

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 28 April 2021 in the remotely via Zoom at 6.00 pm

Members Present:

Mr T Adams	Mr D Birch
Mr H Blathwayt	Mr A Brown
Dr P Bütikofer	Mr C Cushing
Mr N Dixon	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Mr T FitzPatrick	Mr V FitzPatrick
Mrs W Fredericks	Ms V Gay
Mrs P Grove-Jones	Mr G Hayman
Mr C Heinink	Mr P Heinrich
Mr N Housden	Mr R Kershaw
Mr N Lloyd	Mr G Mancini-Boyle
Mr N Pearce	Mr S Penfold
Mrs G Perry-Warnes	Mr J Punchard
Mr J Rest	Mr E Seward
Miss L Shires	Mrs J Stenton
Dr C Stockton	Mr J Toye
Mr A Varley	Ms L Withington
Mr A Yiasimi	

Also in attendance:

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr P Bevan Jones, Cllr S Butikofer, Cllr P Fisher, Cllr M Millership and Cllr E Spagnola

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

27 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

28 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

29 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman said that it had been a very challenging year due to the pandemic, however, he was pleased to inform members that the virtual 'Cley Calling' events had been very successful and had raised £2275 for the Chairman's charity, Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

30 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

31 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

Ms K Hart spoke in relation to Agenda item 17, Notice of Motion: Domestic Abuse. She said that she wished to highlight the lack of resources available in the town of Sheringham. She said that there were more resources available to those suffering from domestic violence but that there was very little support for the victims of emotional and psychological abuse, which could have a detrimental effect on mental health. She said that she would like to see a local support service established to assist victims and direct them to relevant voluntary organisations and agencies. Often people lacked the knowledge and the confidence to approach these bodies themselves and having someone to support them through this process would be hugely beneficial. She referred to the Daisy Programme in Dereham which offered these services and said that a similar scheme in Sheringham would be welcomed. She concluded by urging members to consider creating such a help hub.

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

The Independent Group Leader, Cllr J Rest informed members of the following changes to appointments:

Cllr J Rest to replace Cllr N Housden on the Constitution Working Party
Cllr N Housden to be removed from North Norfolk Community Transport (replacement to be confirmed)

33 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman invited Portfolio Holders to present their reports:

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for Coast said that she was delighted to inform members that the Bacton to Walcott Sandscaping scheme had recently been awarded the Norfolk Construction Excellence Award. She said that Coastal Partnership East's £8m bid for a 6 year programme to deliver an adaptation scheme on the Norfolk / Suffolk coast had been successful. She concluded by saying that the CPE team was preparing a response to the consultation on the FloodRe scheme, which was exploring the possibility of widening the current scheme to include protection from wider forms of risk such as coastal erosion, which was currently uninsurable.

Cllr C Cushing began by congratulating the team on their award. He referred to a report in the North Norfolk News on 16th April which detailed sand erosion on Bacton beach. He sought reassurance that the issue was being addressed and asked how it would be monitored. Cllr Fitch-Tillett replied that sand was constantly moving and changing. The coastal team was aware of certain objects rising to the surface and being exposed and the situation was being monitored by the coastal engineers. Any hazards that were found were marked as such. Advice to the public on beach safety would be issued in advance of the summer season.

Cllr V Gay, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Culture, presented her report. She informed members that the new 'Reef' leisure centre in Sheringham was on course for a summer opening. She said that an announcement was expected imminently regarding the Council's blue and green flags. From Saturday 1st May, four beaches would have a lifeguard in attendance.

Cllr Gay highlighted the continuing success of the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund which had allocated £106k to 22 organisations between March 2020 and March 2021. She concluded by saying that the social prescribing briefing for members had now taken place. It was well attended and feedback had been excellent.

Cllr W Fredericks thanked Cllr Gay for the social prescribing briefing which had been very informative.

