

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 6 September 2021 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Mrs W Fredericks	Mrs S Bütikofer (Chair)
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Ms V Gay
Mr R Kershaw	Mr N Lloyd
Mr E Seward	Miss L Shires
Mr J Toye	

Members also attending:

Cllr A Briwn, Cllr C Cushing, Cllr N Dixon, Cllr V Holliday, Cllr J Rest and Cllr E Withington

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Democratic Services Manager, Director for Resources/Section 151 Officer and Democratic Services and Governance Officer - Scrutiny, Chief Technical Accountant, Economic Growth Manager

120 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July and the special meeting held on 19th July were approved as a correct record.

121 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

122 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

123 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

124 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised that Members could ask questions as issues arose during the meeting.

125 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET WORKING PARTIES

Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party – 16 August 2021

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Planning, introduced this item. He explained that there were two recommendations relating to the Small Growth Villages Policy. In relation to the first one, the removal of Happisburgh from the list of small growth villages, he proposed that this be referred back to the Working Party as the village

shop was no longer disappearing.

It was proposed by Cllr J Toye, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED to refer recommendation 1 back to the Working Party for reconsideration

To approve:

That additional policy criteria are added to ensure that rural exceptions affordable housing schemes are prioritised in Small Growth Villages, and additional amendments

- to explain how Neighbourhood Plans are impacted by the policy;
- to clarify that the policy criteria applies to sites between .25 hectares and 1 hectare in size;
- to provide clarification of the status of Hoveton as a Large Growth Village within the Local Plan.

126 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, confirmed that there were no recommendations to Cabinet. He referenced a previous recommendation regarding additional resources for planning enforcement and asked when a response would be provided. The Leader confirmed that now that the new Director of Place was in post, it would be discussed with him and an update provided in due course.

127 OFFICER DELEGATED DECISION MAY TO AUGUST 2021

The Chairman said that the report set out the decisions taken by senior officers under delegated powers between May and August 2021.

Members agreed to note the report.

128 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - PERIOD 4

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Assets, Cllr E Seward, introduced this item. He said that this was the first monitoring report for the current municipal year. So far car parking income and planning fees income were above the forecast figures, however, the next report would provide a much clearer picture.

Cllr L Shires referred to page 31 of the report. She requested that the Sheringham Leisure Centre was referred to by its new name the Reef from now on.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr R Kershaw and

RESOLVED

To note the contents of the report and the current budget monitoring position for the Council.

Reasons for the decision:

To update Members on the current budget monitoring position for the Council.

129 2020/21 OUTTURN REPORT (PERIOD 12 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Assets, Cllr E Seward, introduced this item. He said that the report provided a final budget monitoring position for the 2020/21 financial year. It showed an overall underspend of £752,223, allowing £255,917 from budget and grant underspends to be rolled forward within earmarked reserves to fund ongoing and identified commitments for which no budget had been allocated in 2021/22.

Cllr Seward said that the surplus showed that the Council was soundly managed and emerging from the pandemic in a good financial position. He thanked the Finance Team and the Revenues and Benefits team for their hard work.

He summarised key points from the report. Regarding the Council's operating costs against the budget, he said that there was an adverse balance of just over £1m but this had been more than compensated for by not having to borrow money, which had been anticipated for the waste vehicles contract and the new leisure centre. Instead, the amount income coming in meant that this had not occurred.

Regarding the business grants collection fund, Cllr Seward said that this had exceeded expectations. Due to the number of small businesses in North Norfolk which were entitled to rate relief, this income then came straight to the Council.

He then spoke about the Fees and Charges compensation scheme which covered loss of income from the Council's car parks and leisure centres, explaining that this had also brought in further funds. All of this additional funding had been allocated to the Delivery Plan Reserve, to be spent on projects for the District and its residents.

