

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 1 February 2021 at the remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Mr G Hayman
Mr N Lloyd
Miss L Shires

Ms V Gay
Mr R Kershaw
Mr E Seward
Mr J Toye

Members also attending:

Mr H Blathwayt (Observer)
Mr C Cushing (Observer)
Mr N Pearce (Observer)
Ms L Withington (Observer)

Mr A Brown (Observer)
Mr N Dixon (Observer)
Mr J Rest (Observer)

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Democratic Services and Governance Officer (Scrutiny), Cara Jordan, Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Regulatory), Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager, Communications & PR Manager and Chief Technical Accountant

Also in attendance:

Press and Public

15 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr S Bütikofer.

16 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

18 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

20 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

None received.

21 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET WORKING PARTIES

NORTH WALSHAM HERITAGE ACTION ZONE WORKING PARTY – 9 TH DECEMBER 2020

Cllr R Kershaw introduced the recommendation and informed Members that it sought to assign Norfolk County Council as an identified partner, to assist in the design and delivery of the town centre placemaking and public realm improvement schemes. He added that it would provide significant support for implementing Traffic Regulation Orders, and would be a sensible and prudent step in moving the project forward.

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr V Gay.

RESOLVED

That Norfolk County Council be contracted as a nominated partner to assist in the design and delivery of the North Walsham town centre place making and public realm improvement work.

PLANNING POLICY AND BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY – 14TH DECEMBER 2020

Cllr J Toye introduced the recommendations and informed Members that they covered two months of PPBH Working Party meetings. He proposed to take the recommendations en bloc. Cllr A Fitch-Tillett seconded the recommendations and stated that she was pleased to see items 8 and 9 on landscape sensitivity and recreation avoidance. She stated that it was the Council's responsibility as the planning authority to protect areas of outstanding natural beauty, which was congruent to her work on the Norfolk Coastal Partnership. It was stated that the recreation mitigation strategy was also very important, as Cllr A Fitch-Tillett informed Members that no breeding birds were present at the Holkham estate in 2020 due to visitor disturbance, which was a significant concern for all. She added that she was pleased to see that consideration of this issue had been applied as a condition on the recent large Fakenham planning application, and was therefore very pleased to second the recommendations.

ITEM 7: LOCAL PLAN - PROGRESS UPDATE ON SITE SELECTION OPTIONS - DEFERRED SITES

RESOLVED

- 1. That site BLA04/A (land east of Langham Road) is retained as an allocation in the proposed submission Local Plan and the final policy wording is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager.**
- 2. That MUN03/A – land off Cromer Road and Church Lane (reduced to approximately 30 dwellings) is retained as an allocation in the proposed Submission Local Plan, and the final policy wording is delegated to the Planning Policy Manager, to include the need to protect the amenity of adjacent occupiers.**

ITEM 8: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

- 1. Adopts and publishes the revised 2021 Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment as Supplementary Planning Guidance.**
- 2. Revokes the existing 2009 North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment in line with the legislative requirements.**
- 3. Gives delegated authority to the Head of Planning in relation to the required statutory process.**

ITEM 9: RECREATION AVOIDANCE MITIGATION STRATEGY

RESOLVED

- 1. That Cabinet endorses the approach and delegates responsibility for drafting such an approach, including that of finalising the associated tariff and Policy to be included in the Local Plan to the Planning Manager.**
- 2. That Cabinet endorse Option 1 set out in the report to the Working Party in respect of the collection of the tariff.**

ITEM 10: LOCAL PLAN DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

RESOLVED

That Cabinet endorses the revised Policies below and delegates responsibility for drafting such an approach, including that of finalising the associated policies to the Planning Manager:

**ENV 1: Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty & The Broads;
ENV 2: Protection & Enhancement of Landscape & Settlement Character;
ENV4: Biodiversity & Geology;
ENV 5: Green Infrastructure & Public Rights of Way;
ENV 6: Trees, Hedgerows & Development;
ENV 9: High Quality Design; ENV 10: Protection of Amenity;
ENV 11: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment**

ITEM 11: LOCAL PLAN SITE ALLOCATIONS: NORTH WALSHAM

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

- 1. Endorses the identified sites for inclusion in the Local Plan.**
- 2. Delegates the final policy wording to the Planning Policy Manager.**
- 3. Discounts all other sites at this stage.**
- 4. Agrees the green open space designations shown on the site assessment maps.**

ITEM 12: BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER UPDATE

RESOLVED

1. That the register is published as required by the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 and that Part 2 of the Register is not undertaken.

PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY – 18 JANUARY 2021

LOCAL PLAN DRAFT SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES FOR SMALL GROWTH VILLAGES:

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet approves the settlement boundaries for the Small Growth Villages shown in Appendix 1 as a basis for Regulation 19 consultation and for inclusion in the Local Plan.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Planning Policy Manager to produce proposed boundaries for Sea Palling, Walcott and Potter Heigham in accordance with the methodology.

LOCAL PLAN OPEN LAND AREA DESIGNATIONS – WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet approves the additional Open Land Area Designation for site WEL22 (Wells East Quay) for inclusion in the Local Plan.

22 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CAR PARK INCOME DATA - JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019 AND 2020

Cllr N Dixon – Overview & Scrutiny Chairman introduced the recommendations and informed Members that the recommendations made on the 2021/22 budget should also include that ‘savings options be identified within the in-year budget’, as well as the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Cllr E Seward referred to the parking income recommendations, and stated that he agreed that the Council should increase its promotion of the parking permits. He added that he was content with the additional recommendations.

Cllr L Shires referred to the season ticket parking permits, and stated that following the Overview and Scrutiny meeting, she had spoken to the Assistant Director for Organisational Resources, who was now working to improve access to pricing data on the NNDC website.

On the budget recommendations, Cllr E Seward agreed that it would be helpful for the Council to have greater clarity on future financial support, and proposed to accept the recommendations. Cllr L Shires seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED

- 1. That promotion of the Council's annual and seasonal parking permits is increased.**
- 2. That consideration is given to reviewing potential opportunities for new car parking sites, where appropriate.**
- 3. That consideration is given to offering limited free parking arrangements to encourage support of the District's high streets.**

2021/22 BASE BUDGET & PROJECTIONS FOR 2022/23 TO 2023/24 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Council continues to lobby for greater certainty on future levels of funding support from Central Government.**
- 2. That efforts are continued to identify potential savings options within the 2021/22 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.**

23 UPDATE ON THE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The CE introduced the item and stated that with high and rising cases of Covid-19 over the Christmas and new year period, the Government had announced a new lockdown on the 4th January, which would be formally reviewed on the week of the 22nd February. It was noted that the Prime Minister had stated that Schools in England would not reopen until at least the 8th March, suggesting that the current lockdown would continue for a further five weeks. The CE stated that it was hoped that during this time, case numbers would continue to fall, reducing pressure on hospitals and health services, whilst allowing good progress to be made on the rollout of the vaccination programme. It was reported that North Norfolk had seen some of the lowest levels of infection in the country during the first peak of the pandemic, throughout the summer and into the autumn. The CE stated that until the 14th December, the District had not seen more than 100 cases per day. Beyond this date however, cases had risen rapidly both locally and nationally, with 442 cases recorded on the 4th January. This equated to an infection rate of 421.6 cases per 100k, with the countywide infection rate at 505 per 100k, compared to a national rate of 680.5 per 100k. The CE reported that since then cases had fallen steadily with 169 cases or 161.2 per 100k on the 26th January, against a Norfolk rate of 323.7 per 100k, whilst the England rate was 309.5. It was noted that North Norfolk was the only District in the county to report an infection rate below 200 per 100k since the new year. The CE reported that the cumulative total of cases since March 2020 now stood at 2659 in North Norfolk as of the 31st January, giving a total of 2536 per 100k, compared to Norfolk's average of 3919 and the England average of 5936 per 100k. This meant that North Norfolk continued to have one of the lowest cumulative rates of infection of any local authority area in the country, at 304 of 314 local authority areas in England.