Cllr G Hayman, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Benefits presented his report as written. He drew members attention to the Domestic Abuse bill which was shortly to be enacted. He said that the Council was working closely with the County Council to deliver the services required to support the victims of domestic abuse.

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development introduced his report and provided an update on grant payments. In the last year the Council had distributed £118.5m to businesses. He thanked the team for their exceptional performance. He informed members that consultants had been appointed for the North Walsham Heritage Action Zone project, with work about to commence on the lokes. The newly formed Cultural Committee had recently met.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked whether the Portfolio Holder would like to thank central government for the funding received from Government to pay in grants to businesses. Cllr Kershaw agreed.

Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environment, introduced his report. He said that the Environmental Charter would be going to Cabinet on 10th May for approval. He then referred to the Environment Forum which had taken place virtually, with 50 delegates in attendance. Cllr S Penfold said that he had attended the forum and it had been very engaging and thought-provoking. He thanked everyone involved.

Cllr J Toye agreed, adding that the Chairman of the Purbeck Trust had commented how good it had been.

Cllr N Dixon referred to the noise abatement notice on page 62. He said that as local member for Hoveton, this was the first he had heard of it. He asked whether this reflected the local member protocol which covered communication relating to such issues. Cllr Lloyd apologised and said that he would follow this up with the relevant officers. Local members should be informed of any issues relating to their ward.

Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets presented his report as written.

Cllr L Shire, Portfolio Holder for Organisational Resources, introduced her report. She thanked the Customer Services team for the assistance that they had provided to the NHS by contacting patients and booking appointments for vaccinations.

Cllr V FitzPatrick referred to page 69 and the rollout of the NNDC App. He asked if it was purely transactional or information-based. He asked what the anticipated uptake was likely to be, the initial outlay and the ongoing running costs. He concluded by asking if there was a financial benefit to the Council and whether a business case had been presented to the Portfolio Holder. Cllr Shires said that she did not have the information to answer the questions but she would provide a written response.

Cllr N Housden referred to Customer Services and availability via telephone. Several of his constituents had contacted him to say that they could not get through, occasionally waiting 20 minutes for a response. Cllr Shires asked if any specific departments were involved. Cllr Housden said it was regarding the Planning and Licensing service areas. He agreed to provide Cllr Shires with more information so she could look into it.

Cllr J Stenton asked why the Council continued to use paper pay slips instead of digital ones. It wasn't environmentally friendly. Cllr Shires agreed, saying that she would look into it.

Cllr D Birch referred to the issue of accessibility and the Council's website. He welcomed that it had improved and asked Cllr Shires what steps would be taken to build on this. Cllr Shires replied that this was ongoing issue. The layout of the site would be assessed and the facility to enlarge text easily, with good colour contrast. Keyboard navigation was also a factor. NNDC was in the top 30 accessible councils.

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement, presented his report. He said that there had been a huge increase in planning applications. Despite this, the Planning Team were processing them quickly and he thanked them for their hard work.

Cllr T FitzPatrick referred to the section of the report on 'digital transformation'. He said that two of his parishes had not received notification of planning applications. He asked whether this issue could be looked into as it may be occurring more widely. Cllr Toye agreed, saying that it would be helpful to know if there were any gaps.

The Chairman said that there was sufficient time remaining to take any outstanding questions.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle referred to the Environmental Charter. He asked about the targets set and the commitments stated and how they would be measured and reported back to measured and how frequently. Cllr Lloyd referred to the Managing Performance updates to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and asked if there was any further informed that Cllr Mancini-Boyle required. Cllr Mancini-Boyle replied how ambitious the Council was being regarding its environmental targets and what Cllr Lloyd would aspire to achieve. Cllr Lloyd replied that the Council was committed to being carbon neutral by 2030 and there would be a roadmap to achieving this. Regarding recycling, he said that the pandemic had led to significant changes to the waste streams and this made the setting of targets very challenging. That said, he felt there was room for improvement. He would like to see food waste collection but the costs at the moment were prohibitive.