Cllr Seward concluded by saying that the Council, like many others, had received financial assistance from the Government during the pandemic, adding that unlike a lot of local authorities which were now facing a dire financial situation, NNDC was not. He referred to the challenges of budget forecasting, using the example of the Budget of February 2019 as an example. At that time, there had been a forecast deficit of £2m for 2021, yet there was now a surplus of £0.75m. One of the biggest, ongoing challenges that the Council faced was the uncertainty over future Government funding. If it stayed as it currently was, then the Council could maintain its services.

Cllr C Cushing asked how much funding the Council had received from the Government in the previous financial year. The Chief Technical Accountant replied that Covid grant funding had totalled £1.7m (in four tranches) with a further £700k to cover lost fees and charges. Cllr Cushing said that it would be appropriate then for the Council to thank the Government for its support. He then referred to Cllr Seward's comments about the forecast deficit of £2m and asked what work was being undertaken to understand how forecasting and projections could be improved for the future.

Cllr Seward said that in terms of central government support, it was assumed that this would fall away and therefore there was a very cautious approach going forward. The Chief Technical Accountant added that it was very hard to forecast even one year ahead and as yet there was no clarity regarding future funding streams. The business rates retention scheme was also currently under review and this, together with the business rates revaluation programme, was causing uncertainty from April 2022 onwards. In addition, it was possible that many of the

non-ringfenced grants such as New Homes Bonus and the Rural Delivery Grant, may not continue. Consequently, the Finance Team took a cautious approach in their estimates, particularly regarding grant income. They worked with funding advisory services which helped provide a steer and shared information with peer groups.

The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, said that Cabinet also asked the same questions of the Finance team and that for anyone from the commercial sector, local government funding was a difficult subject to understand.

Cllr J Rest referred to page 35 of the report and the allocation of £0.75m to a special reserve. He asked for more information on this. Cllr Seward replied that this was the Delivery Plan Reserve. The funding had been allocated to this reserve and would be earmarked for future investment in North Norfolk.

Cllr L Shires referred to page 81 and the second homes council tax. She said that it did not make it clear that this had now been withdrawn and suggested that future reports should be updated to reflect this.

Cllr J Toye thanked everyone for their hard work in preparing the report.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED

To recommend the following to Full Council:

- a) The provisional outturn position for the General Fund revenue account for 2020/21;
- b) The transfers to and from reserves as detailed within the report (and appendix C) along with the corresponding updates to the 2021/22 budget;
- c) Allocate the surplus of £752,223 to the Delivery Plan Reserve;
- d) The financing of the 2020/21 capital programme as detailed within the report and at Appendix D;
- e) The balance on the General Reserve of £2.326 million;
- f) The updated capital programme for 2021/22 to 2024/25 and scheme financing as outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix E;
- g) The outturn position in respect of the Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix F and;
- h) The roll-forward requests as outline in Appendix H are approved.

Reasons for the recommendations:

To approve the outturn position on the revenue and capital accounts used to produce the statutory accounts for 2020/21.

130 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Seward, introduced this item. He explained that the report set out the treasury management activities of the Council actually undertaken during 2020/21 compared with the treasury management strategy for the year.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr J Toye and

RESOLVED

To recommend to Full Council that the Treasury Management Annual Report and Prudential Indicators for 2020/21 are approved.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure compliance with the financial codes

131 DEBT RECOVERY 2020-21

Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced this item. He explained that it was an annual report detailing the Council's collection performance and debt management arrangements for 2020/21. He thanked the Revenues & Benefits team for their hard work during a very challenging period for rate collection. Early in the pandemic a softer approach had been taken to collection and this meant that it was slightly lower than previous years, although performance remained high.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

RESOLVED

To recommend to Council:

Approval of the annual report giving details of the Council's write-offs in accordance with the Council's Debt Write-Off Policy and performance in relation to revenues collection.

Reasons for the decision

To ensure compliance with Council policies.

132 CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Organisational Resources, Cllr L Shires, said that this item had been to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration and input. She said that did not feel that it was ready to be approved and that the changes proposed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee as well as requests from Cabinet still needed to be incorporated into the Strategy. She therefore proposed that this item was deferred.