The CE stated that the total number of Covid deaths in North Norfolk as of the 31st January was 153 deaths since the start of the pandemic, giving a rate of 145.9 per 100k, compared to a Norfolk average of 156 per 100k and an England average of 166 per 100k. It was stated that North Norfolk was 195th of 314 local authority areas in England, which was potentially the result of having an older demographic. The CE stated that the Council continued to promote Government messages to stay at

home, protect the NHS and save lives. It was noted that these messages had been promoted particularly in areas where the infection rate was higher, and that Covid marshals had been deployed to provide support and guidance in town centres, as well as making food and prescription deliveries in emergency situations.

The CE reported that the Economic Growth Team had continued to administer an additional £25m of Government grants to businesses, and the Council had been recognized as part of independent research by the New Anglia LEP for paying out more grants than any other authority in Norfolk. He added that the Team had also launched the additional restrictions discretionary business grant scheme on the 11th January, which had paid out over £143k to 139 businesses, with eligibility being broadened further to provide support to additional businesses. It was reported that staff in the Benefits Team continued to make payments under the test and trace scheme, with people on low incomes that had either tested positive or were having to self-isolate.

On Covid testing, the CE reported that test facilities continued to be run on Council owned car parks in Cromer and Fakenham, to avoid residents having to travel for a test, where possible. It was noted that that the Cromer testing site was opening four days per week, and the Fakenham site on two days per week. The CE referred to the vaccine programme, and reported that Fakenham Medical Practice was the first site in North Norfolk to offer vaccinations to people over 80, as well as health and social care staff from 14th December, with vaccination centres opening in Sheringham, North Walsham and Hoveton from mid-January. He added that from 6th February a new large scale vaccination centre would operate from North Walsham Community Centre, and the Council were supporting this by suspending parking charges in the New Road car park for people attending appointments. The CE stated that visitors would therefore be encouraged to use alternate car parks from the end of the week.

The CE reported that the Council continued to operate its Gold civil contingency arrangements to develop and agree the local response, as well as working together with the Norfolk Resilience Forum. It was noted that Cllr R Kershaw was representing the Council at these meetings on behalf of the Leader during her absence. In anticipation of a busy summer ahead, consideration was already being given as how to best open up the District, whilst keeping visitors safe as the vaccination programme continued.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr R Kershaw stated that it was good news to hear that North Walsham Community Centre would become a vaccine hub, and thanked officers for making the necessary arrangements.
- ii. Cllr J Toye stated his thanks to officers for their continued efforts to address the challenges presented by Covid-19.
- iii. Cllr L Withington stated that Cromer testing site did not show up as available on the booking website during weekends, which meant that Sheringham residents were having to travel to Norwich for a test. She asked if this was a result of booking availability or an issue with the system. The CE replied that there were two issues, the first being that the mobile site in Cromer only operated on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and trying to book on a different day could potentially cause the system to show that no bookings were available. He added that he could chase this issue up to see if it could be

resolved. On vaccinations, the CE stated that under the current arrangements residents in Cromer and surrounding areas were required to go to North Walsham to receive their vaccinations, though transport options were available if required. He added that representations would continue to be made for the creation of a vaccination site in Cromer.

24 DELEGATED DECISIONS

Cllr E Seward introduced the report and informed Members that the decisions related primarily to actions taken in response to Covid-19.

The recommendation was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw and seconded by Cllr J Toye.