Cllr Toye asked Cllr Shires about car parking season tickets and what the uptake was. Cllr Shires replied that during the last financial year there had been an increase of 620 extra season tickets. There had been a shift in how transactions were undertaken with 67% of purchases now being done digitally.

34 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, introduced this item. He explained that the report set out the current financial position of the COVID Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) and the actions that the Council was undertaking to commit the remainder of the District's allocation which was intended to support businesses and the local economy. He said that the Government had

recently announced that local authorities would receive an additional top-up to their ARG allocation. However, in order to qualify for this money (£760,411 for North Norfolk) Councils would need to have fully defrayed all of their current allocation and consideration was now being given as to how this could be drawn down for the benefit of the business community.

AGREED to note

- the content of the report and the progress to date in committing the ARG allocation to support local businesses;
- given the time constraints, that delegation is provided to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Growth Economic, to:
 1. establish the terms and processes to commit the remaining ARG fund by 30 June 2021, and;
 2. develop a programme of business support using the anticipated ARG top-up funds that the District will benefit from following the full dissemination of the current fund.

35 PREPARATIONS FOR MANAGING ANTICIPATED INCREASED VISITOR NUMBERS - SUMMER 2021

The Chief Executive introduced this item. He said that it set out the consideration that the Council was giving to the management of larger numbers of visitors to the District during the summer of 2021. He outlined the key challenges, including an increased demand for holiday homes, car parking, improved road signage and the promotion of quieter areas of the District, to reduce pressure on the coastal towns. He then set out proposals for each of the main coastal towns to manage the anticipated rise in visitor numbers and to ensure that compliance with Covid regulations and guidance was maintained throughout.

The Chairman invited members to comment:

Cllr J Rest referred to the recommendation regarding the provision of a food court area in North Lodge park in Cromer. He asked whether the reference to local businesses meant existing businesses in the area to set up a satellite business or whether other traders who wouldn't normally trade in that way would be allowed to participate. He also asked whether they would have to be registered with NNDC. The Chief Executive replied that the opportunities would initially be offered to businesses that already had a presence in Cromer such as cafes and restaurants. Conversations were currently ongoing. He confirmed that they would be businesses registered with the Council in terms of food hygiene and commercial licences.

Cllr E Withington said that Sheringham would welcome the opportunity for a Park and Ride scheme in the town. She thanked the Chief Executive for the information and work that had been undertaken so far regarding preparations for the summer season.

Cllr G Hayman asked about the former playgroup building in North Lodge park and whether consideration was being given to it being brought into use over the summer. The Chief Executive replied that the Council's Estates team was currently looking at options for the building.

Cllr N Pearce asked about car boot sites, saying that there may be an issue regarding additional traffic in relation to these. He also raised concerns regarding the new McDonalds restaurant in Cromer, saying that the traffic on the first day of trading had been exceptionally heavy. In addition litter from the site had begun to appear across the District. The Chief Executive replied that car boot sales had not been considered but this would be monitored together with outdoor markets. Regarding the new McDonalds, he said that the traffic on the first day had been exceptional and had eased off now. The littering situation was the subject of ongoing discussions with the operator.

Cllr S Penfold commented that there were lots of hidden gems across the District and he supported the proposals to promote them more.

AGREED

To note the report and the actions listed.

36 SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

Cllr J Rest, Chairman of the Employment & Appeals Committee, introduced this item. He explained that a Panel had been convened to support the process of the recruitment of the new Director of Place and Climate Change. This had been done in conjunction with SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives). The Panel had met the previous week to undertake the final interviews in person. He said that he was pleased to confirm that the Panel had supported one candidate and a formal offer had been made to them. A response was still awaited and further details would be provided at a suitable time.

37 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 15 MARCH AND 12 APRIL

None.

38 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 21 APRIL 2021

None.

39 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None received.