Cllr J Rest asked when the item would come back to Cabinet for approval. Cllr Shires confirmed that it would come to the meeting on 4th October.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr V Gay and

Resolved:

That this decision be deferred until the Cabinet meeting on 4th October 2021.

Reason for the decision:

The strategy did not sufficiently reflect the priorities of the Administration and further work was required.

133 MANAGING PERFORMANCE Q1 2021-2022

The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, introduced this item. She said that good progress was being made against targets and clarified that the report covered the period up until the end of quarter 1 – not the current position.

Cllr C Cushing said that six things had been pushed back to the following year yet this was not mentioned in the accompanying commentary. One of them was supporting start-ups, which was a concern. He also commented that the number of calls to the Council appeared to have dropped off and again, this was not reflected in the accompanying report. He said it appeared that Covid 19 was still being used as an excuse for poor customer service.

The Leader replied that the country was facing a major pandemic. She said that businesses had been supported by the Council throughout this period and the Council had received additional funding for hitting its targets. The report did not reflect this either. She said that everyone agreed that the call handling figures were disappointing, adding that the new Customer Services Strategy needed to reflect revised times and targets. She concluded by saying that she was also tired of hearing Covid being used as an excuse.

Cllr C Cushing said that there should be specific actions regarding call handling and call times. He added that it would be helpful to have the movement of baseline targets set out clearly in the report. The Leader replied that Cabinet was also frustrated and said that she would look into it. She added that the Council needed to respond to the needs of residents and focus on what could be delivered. If some projects were moved back to accommodate this then so be it.

Cllr Cushing replied that open and honest reporting was important. Moving target dates was not helpful. The Leader replied that some officers had been allocated to other work during the pandemic and this was not something that had been anticipated.

The Chief Executive reminded members that the corporate plan had been approved in November 2019, with a delivery plan of 90 objectives being approved by Cabinet in February 2020. Following the onset of the pandemic, he had advised Cabinet in August 2020 that they would not be able to deliver all 90 objectives. In October 2020, a revised delivery plan of just 18 objectives was agreed. He added that the situation with the pandemic continued in the first quarter of 2021 – including a third lockdown and this was reflected in the performance report. He said that he was now working with Cabinet to review the 18 priority objectives. It was anticipated that a report would come forwards to Cabinet soon outlining this refocus and to help members understand the journey better.

The Policy & Performance Officer said that any change to the due date of an objective required an explanation in the accompanying commentary.

Cllr V Holliday said that there were some overlooked key performance indicators (KPI's) and it was difficult to assess these if there was no target as you couldn't be sure what the Council was working towards. The Leader replied that Cabinet was aware of the targets and what it was trying to deliver.

It was proposed by Cllr S Butikofer, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED

To note the report and endorse the actions being taken by the Corporate Leadership Team detailed in Appendix A.

134 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, introduced this item. He explained that following the Council's success in fully defraying its initial allocation from the Government funded Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), it had now qualified for additional funding. This top-up fund would enable the Council to move from the rescue phase of the pandemic to the recovery phase. He said that the intention was to focus on business support and the provision of training for care sector workers.

Cllr C Cushing referred to page 246 and the reference to some small businesses 'slipping between the cracks' He asked whether efforts would be made to prioritise these and how the funding would be allocated. Cllr Kershaw confirmed that this was a priority. He said that there was not sufficient funding to help all of them but the Council would be sympathetic and would apply the funds according to merit.

Cllr V Holliday asked how much funding would be allocated to supporting the care sector. She said that young people had difficulty accessing work in this sector as they often didn't have a car. Cllr Kershaw confirmed that £500k had been allocated to supporting the visitor sector and the care sector. The Economic Growth Manager added a firm amount had not been allocated to the care sector yet. All options were being looked and review would be undertaken in the next couple of weeks and then his team would be in a position to confirm the funding allocation.