RESOLVED

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

25 2021/22 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-25

Cllr E Seward introduced the report and informed Members that they were asked to agree to recommend to Council the budget for 2021-22 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022-25. He added that the budget had been prepared under challenging circumstances as a result of Covid-19, and at present, the levels of future Government support to mitigate this impact remained unknown. It was stated that the budget presented for 2021-22 was balanced and that it maintained existing services without cuts, or the use of reserves to plug deficits. Cllr E Seward noted that the Council was not increasing charges where possible, and that the programme to improve facilities would continue, with the expected opening of the new Sheringham Leisure Centre in August, the refurbishment of widely used toilets, and the continuation of the tree planting programme. It was noted that this was being done with less than a £5 rise in Council Tax for most residents, and that it was the expectation of Central Government that all local authorities would increase taxes to offset future deficits. Cllr E Seward noted that deficits had been forecasted for future years, and that these were largely the result of uncertainty around funding support. He added that as a financially prudent authority, the Council had to plan for a continued reduction in Government support, and therefore proposals on how to address this were included. Cllr E Seward stated that he did not expect the funding reductions to be as significant as forecasted, but the Council had to have contingency plans in place. He added that as the billing authority, it was likely that the average band D property would see an annual Council Tax increase of approximately £70, though 90% of this was for other Councils, including the police authority. It was noted that the budget would go to Council on the 24th February for final approval, and could be subject to change prior to that date.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr J Rest referred to appendix A1 and asked whether there was an income figure available for the solar panel FIT payments. The CTA replied that this appendix showed the main variances only, and as the last figure for FIT payments was approximately £10k, it would not be included in this section of the report, but could be found within the Property Services budget.
- ii. Cllr N Dixon noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already seen the budget and submitted recommendations, though it was yet to see a

full MTFs, which was expected at the February meeting. He then referred to the recommendations on page 19, and noted that whilst the report suggested inclusion of the MTFs, he did not see a recommendation relating to approval of this. It was suggested that an additional recommendation could be included to recommend approval of the MTFs to Full Council.

- iii. Cllr N Dixon referred to page 21, and noted that within the executive summary, reference was made to information that did not appear to be included in the report. The CTA replied that this information could be found in table 1 in section 5.1 of the report. It was noted that the table provided updated figures for the budget, whereas future years were covered in appendix A. Cllr N Dixon noted that he saw predictions and forecasts, but did not see an identifiable strategy. The CTA replied that due to the impact and financial pressures of Covid-19, whilst there was usually a separate MTFs report presented in the autumn, a decision had been taken to merge it with the budget report. She added that many Councils took this approach, and noted that the reports were reasonably similar, as the budget provided an update of figures from the previous year's MTFs, as shown in section 9 in conjunction with appendix E. Cllr N Dixon stated that whilst he saw projections and forecasts, he could not see a strategy identified to mitigate future forecasted deficits. Cllr E Seward stated that the Council would be required to set a balanced budget for 2022, and as a result would be proposing savings plan to achieve this, including the use of zero base budgeting, and asking each department to consider the impact of a 10% reduction in service budgets. He added that the main concern, was the uncertainty that remained around future levels of Government support.
- iv. Cllr J Toye referred to comments on the solar panel FIT payments, and said that it was important to remember that the Council's electricity use would have fallen significantly as a result of Covid-19, and the subsequent savings should be taken into account, if not already identified.
- v. Cllr C Cushing referred to page 76 and noted that the internal and external borrowing figures were difficult to differentiate, and asked for clarification of the external borrowing figures. Cllr E Seward replied that the external borrowing related to the Sheringham Leisure Centre project and the purchase of new waste collection vehicles. The CTA stated that the internal and external borrowing was not fully separated to allow the Council extra flexibility with its borrowing. She added that if required, she could provide a full breakdown of the external borrowing figures. Cllr C Cushing said that he assumed that external borrowing would be more expensive, then referred to comments in the report suggesting the Council could use private finance initiatives, and asked how this would fit into financial strategy. It was noted that the question referred to the next agenda item and would be answered at the appropriate time.
- vi. It was confirmed, following a point raised by Cllr N Dixon that the Council Tax projections for the next four years would be amended to reflect the correct years.
- vii. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr E Seward and seconded by Cllr L Shires with an additional recommendation for Council to approve the MTFs.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agree and where necessary recommend to Full Council:

1. The 2021/22 revenue budget as outlined at appendix A1;
2. The demand on the Collection Fund for 2021/22, subject to any amendments as a result of final precepts still to be received be: a. £6,456,213 for District purposes b. £2,529,011 (subject to confirmation of the final precepts) for Parish/Town Precepts;
3. The statement of and movement on the reserves as detailed at appendix D;
4. The updated Capital Programme and financing for 2021/22 to 2023/24 as detailed at appendix C1;
5. The capital bids contained within Appendix C2;
6. That the Council adopts the changes to the LCTS scheme as detailed in section 5.3, subject to the outcome of the public consultation;
7. That the balance on the Property Investment Fund of £999,476 be transferred to the new Earmarked Reserve – the Major Repairs Reserve
8. That Members note the current financial projections for the period to 2024/25;
9. That Full Council approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

26 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/2022

Cllr E Seward introduced the report and stated that he was happy to propose the recommendation. Cllr J Toye seconded the recommendation.