40 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None received.

41 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

The Chairman said that two notices of motion had been received:

1. Environment Bill, proposed by Cllr N Lloyd and seconded by Cllr E Seward
2. Domestic Abuse, proposed by Cllr W Fredericks and seconded by Cllr E Withington

He invited Cllr Lloyd to introduce the first motion. Cllr Lloyd presented the motion as set out in the agenda:

'Human activity has already resulted in climate change.

The impacts of rising temperatures are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

Limiting Global Warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius may still be possible with ambitious action from national and regional authorities, the private sector, and local communities.

Average World temperature records continue to be broken year on year with the previous 10 year period being the hottest on record (WMO). Despite this, green house gasses continue to rise.

North Norfolk, with its extended coastline, is particularly susceptible to the effects of climate change.

Councils have an important role to play in tackling climate change. They can act as leaders and role models for others to follow. NNDC is committed to reaching net zero carbon by 2030. This pledge will soon be evidenced in our Climate Change Charter, indeed reducing the Council's carbon footprint has been a priority since 2019.

NNDC have already taken action by committing to planting 110,000 trees by 2023, switching to a green energy supply, renewable energy projects, introducing EVCP's to North Norfolk and including ambitious green policies into our draft Local Plan. Our journey has only just begun.

Everyone, has a responsibility to reduce their impact on the environment - but we cannot be expected to solve the problem of climate change on our own. The Government has a huge role to play in restoring the quality of the air we breathe, nature, biodiversity and the natural environment.

The recently announced delay to the Environment Bill was therefore extremely disappointing. This Bill promised new powers to defend nature and biodiversity, protect our water supplies, reduce flooding potential, improve air quality, enhance waste and resource efficiency whilst improving recycling rates.

Motion:

North Norfolk District Council calls for the Government to reintroduce the Environment Bill at its earliest opportunity.

The Bill will call for a new environmental relationship between local and national Government. Councils will take a greater responsibility to enforce many aspects of the Bill and will be obliged to formally adopt new environmental improvement roles at a local level. NNDC believe we are well placed to take a leading role in this new agenda and to deliver ambitious plans to protect our beautiful district for future generations. However, this will come at a cost. This Council therefore calls upon

Government to provide the support that will be required in terms of finance and legislative powers to ensure the Bill is implemented effectively.

NNDC will write to George Eustice MP to express our support for the Bill, urge him to reintroduce the Bill at his earliest opportunity whilst emphasising that adequate resources must be provided to local Councils.

Write to North Norfolk's two MP's seeking their support for the Environmental Bill and request them to take a leading role by championing its passage into law through Parliament.'

Cllr Lloyd said that there were three Bills relating to environmental and green issues currently making their passage through Parliament. This motion related specifically to the Environment Bill. This had been introduced in October 2019 and was currently stalled, awaiting scheduling which was very disappointing. He outlined the aims of the Bill and set out the targets that it would introduce. He said that he was very supportive of the Bill and drew members' attention to the recommendations, urging them to support them.

Cllr Seward reserved his right to speak as seconder of the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate:

Cllr N Housden referred to paragraph six. He sought clarification on whether the reference to NNDC was to the Council in its own right or the whole District. Cllr Lloyd confirmed that it related to the Council specifically, adding that the commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030 was something that the Council could implement in its own offices and assets but this was not feasible to achieve district wide. Cllr Housden suggested that this should be clarified. He proposed the following amendment:

'That NNDC was committed to reaching zero net carbon by 2030 in its own right'. The Chairman asked the proposer and seconder of the motion whether they would accept the amendment. They agreed and it became part of the substantive motion.

