housing Strategy soon and she would incorporate any additional points raised as part of the Task & Finish Group's work at that point. The Chairman said that Cabinet would welcome the Overview & Scrutiny Committee receiving regular updates on this topic. Cllr Holliday said that the Task & Finish Group's work had been undertaken with existing housing policies and strategies in mind and cross-referenced against everything.

The Chairman invited Cllr Dixon to speak to the second recommendation made by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding 'Reporting Progress implementing the Corporate Plan'. Before doing so, Cllr Dixon asked for clarification regarding the Task & Finish Group recommendations and whether they had been accepted. The Chairman replied that he intended to take all of the recommendations together.

Cllr Dixon explained that he was not present at the meeting of 20th September but that the recommendation was self-explanatory.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Dixon and Cllr Holliday for attending Cabinet and presenting the recommendations. He proposed that they were all approved en bloc. Cllr W Fredericks seconded the proposal.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following:

1. Homelessness Task & Finish Group (chaired by Cllr Dr V Holliday)

(A) To prevent homelessness

expands its homelessness service prevention work to undertake such work at an earlier stage along with multi agency support, on an invest to save basis, to seek to reduce the number of people going into temporary accommodation and the costs of that to the council that should include

1. increasing the awareness and risks of homelessness in the local communities, on the value of prevention for homelessness and that early intervention requires people to ask for help before it becomes too late
2. increasing its communication work which should include Parish and Town Councils and should also provide support to Councillors to enable them to help signpost those people who need housing help
3. increasing the range of interventions to help people especially on benefit support and with financial viability assessments

(B) Managing homelessness

Explores how it uses partner, charity, and voluntary organisations to create a series of outreach hubs and front-line services in North Norfolk for homelessness to create a network of advice and support including appropriate partner organisation(s)

(C) Housing allocation

Considers the viability of a support match scheme to match younger residents who need accommodation into a home with an older resident(s) that needs assistance in a similar way to the scheme in Cornwall [Supportmatch Homeshare - Cornwall Council](#)

(D) Increase housing supply

1. Continues to encourage its Councillors to work within their local communities to

seek to find additional plots of land that can be used for new affordable housing schemes

2. As a medium-term solution looks at setting up an investment partnership to provide affordable local housing for local people at social, discount and market rent. We would recommend the model used by Cambridge City Council and Gravesham Borough Council who set an investment partnership with the Hill Group on a 50:50 basis

3. Explores the use of Solo Haus one bed housing where additional temporary accommodation for single people is required

(E) Increase affordable house building/supply

1. Undertakes an audit of shop fronts away from primary retail areas and empty units above and behind shops to assess their potential for conversion to residential usage or renting out rooms
2. An affordable housing conference be set up to encourage Parish and Town councils to create neighbourhood plans that include allocations for community led development for local people and encourages community land trusts to come forward with affordable schemes in rural exception sites
3. Continues to seek from Norfolk County Council a minimum 50% return of the extra Council tax that will be received from the new extra second homes premium and that the money the Council receives is ringfenced for affordable housing
4. Responds to the Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework on the definition of affordability
5. Explores the potential to use Better Society Capital/National Homelessness Property fund 2 funding for 3-to-4-bedroom properties

[National Homelessness Property fund 2 | Better Society Capital](#)

(F) Increase/sustain Private rental tenancies

1. Explores the model of using a local estate agency to set up a Council letting agency and also looks at whether homelessness prevention grant could be used to bring empty properties back into use

2. Encourages the new government to continue the previous government's work on introducing an appropriate licencing scheme for all short-term lets

3. Continues to engage proactively with private landlords and considers whether setting up a Landlords Forum would be beneficial with an introductory conference type session including mortgage brokers, lenders, insurance companies as well as landlords and housing associations to explore solutions to the issues Landlords are experiencing

(G) Reducing Long Term Empty Homes

1. Continues to have an Empty Homes Officer as a permanent role

2. Considers how to increase engagement with the Town and Parish Councils on the number of long-term empty properties in their areas

3. Continues to investigate whether funding could be found to refurbish empty properties for people in housing need

(H) Sustain social tenancies

1. Continues to investigate with registered providers on the reuse of sheltered housing and to seek fewer age designated homes

2. Continues to have a strategic discussion with the registered providers on potential disposals that may occur over the next few years

3. Encourages registered providers to ensure sufficient target hardening is provided

in Domestic Abuse cases

(I) Prevention of/provision for victims of Domestic Abuse

1. Explores how partner organisations can be used to help with homelessness prevention especially in domestic abuse cases that would include tenancy support by the Registered Providers and spreading awareness to Parish and Town Councils and Councillors
2. Asks the new Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner whether the offer of scoping out a pilot that moves out the perpetrator in domestic abuse cases rather than the victim is still valid

(B) Reporting progress implementing Corporate Plan 2023-27 Delivery against Action Plan 2023-24 and Action Plan 2024-25 - to end of Quarter 1 - 30 June 2024

That more detailed information be provided within the action plan that would include delivery dates where possible and success criteria to give a greater understanding of the progress being made against each of the RAG targets.

40 SHERINGHAM ENABLING LAND

The Chairman said that he was aware that a member of the public had requested to speak on this item, however, a statement had not been submitted in advance of the meeting, as required by the constitution.

The Monitoring Officer advised that due to exempt information being included as an appendix to the report, she did not feel that it would be appropriate for a public question/statement to proceed without her having had sight of it first.

The Chairman thanked her for the advice and suggested that the meeting moved into private session so that all of the information relating to this item could be considered fully.

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

To pass the following resolution:

“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 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.”

Once the discussion had concluded, Cabinet reconvened.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED:

- To grant a further extension to the legal agreement as outlined in the exempt appendix, and alongside this,
- For Officers to explore demand for the site as outlined in the exempt appendix.

Reason for the decision:

To generate a capital receipt.

41 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

42 PRIVATE BUSINESS - SHERINGHAM ENABLING LAND EXEMPT APPENDIX

The meeting ended at 10.40 am.

Chairman