In response to Cllr C Cushing's question on the role Private Finance Initiatives, the CTA stated that this was only included as a potential option, and to date there had not been any previous use or consideration of PFI funding.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that;

The Capital Strategy and Prudential Indicators for 2021-22 are approved.

27 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/2022

Cllr E Seward introduced the report and stated that he was happy to propose the recommendation for Council to approve the Investment Strategy. Cllr V Gay seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

That the Council be asked to RESOLVE that The Investment Strategy is approved.

28 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021-22

Cllr E Seward introduced the report and proposed the recommendation for Council to approve the Treasury Management Strategy. Cllr N Lloyd seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED

To recommend to Council that:

That the Council be asked to RESOLVE that The Treasury Management Strategy Statement is approved.

29 NORTH NORFOLK COUNCIL TAX HARDSHIP POLICY

Cllr G Hayman introduced the report and informed Members that the Council distributed funds on behalf of the Government. He added that the methodology of the distribution was included in the report, and proposed the recommendations. Cllr L Shires seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED

To recommend to Council:

- 1. To approve the Council Tax Hardship Policy (Appendix 1) which will support the administration of the hardship fund.**
- 2. That delegation is given to the Benefits Manager to make any technical scheme amendments to ensure that it meets to criteria set by central government.**
- 3. To delegate any amendments as to funding distribution following any further funding committed by Government, to the Section 151 Officer and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Benefits.**

30 NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL - COMMUNICATIONS DELIVERY PLAN

The CM introduced the report and noted that it had been through several workshops and subject to review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He added that the aims of the strategy were to build the audience of the Council's social media channels, improve communication with residents, improve internal communications, provide better coverage of meetings and introduce an internal graphic design resource.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr J Rest referred to comments on improving internal communications, and asked whether officer's numbers could be identified when calling out of the Council as many people were reluctant to answer hidden numbers. Cllr L Shires stated that this issue was being discussed, though the solution was slightly more technical than expected. The CE added that the issue had been discussed by CLT and would hopefully be addressed in the near future.
- ii. It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw and seconded by Cllr J Toye to approve the Communications Delivery Plan.

RESOLVED

To approve the draft communications delivery plan.

31 PROVIDING MORTGAGE LOAN FUNDING FOR HOMES FOR WELLS

Cllr E Seward introduced the report and stated that any potential questions on the content of the exempt appendix would require the meeting to be moved into private business.

Cllr G Hayman stated that the report was part of the Council's efforts to increase the availability of affordable homes across the District, by using partners and registered providers. He added that the loan would enable the provider to double the number of homes available, which they would acquire from a previous provider. It was noted that the proposal was an exciting innovation for the Council, that would increase the availability of affordable homes, whilst presenting very low risk. Cllr G Hayman proposed the recommendation. Cllr N Lloyd seconded the recommendation and stated that the proposals supported the aims of the Corporate Plan and sought to alleviate the issues caused by a large number of second homes in the area.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr J Rest asked whether it was known who the asset lock of Homes for Wells was with and whether this information could be shared. It was confirmed that a written response would be given.
- ii. Cllr N Dixon referred to comments in the report that suggested that Homes for Wells were not able to raise the funds required from their usual funding sources, and asked whether it was known why this was the case. It was confirmed that a written response would be supplied to all Members together with a response to the previous question.

RESOLVED

To support the proposal to offer mortgage loan finance for Homes for Wells to allow Homes for Wells to purchase of four homes to let to key workers in Wells.

The meeting ended at 11.00 am.

Chairman