

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 13 October 2021 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

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| Committee Members Present: | Mr N Dixon (Chairman) | Mr S Penfold (Vice-Chairman) |
| | Ms L Withington | Mr H Blathwayt |
| | Mr P Heinrich | Dr V Holliday |
| | Mrs E Spagnola | Mr C Cushing |
| | Mr A Brown | Mr T Adams |
| Members also attending: | Ms V Gay (Observer) | Mr N Lloyd (Observer) |
| | Mr J Rest (Observer) | Mr E Seward (Observer) |
| Officers in Attendance: | Democratic Services and Governance Officer - Scrutiny (DSGOS), Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager (HSDM), Democratic Services Manager (DSM), Estates and Asset Strategy Manager (EASM), Benefits Manager (BM), Housing Options Manager (HOM), Director for Communities (DFC), Assistant Director for People Services (ADPS), Chief Technical Accountant (CTA), Economic Growth Manager (EGM) and Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth (ADSG) | |

69 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr N Housden, Cllr P Fisher and Cllr A Varley.

70 SUBSTITUTES

Cllr T Adams.

71 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

72 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

74 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

75 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

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

None received.

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

The DSGOS referred Members to the response provided by the Revenues Manager on the number and type of businesses that required NDR write-offs, as a result of insolvency. He added that the data showed that there was no clear correlation between the types of businesses and insolvencies.

78 PEOPLE SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

Cllr E Seward – Deputy Leader introduced the report and informed Members that the restructure aligned with the use of housing reserves to enhance the delivery of services. He added that this would strengthen the services provided to residents in need of housing assistance and disabled facilities grants. It was noted that the additional posts were not within the base budget, and would therefore be fixed-term positions, that would help to generate income via grant funding opportunities.

Question and Discussion

- i. The Chairman noted that he had shared a range of questions posed to the CE via email in advance of the meeting, with answers provided by the ADPS.
- ii. Cllr C Cushing stated that he had concerns regarding the restructure as a substantial request for additional resource had been made, whilst quarterly performance reports indicated that there were no issues that required additional resource. He added that claims made regarding the potential for generating income had not been supported with data, and overall he felt that an additional layer of management would not generate efficiencies. Cllr E Seward replied that approximately £160k of funding was for existing posts that was pre-planned expenditure, which meant that only £486k would be spent on new posts, as opposed £700k. He added that when combined with the use of housing reserves, only £1 in £4 of the proposed spend would be for staffing costs. It was noted that the Housing Team also provided a complex service that required careful management and support to deliver services.
- iii. The ADPS stated that a key reason for introducing Team Leader posts over more officer level posts was to provide an opportunity for existing team members to step-up on a fixed-term basis to provide a better staff to team leader ratio. She added that HR had been consulted on improving this balance, which would allow managers more time to focus on key tasks. In relation to performance, it was reported that the additional resource would allow officers to move from crisis management to prevention, which would be a key focus following the restructure. The ADPS stated that the Pandemic had been a very difficult time for residents in need of assistance from the Housing Team, and it was therefore appropriate to use reserves and funding provided by Central Government to tackle the additional burdens placed on the Council.
- iv. Cllr N Lloyd referred to rising fuel and energy costs and stated that fuel

poverty was an increasing risk to residents that the Energy Officer would be well placed to address.