Cllr C Cushing said that he did not feel that it was a good motion as the Government had already indicated that they intended to bring the Environment Bill forward soon. He said that there had been additional pressure placed on the Parliamentary timetable by the pandemic and Members were aware of this. Parliament had been informed that the Bill would come forwards early in the next parliamentary session and would become law by the Autumn. He then outlined all of the work that the Government had already undertaken regarding climate change and the environment. He said this clearly demonstrated their commitment to delivering the green agenda and members should be satisfied with the Government's record on environmental issues. Cllr Cushing concluded by reminding members that delivery of the Council's corporate plan had been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic. He said that if this was an acceptable reason for the Council then why was it not acceptable for the Government.

Cllr N Pearce said that what went on in Westminster served the whole nation not just the Council and this should be recognised. He said that the Government had worked very hard, despite the impact of the pandemic.

Cllr L Shires referred members to the penultimate paragraph which expressed

support for the Bill and she refuted that it was not a supportive motion.

Cllr J Toye agreed, saying that the Council was supportive of the Government and they wished to see the Bill moving forwards and work with them on delivering the actions arising from it.

Cllr E Seward then spoke as seconder of the Motion. He said that it clearly stated that the Council was supportive of the Bill and that it just expressed concerns that it was being deferred. If the Government was serious about this issue, then it should be prioritised. A programme of delivery was needed to get you there and the Bill enable this. One of the key issues was regarding powers to deal with flood protection and these were needed now. If the Government wanted to expedite the Bill's passage through Parliament, then they could.

It was proposed by Cllr N Lloyd, seconded by Cllr E Seward and

RESOLVED

That North Norfolk District Council calls for the Government to reintroduce the Environment Bill at its earliest opportunity.

The Bill will call for a new environmental relationship between local and national Government. Councils will take a greater responsibility to enforce many aspects of the Bill and will be obliged to formally adopt new environmental improvement roles at a local level. NNDC believe we are well placed to take a leading role in this new agenda and to deliver ambitious plans to protect our beautiful district for future generations. However, this will come at a cost. This Council therefore calls upon Government to provide the support that will be required in terms of finance and legislative powers to ensure the Bill is implemented effectively.

That NNDC will write to George Eustice MP to express our support for the Bill, urge him to reintroduce the Bill at his earliest opportunity whilst emphasising that adequate resources must be provided to local Councils.

To write to North Norfolk's two MP's seeking their support for the Environmental Bill and request them to take a leading role by championing its passage into law through Parliament.'

Seven members abstained.

The Chairman then moved onto the second motion regarding domestic abuse, proposed by Cllr W Fredericks, seconded by E Withington. He invited Cllr Fredericks to introduce it:

Cllr Fredericks began by thanking Ms Hart for speaking at the start of the meeting and for highlighting the many forms that abuse could take. She outlined the motion as presented in the agenda:

'Over the last year Norfolk Police have reported a 20% increase in Domestic Abuse. In Norfolk 1 in 4 women and 1 in 8 men have reported being the victim of Domestic Abuse. Nationally this is 1 in 3 Women. (Fig. Norfolk County Council). Norfolk Police have recorded a 20% increase in cases over the last year. This is an epidemic. With only a 5% positive outcome of the 54% of cases reaching

prosecution by the CPS. These are the cases we know about. There are many more hidden away.

Children are often witnesses and there are 692 children in Norfolk per day, are assessed as being at risk of DA.

This is now an incredibly urgent issue which needs all of our collective thinking on how to prevent acts of abuse, and find ways to support and enable survivors to flee from their situations and then ongoing support to continue to stay safe. Often the victim stays or returns because there is no support available.

The present system isn't coping with the numbers and we simply don't have the mechanism to help victims when they need it most. Survivors need help at the point of escape. Not to jump off a cliff with anyone to catch them. Recently I hid a family in a chalet and without the excellent work of our housing team, the next place would have been a caravan. Help is usually available in Greater Norwich, however is nothing or very little is here in North Norfolk.