It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw, seconded by Cllr J Toye and

RESOLVED to:

1. agree and approve the Business Support and Recovery Grant Scheme;
2. confirm support for the appointment of administrative resource (1 FTE) to support the grant scheme(s) and, as required, to support the delivery of wider business support;
3. agree to the further development of a wider scheme, with specific targeted support for the visitor economy, social care sectors and digital skills;

Reason for the decision:

To continue to support the recovery of the local economy and to ensure the funding is fully defrayed within the timescales determined by the Government.

135 RATIFICATION OF NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOODING ALLIANCE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environment, introduced this item. He said that it was important the Council signed up to the principles of the proposed strategy as the need for partnership working was recognised. He said that he had not been overly impressed with progress so far but it was early days and any challenges could only be addressed by working collaboratively.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett said that she was relieved to see that the Alliance had been formed. It had been a huge disappointment when the County Council's flood forum

had been disbanded. Karen Thomas, Head of Coastal Partnership East (CPE) attended meetings of the new strategic alliance, so it covered the coast too.

Cllr V Holliday echoed Cllr Fitch-Tillett's comments. She said that there was very little mention of coastal flooding. The main focus was on inland flooding and coastal flooding should be represented more strongly. The Leader replied that there was a strong coastal network in place and the Council would keep pushing for support in this area.

Cllr N Dixon said that he endorsed Cllr Fitch-Tillett's comments, however, it was important to note that it was fluvial and pluvial flooding that led to the strategic alliance being formed, not coastal flooding. He said that he had some concerns about resources to deliver the strategy and he was cautious about the willingness to sign up to partnership working and sign up to a common agenda. The real challenge would come in integrating this into the various services areas across the Council – such as Planning and Environmental Health. He said that he would want to see evidence on how the ambitions of the strategy would be delivered in the Council's planning policies and environmental aims and policies. He added that from his previous involvement in flooding matters, it was clear that there was an issue in the way responsibilities were shared and allocated – between the Environment Agency and landowners. There was a general lack of awareness which was a reflection of decades of neglect and misunderstanding as well as climate variations. The real issue was about how the Council as an organisation embraced this opportunity and demonstrated its commitment via ensuring deliverability through the main affected service areas of the Council.

Cllr E Withington said that she was very supportive of the proposals but that she did have a number of concerns. She referenced recent pluvial flooding in Sheringham and said that the Council's planning team had been very responsive and come out and reviewed the situation along with Anglian Water. She queried what would happen when action was needed and who would fund it. There was still a long way to go.

Cllr R Kershaw agreed with Cllr Dixon's comments. He said that the Environment Agency lacked 'teeth' and resources to work effectively with farmers and landowners. He referred to Water Resources East and said that NNDC had joined to work longer term to address these problems.

Cllr Lloyd said that the comments so far echoed his own feelings. The Council would be one of many bodies on the Alliance and it would try to influence outcomes.

Cllr J Toyne said he agreed that the Council's planning team had a big part to play, adding that there was a policy in place to deal with flood risk.

Cllr E Seward welcomed the proposals, saying that it was important to have a framework in place for dealing with flooding as it was an issue that was the responsibility of a wide range of bodies. He gave an example of how a recent flooding event in North Walsham had been dealt with and said that it was not clear to residents who was responsible for the cleaning of gullies and drains and how to report problems with these. Cllr Dixon agreed, adding that many residential estates had a lot of paved drives but the residents complained when the roads flooded. There was a lack of awareness and responsibility for these issues. He said that for a group such as the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance to work, it needed all of the participating members to shoulder their responsibilities. He added that a lot rested on property owners and land owners and they may need to pay towards it. It could

be a painful process and the Council should be mindful of this.

Cllr W Fredericks pointed out that there was no phone number for emergency flooding on the County Council's website.

It was proposed by Cllr N Lloyd, seconded by Cllr A Fitch-Tillett and

RESOLVED

To ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance Strategy and Action Plan.

Reason for the decision:

To support a collaborate approach to flooding and water management in Norfolk. To ensure that there continues to be a planned and resilient approach to flooding across the County.

136 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

137 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.

Chairman