- v. Cllr C Cushing noted that metrics on the officer to management ratio had not been included in the report, and asked whether this information was available. The ADPS replied that the ratio would be approximately six officers to one team leader. Cllr C Cushing said that he had seen little information on how processes would be improved, and asked what would happen to officers once fixed-term funding came to an end and whether any aspect of the decision taken by Cabinet had been actioned. The ADPS replied that the management to officer ratio would be correct for the services provided, taking into account the nature of the work. She added that any officers that stepped-up into the posts would have a substantive post to return to at the end of the fixed-term. It was suggested that any additional Government funding received could provide an opportunity to continue the posts, if successful. The ADPS stated that none of the decisions had been actioned, though preparations had been made. In response to a further question from Cllr C Cushing, it was suggested that the first action following approval would be to begin the recruitment process.
- vi. Cllr H Blathwayt stated that funding to support those in desperate need of housing assistance was crucial, and asked whether officers were confident that the restructure would help improve services. The ADPS replied that People Services cared deeply about helping residents in need, and was confident that the restructure would help to move to a system of prevention rather than crisis management.
- vii. Cllr V Holliday stated that she expected a more outcome focused approach with supporting data, and suggested that the outcomes that were included lacked ambition. She referred to risks in the Outturn report relating to temporary accommodation, the housing benefits subsidy and business rates retention, and asked whether it would be prudent to consider what resource would be required to manage these risks. The ADPS replied that the Council had significant reserves to mitigate these risks, and suggested that the opportunity to move to a preventative strategy would significantly reduce the risk of relying on expensive temporary accommodation and making housing benefit subsidy payments.
- viii. Cllr V Gay noted that the work of People Services was often complex and required significant resource to support residents. She added that the restructure had been given careful consideration, and performance would be regularly reported to the Committee. It was noted that prevention and integration were key aspects of the County's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and it was important to support this.
- ix. Cllr S Penfold stated that it was important to focus on service improvement with targeted investment to help residents, and noted that he supported the proposals.
- x. Cllr T Adams stated that with growing demand, it was important that the Council was ready to adapt and respond to these demands, and the restructure provided that opportunity. He added that he would hope to see both quantitative and qualitative data of how the service was performing in the months ahead. Cllr T Adams noted that the Rough Sleeping Coordinator post had been effective and asked whether additional Government funding

would be available to continue this post in the future. The ADPS replied that funding was announced on an annual basis, and the level of uncertainty meant that the post had to be run on a fixed-term basis, with the current post running to March 2022. She added that this funding was not covered within the report, though it could provide an opportunity for people in these posts to consider those identified within the report. It was noted that there were still rough sleepers that chose not to move into temporary accommodation, though the Rough Sleeping Coordinator continued their efforts to support these individuals. The HOM said that she hoped that RSI year five funding would be made available, which could fund the continuation of the rough sleeper post. The DFC added that the Rough Sleeping Coordinator was on a secondment, and would have a substantive post to return to, should further funding not be available. He added that there was potential to adapt other posts to ensure that this work was not lost, if funding was stopped. It was noted that any further funding would have to be bid for, and the restructure would allow managers more time to pursue this.

- xi. Cllr L Withington stated that the Council should not view itself in isolation from other public service providers, and it was right to invest in services that would benefit residents.
- xii. Cllr P Heinrich stated that housing difficulties were some of the most complex issues addressed by the Council, which justified the need for funding to adequately support residents in need.
- xiii. The recommendation was proposed by Cllr H Blathwayt and seconded by Cllr A Brown.

RESOLVED

- 1. To endorse the use of uncommitted fee income and reserves to fund the proposed additional posts within for the revised 'People Services' service grouping and to earmark the uncommitted fee income and the required level of reserves to support the funding of the structure for the next 2 years.**

79 USE OF HOUSING RESERVES TO ENHANCE DELIVERY

Cllr E Seward – Deputy Leader introduced the report and stated that there were significant underlying issues with the housing market, and whilst the Council could not resolve these issues, the use of reserves aimed to plug as many gaps as possible. He added that the report did not cover S106 funding for affordable housing, which would be addressed in the months ahead. Cllr E Seward referred to the Energy Officer post, and noted that similar posts had been highly successful at neighbouring authorities. It was noted that funding would also be used to increase the Council's temporary housing stock, which would both save money and provide stability to residents in need. Cllr E Seward reported that the next proposal was a rent guarantee scheme, which would enable residents on low incomes the ability to rent privately. Finally, the shared ownership scheme would convert properties to affordable rent, which would assist ten to twelve families in meeting their housing needs.