We welcome the upcoming Domestic Abuse Bill from Parliament. We can put steps in place to implement legislation with the help of the following resolutions:

Resolutions

1) In May NNDC to establish a forum and invite the police, Norfolk County Council, our experienced officers, agencies and survivors, to work together to find opportunities to support where there are currently gaps in services. Also to pull together our current working partnerships.

Working with NNDC and Norfolk County Council, the forum will help develop an action plan to improve support, to those who are living with DA in particular to those who have or want to escape away from their situation.

2) All staff and members to be offered a short training course from Norfolk County Council which will raise awareness of DA and address the issues. We are a customer facing council and our officers doing brilliant work with our residents. I believe that this will increase our empathy and show those suffering that we are listening and we do care.

3) One DA Champion to be trained and be responsible for the following departments; Customer Services, Housing, Revenue and Benefits, Social Prescribing and Environmental Health.

As members we are responsible for representing the needs of all our residents, those living with Domestic Abuse are part of the hidden community. It is vital that we have the support network in place to enable them to come forward and empower them to live in safety.

Cllr Fredericks then drew members' attention to the very low rates of prosecution. In Norfolk alone there was over 600 children at risk of domestic abuse. She spoke of her personal experiences of responding to incidents of abuse within her community and her frustration at not being able to help more. Cllr Fredericks concluded by outlining the recommendations and urged members to support them.

Cllr E Withington reserved her right to speak as seconder of the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate.

Cllr L Shires thanked Cllrs Fredericks and Withington for bringing the motion forward and Ms Hart for speaking. She said that there was evidence that progress was being made regarding gaining the trust of residents regarding domestic abuse and seeking support. Many victims left their homes with very little and then found there was extremely limited support available. There was no system in place to support the survivor and she welcomed the opportunity for all of the groups and individuals involved to work together. She thanked all of the people in the community who had previously helped in challenging situations and ensured that victims could remain in the communities to which they belonged.

Cllr J Toye reiterated the previous comments and said that it was real issue that needed to be addressed.

Cllr G Hayman agreed with the previous comments. He said that everyone knew someone who had been a victim of domestic abuse. He felt that this was a problem that sat with men and a long-term solution was needed in educating and socialising them.

Cllr P Heinrich said that it was important to recognise the sheer scale of the issue. The statistics bore this out. The lack of support was a problem and a solution must be found.

Cllr R Kershaw said that he had been very touched during the recent briefing on social prescribing. The impact on residents' lives was so positive and made a real difference. He requested a recorded vote.

The Chairman said that he wished to comment on the fact that it was not a gender-specific problem. He was personally aware of a case where the perpetrator had been female.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle referred to the social prescribing team and said that this should be increased and this option should be explored too.

Cllr E Withington then spoke as the seconder of the motion. She said that domestic abuse was a hidden epidemic. Month on month it was one of the highest crimes reported – as demonstrated in the statistics. This had always been the case. She said that in the last 18 months she had personally supported 5 women to escape from domestic violence – ranging in age from 21 to 71. They have left with nothing and there was no mechanism in place to provide a safe refuge, keeping their children in school or even legal advice. It was crucial that the gaps in the system were identified so that appropriate support could be put in place. She urged the Council to play an important role and to support the motion.

A recorded vote was taken and it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1) In May NNDC to establish a forum and invite the police, Norfolk County Council, our experienced officers, agencies and survivors, to work together to find

opportunities to support where there are currently gaps in services. Also to pull together our current working partnerships.

Working with NNDC and Norfolk County Council, the forum will help develop an action plan to improve support, to those who are living with DA in particular to those who have or want to escape away from their situation.

2) All staff and members to be offered a short training course from Norfolk County Council which will raise awareness of DA and address the issues. We are a customer facing council and our officers doing brilliant work with our residents. I believe that this will increase our empathy and show those suffering that we are listening and we do care.

3) One DA Champion to be trained and be responsible for the following departments; Customer Services, Housing, Revenue and Benefits, Social Prescribing and Environmental Health.

42 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

43 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.

Chairman