Questions and Discussion

- i. The Chairman referred to the contributions made by the private rental sector, and noted that there appeared to be a significant migration of properties from this sector into second homes and holiday lets. He asked whether the Council understood what was happening in the private rental sector, and whether it was in a position to try to prevent these changes, rather than treating the symptoms. Cllr E Seward replied that the changes to the private rental sector appeared evident and had emerged in-part as a result of the pandemic. He added that once more was known about these changes, measures could be put in place to address the issue. The HSDM stated that the private rental sector was an important gap filler between those who could afford to buy and those who were in greater need of affordable housing. She added that the private rental sector in North Norfolk remained small compared with other parts of the Country, and was further exacerbated by property prices and the prevalence of second and holiday homes. It was noted that demographics also played a role in the limited number of private rental properties available, as older residents did not tend to live in privately rented properties. The HSDM stated that whilst the private rental sector was small, it was still an important part of the housing mix for the District, and efforts had to be made to work with private landlords to retain as much of this housing as possible. She added that ultimately the private rental sector was determined by income, and many landlords could earn more from holiday lets, or by selling their property, which was very difficult for the Council to address. It was stated that anecdotally, the increases in second and holiday homes appeared to be at the expense of private sector rental properties, though Census information would be required to confirm this.
- ii. The Chairman asked whether private landlords were known to the Council and to what extent the Council communicated with them to help maintain the supply of housing. The HSDM replied that the Council had a reasonable understanding of private landlords across the District, with most being single property owners as opposed to commercial businesses. She added that the Council maintained a working relationship with the Eastern Landlords Association, who supported private landlords. It was suggested that more could be done to support smaller private landlords, and that this could help to address further loss of private rental properties.
- iii. Cllr L Withington referred to the preventative approach taken in the Peoples Services restructure, and suggested that this ethos must be taken across the Council. She added that there was more that could be done to support landlords, but it was crucial to invest in these services as residents with complex needs were often forced to rely on private rental accommodation. It was suggested that the rent guarantee scheme was a key example of how the Council could help, but there was still more that could be done.
- iv. Cllr H Blathwayt stated that waiting for evidence to reveal changes to the housing market would limit the Council's ability to get ahead of the curve in rental property decline. He asked whether there was any anecdotal evidence of commercial properties being converted to residential, and whether it would be private or social housing. The HSDM replied that the Council did not have any evidence of commercial property being converted for residential use, though this was happening at scale elsewhere in the Country. She added that this had been given consideration as part of the NWHS/HAZ project, though it was in its early stages and would be difficult to deliver.

- v. Cllr A Brown referred to comments on the nature of the housing market, and suggested that the need for social housing was driven by a lack of security for private sector tenants and Section 21 notices that allowed landlords to evict tenants at short notice. He added that more work was required at a national level to ensure greater security for tenants in the private sector.
- vi. Cllr C Cushing suggested that it could be worth working with local estate agents to better understand the private rental market. He added that he did see value in both the Energy Officer post and shared ownership to affordable rent scheme.
- vii. Cllr E Spagnola provided an example of how the private sector rental market was increasingly difficult to access for residents on low incomes, and stated that she fully support the proposals.
- viii. Cllr J Rest asked whether the rent guarantee scheme would be classed as an income for applicants, and whether this would effect any benefits received. He added that he felt conversion from shared ownership to affordable rent was not the right approach, as it would be more beneficial to help residents purchase property. The HSDM replied that the rent guarantee scheme would not be classed as an income, as the Council would only provide funding in situations where tenants were unable to pay their rent. On the shared ownership to affordable rent scheme, she added that shared ownership was not a realistic option for all residents, so a small number of conversions to affordable rent would increase the options available.
- ix. Cllr E Seward referred to comments on commercial property conversion in North Walsham and confirmed that some properties would be converted as the NWHSZ project progressed.
- x. The Chairman suggested that a further recommendation could be included to consider what more could be done to work with private landlords to retain and promote the supply of private sector housing. The ADPS replied that this was being actively considered by officers, and would be taken further as a result of the People Services restructure. The Chairman's suggested recommendation was proposed by Cllr H Blathwayt and Cllr A Brown, alongside the substantive recommendations proposed by Cllr E Spagnola and Cllr A Brown.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Committee supports the recommended uses of the £2.516m of housing reserves to fund the continuation of posts and restructure of Peoples Services, continuation of community-led housing activity and an energy officer role (as set out in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.11)**
- 2. The Committee supports the use of the remaining £890,246 of reserves to accelerate housing delivery (as set out in paragraphs 2.12 – 2.25), including the purchase of two further units of temporary accommodation for homeless households.**
- 3. The Committee supports the delegated authority given to a Chief Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Benefits, for the purchase of the specific properties within the overall re-allocated budget of £640,000 (with all purchases subject to an independent valuation and**

survey).

4. To recommend to Cabinet, that CLT and the Housing Portfolio Holder task officers to investigate what more can be done to work with private landlords to support and retain privately rented accommodation across the District.

80 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS 2022/23

- i. Cllr E Seward – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets introduced the report and informed Members that a hardship relief scheme for residents in need of assistance with Council Tax payments had been included. The CTA added that this scheme had been established to provide a mechanism to offer write-offs or relief to residents without the need for Court action and the recovery process. She added that throughout the pandemic this would have applied to two or three cases, and was therefore not considered to represent a significant risk to the Council.
- ii. The recommendations were proposed by Cllr L Withington and seconded by Cllr P Heinrich.

RESOLVED

To recommend that Full Council shall resolve that under section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and other enabling powers one of the following applies:

1. (a) The discounts for the year 2022/23 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 2.1.
(b) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 24 months) is set at 100% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
(c) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 60 months) is set at 200% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
(d) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 120 months) is set at 300% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
(e) To award a Council Tax Hardship Discount of 100% as per the policy attached at Appendix B, under the provisions section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended)
(f) To continue to award a local discount of 100% for eligible cases of care leavers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).
(g) That an exception to the levy charges may be made by the Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio holder for Finance, on advice of the Revenues Manager in the circumstances laid out in section 3.6 of this report.
2. (a) those dwellings that are specifically identified under regulation 6 of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings)(England) Regulations 2003 will retain the 50% discount and;
(b) those dwellings described or geographically defined at Appendix A which in the reasonable opinion of the Head of Finance and Asset

Management are judged not to be structurally capable of occupation all year round and were built before the restrictions of seasonal usage were introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, will be entitled to a 35% discount.

In accordance with the relevant legislation these determinations shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating in North Norfolk before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determinations.

81 WASTE CONTRACT UPDATE: OCTOBER 2021

The DFC introduced the report and informed Members that the Environment Bill was now on its third reading in the House of Lords and expected to gain royal ascent with no further substantial changes. He added that the Bill would outline the Government's environmental targets and expectations, and introduce a new regulatory body called the Office for Environmental protection. It was reported that efforts would be made to make greater use of waste as a resource, such as the extended producer responsibility, that would define the level of recyclable materials required in products. The DFC stated that this would be supported by an additional levy for producers that did not meet the required standards. A deposit return scheme had also been proposed, though details of how this would operate, such as reverse vending machines were yet to be confirmed. It was noted that reductions in packaging had impacted the Council's recycling rates, which in addition to the deposit return scheme, would limit the Council's ability to market its recyclable materials. The DFC stated that the most notable element of the Bill was the inclusion of a mandatory requirement for separate food waste collections from 2023. He added that the Council was prepared to offer this service, as it had been included as a costed option during the procurement process. It was noted that new burdens funding was expected to cover the costs of the additional collections. The DFC reported that a further initiative included encouraging trade waste customers to better separate their waste and recycling. He added that there were still issues that required clarification, such as free garden waste bins, and increased enforcement powers for environmental crimes.

The DFC reported that the Serco waste contract had faced a range of difficulties during the Pandemic, which included significant increases in the weight and type of waste being produced. The DFC stated that there were also issues with HGV driver and fuel shortages, despite the requirement for Serco to provide its own fuel storage facilities. He added that whilst service disruption had been minimal, many of the requirements outlined during the bidding process were not being met. It was suggested that it may therefore be useful for Serco officers to attend a future meeting to answer questions on when contractual obligations would be met.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr S Penfold asked whether Serco had failed to meet the targets set-out within their contract, and whether there were any issues in supplying brown bins to residents. The DFC replied that there were performance standards failures in the contract, but it was difficult to determine whether these were being triggered, as Serco had not supplied the necessary performance data. He added that there were further contractual issues in addition to delayed collections, such as the re-use service for bulky items that was yet to be implemented. On brown bins, it was reported that whilst delivery had been delayed during the early stages of the pandemic, it had resumed once Serco were operating at capacity. The DFC reported that new brown bin deliveries

had been put on hold more recently, as a result of shortages in materials required. He added that deliveries had now resumed and arrival could be expected shortly.

- ii. Cllr H Blathwayt stated that there appeared to be issues with collections in hard to reach areas, and supported inviting Serco to a future meeting to explain these issues. He asked how residents could better report delayed or missed collections to the Council. The DFC replied that there had been issues in delivering the smaller waste collection vehicles, as a result of delays caused by the Pandemic. He added that existing hire vehicles were well used, and Serco had therefore faced issues with reliability. In reference to reporting delayed and missed collections, the DFC stated that it was difficult for residents to know the difference between delays and missed collections, and service updates had to be improved to address this.
- iii. Cllr A Brown stated that he was pleased to hear that food waste costs would be covered, and asked whether there was a dispute resolution process within the waste contract, and whether it was being used to resolve the issues discussed. The DFC replied that the fuel storage tank was ready to install, though Serco had to take responsibility for the delays. He added that there was a dispute resolution process within the contract, though this was for serious failures, and the service was not considered to have reached this point. It was noted that Serco had not billed the Council for some months, and the level of service failure deductions was not yet known, though they would be held to account for poor performance if necessary.
- iv. Cllr T Adams noted that he had received positive feedback on Serco's green space maintenance, but concerns remained around domestic waste collections. He asked whether the new burdens funding for food waste collections would be sufficient, and whether Serco had a long-term plan to ensure that they could maintain the required number of HGV drivers. The DFC replied that there was a programme in place to internally train and recruit HGV drivers, and that the new burdens funding was not yet known, so it was not yet known whether it would be adequate.
- v. Cllr V Gay stated that Serco must be held to account for not delivering the additional services offered within its contract, and stated that it was a significant concern that the level of food waste required a national collection service. She added that encouraging composting would be positive step and asked whether a national policy of waste reduction could be expected in the future. The DFC replied that a waste reduction policy would be included in the Environment Bill, though greater pressure would be required from consumers to substantially reduce waste.
- vi. The Chairman stated that it would be beneficial for Serco to attend a future meeting and requested that this be added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive and note the update.**

ACTIONS

- 1. DFC to arrange SERCO briefing/attendance at future Committee meeting.**

82 BEACH HUTS AND CHALETS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Cllr E Seward – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets introduced the report and informed Members that updates were provided as a result the Committee’s Task and Finish Group review of beach huts and chalets undertaken in 2018. He added that refurbishments planned in Cromer and Sheringham were expected to begin in November and were due for completion in March.

Questions and Discussion

- i. Cllr T Adams raised concerns on the service recharges, as he felt they did not promote a positive business case for retaining the assets. The EASM replied that the recharges included all costs required to run Council services, some of which did not relate directly to supporting the assets. She added that all recharges would be reconsidered as part of the zero based budgeting exercise, as it could provide an opportunity to improve associated costs.
- ii. Cllr L Withington stated that she found it difficult to reach any conclusions from the report, and noted that whilst occupancy had increased, this had not been made clear. She added that income for beach huts and chalets could also be separated to determine which assets were generating a better income, to better understand the service. Cllr L Withington stated that overall, she was unable to determine whether it was more beneficial to let the assets on a weekly or annual basis, and also requested waiting list information and a clear strategy for the assets. The EASM confirmed that she would provide the information required.
- iii. Cllr V Holliday referred to the maintenance schedule and stated that there did not appear to be any aspiration to maintain a good condition, and asked whether this had an impact on occupancy. The EASM replied that the officers did aspire to maintain good overall condition of the assets, but accepted that the current condition was lower than expected, as a result of delays to maintenance works. She added that this could have an impact on occupancy levels, though this was more likely the result of limited marketing.
- iv. Cllr C Cushing referred to income projections and asked whether further information was available beyond 2021. He noted that annual profit appeared to be approximately £50k, and asked whether this could be expected to grow. The EASM replied that she hoped growth could be expected, and suggested that this would be achieved by the adjustment of fees on weekly lets, with analysis suggesting that profits could be increased from the current £38k, to £100k. She added that increased occupancy would result in some increased costs, but this would be offset by extending the peak letting season, creating a mid-season rate and offering block bookings.
- v. Cllr E Seward stated that a good offer was crucial to increasing occupancy, and this was why maintenance and improvement was important despite the associated costs.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive and note update.**

ACTIONS

1. Estates and Asset Strategy Manager to provide additional information as requested by the Committee on the following matters:

- **Occupancy increases**
- **Income divided by Beach Hut or Chalets**
- **Comparison of weekly and annual lets**
- **Overview of current waiting list**
- **Strategy Document to outline direction**
- **Income projection beyond 2021**

83 NORTH WALSHAM HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE: PROJECT UPDATE OCTOBER 2021

Cllr E Seward – Deputy Leader introduced the report and informed Members that the second round of consultation was about to end, for which a number of public exhibitions and meetings had been held across the town. He added that feedback had been positive with many residents suggesting that were very happy to live in the town. It was noted that there were some concerns regarding the loss of retail businesses within the town centre, and that despite substantial support, there would inevitably be some residents that did not support the proposals. Cllr E Seward stated that it was now time to begin the physical works, alongside the implementation of grants to help businesses improve their premises.

Questions and Discussion

- i. The AD SG noted that consultation was due to end on the 15th October, though further discussions were expected to take place with specific groups such as young residents and those with accessibility requirements.
- ii. A presentation was provided on the range and scope of the project with the four key elements outlined as improving the public realm, improving options for safe and active travel, establishing the town's historical identity and generating a sense of community pride. Various highways proposals were reported to have been discussed with the potential for limiting the times at which HGV and buses could travel through the town centre, in order to establish a more pedestrian friendly space. Public space proposals were shown with various options on how spaces could be better utilised. Key concerns and mitigation measures were addressed, with NCC highways reported to be actively working to ensure that key transport routes would not be negatively impacted by changes.
- iii. Cllr S Penfold stated that there appeared to be a good level of support for the project from within the town, and asked whether the importance of working with young people on learning opportunities could be emphasized. He then asked what percentage of grant funding could be offered to businesses on the building improvement scheme. The AD SG replied that this would vary depending on the nature of the proposals and intended outcome of the intervention, though it could provide up to 100% of funding.
- iv. Cllr T Adams referred to the property improvement grant scheme and asked what could be learnt from the project that could be applied to other towns. He then asked what controls would be put in place to ensure that any improvements made to heritage assets would not be lost at a later date. The AD SG replied that the vast majority of buildings in the town centre were listed

buildings, and would therefore have a pre-existing level of protection, in addition to being within a conservation area. He added that efforts would also be made to work with property owners to undertake works that would benefit them, alongside the public improvement works and community initiatives. It was hoped that the project would establish a legacy of improvement for the town that would inspire business owners to carry on, once the project was complete.

- v. Cllr C Cushing referred to the business improvement grants and asked for further information. Cllr E Seward replied that the building improvement scheme would apply to frontages and wider premises, if required. He added that the difficulty would be in encouraging some businesses to come forward and take advantage of the scheme, to properly improve the character of the conservation area.
- vi. Cllr V Gay stated that gaining funding from Historic England was a significant achievement in itself that had started with a relatively small amount of MTI funding, which had proven the town's ability to work together to achieve positive outcomes. She added that dedicated staff were also crucial to build on these achievements and secure the additional funding that was vital to the project.
- vii. The Chairman noted that there had not been mention of crime and disorder considerations, and asked for confirmation that these had been given adequate attention. The ADSG replied that this would be included in more formal reports, however this was only intended to provide an update. He added that crime and disorder had been given considerable attention, and referenced architectural standards such as secure by design, which sought to ensure that opportunities for crime were as limited as possible.

RESOLVED

To receive and note the report.

84 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

- i. The DSGOS informed Members that there were several key decisions expected to go to Cabinet in November that would be of interest to the Committee, such as renewal of the NEWS contract, a review of car parking charges, the progression of public convenience improvements, and the use of S106 funds.
- ii. The Chairman noted that efforts had to be made to ensure that papers were submitted in advance of pre-agenda meetings, in order to make best use of time and ensure that the Committee were aware of the content of upcoming reports, to be added to the Work Programme where appropriate.

RESOLVED

To note the Cabinet Work Programme.

85 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

- i. The DSGOS informed Members that several key decisions could be expected to be added to the Committee's Work Programme in advance of

the November meeting, in addition to an expected update on the Delivery Plan, and a draft Tree Planting Strategy. It was noted that some responses were still expected on incomplete MTI projects, though it was hoped these would be received in time to bring the process review to the November meeting.

- ii. It was stated that arrangements were also being made to undertake a Reef visit after the November Committee meeting, with the preference to visit once the facility was open to the public.
- iii. The DSGOS noted that there was an outstanding item to monitor resource implications for the Homelessness Strategy, though this had likely been covered by the inclusion of the People Services Restructure and Use of Housing Reserves reports, which had been discussed at length earlier in the meeting.
- iv. On the actions log, it was noted that responses were still outstanding from EEAST regarding the letter sent to the Chief Executive on RRVs and the location of Community First Responders.
- v. Cllr A Brown asked whether implementation and performance of the Uniform Planning system would be included in the Planning Performance review. The DSGOS confirmed that it would form a central element of the review, which had been delayed to allow the new Director time to get acquainted with the issues.

RESOLVED

To note the Committee Work Programme.

86 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm.

Chairman