

CABINET WORKING PARTY - PROJECTS

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Working Party - Projects held on Wednesday, 20 October 2021 remotely via Zoom at 4.00 pm

Committee Members Present: Mrs S Bütikofer Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Ms V Gay Mr R Kershaw

Members also attending: Cllr N Dixon

Officers in Attendance: Planning Policy Manager, Chief Executive, Property, Project & Programme Manager, Democratic Services Manager, Director for Place & Climate Change, Project Manager North Walsham Heritage Action Zone, Corporate Business Manager, Programme & Projects Manager, Assistant Director for Planning, Environmental Policy Officer and Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr E Seward.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

4 PROJECT GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Chairman, Cllr S Butikofer, invited the Chief Executive to speak on this item. He explained that the Project Governance Management Framework had been considered by Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Governance, Risk & Audit Committee (GRAC) in February and March 2021. It had been produced to reflect the outcomes and recommendations from Audit reviews to ensure transparency and oversight of key projects. Referring to page 9, which outlined the process for the review of projects via Overview & Scrutiny Panels, the Chief Executive explained that he had met with the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Democratic Services and the Corporate Business Manager to discuss how the panels would relate to the Cabinet Working Party. The Working Party had been set up to ensure that main Cabinet meetings were not overloaded. It was anticipated that it would meet quarterly to receive project updates. He explained that each project had a project lead – usually a director or assistant director and a named Cabinet member who would be the project sponsor.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee would have an opportunity to review and comment via the Panels. The Panels had not been established yet and it had been agreed that one panel would be established initially as a pilot and there would be a further discussion with the Chairman and the Leader to ensure that the Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny work programmes were more closely aligned going forwards

and that the added value of the scrutiny mechanism was fully understood.

The Leader agreed that the work programmes should interlink and ensure effectiveness. Cllr Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee said that the committee had had a discussion on the establishment of O&S panels but at the time there had not been sufficient agreement to move forwards. There had been a consensus to pilot a panel , as outlined by the Chief Executive, and develop the model further as projects progressed and additional capacity was needed. He said he hoped that more focussed discussion could take place via the panel.

5 PROJECT UPDATE REPORTS

The Leader invited the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to introduce each project in turn:

1. North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, introduced the report. He said that the consultation on the town centre placemaking proposals had just finished and there was a meeting scheduled for that evening with local businesses. Some risks to the overall project had been identified, including supply chain issues in the construction industry. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth added that the Heritage Action Zone was a multi-faceted project and there were additional risks regarding finance and the constraints that the external funding placed on delivery of the project. He said that he was confident that these could be worked around as the Council had a good dialogue with external funding partners. He said that the substantive feedback from the place-making consultation would inform the scheme that would be taken forward through the traffic order regulation process.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett referred to page 15 and the deadline of February 2022 for the spending of funding from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). She asked whether this was still achievable. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth replied that the Council was working with them to identify ways in which a resolution could be reached. He said that the programme prepared by the Council's consultants outlining the delivery programme was being shared with the New Anglia LEP. He said that there was a similar risk regarding the Historic England funding which was divided into different years. He said that they could be flexible about the use of the funding but not the amount that had to be spent each year. It was likely that the most flexible part of the funding (NNDC's allocation) last and the constrained funding (external partners) first.

2. Fakenham A148 Roundabout

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Planning said that the main issue was that the project could not be delivered as early as first thought due to the summer embargo on roadworks on key routes. The completion date was now set for March 2023.

The Director of Resources said that outline planning permission had now been granted for the Fakenham urban extension and this project was to deliver a new roundabout as part of the infrastructure for the site. Of the 950 homes, 157 (16.5%) would be affordable homes. It was hoped to leverage in a further 18 units (2%). A capital contribution of £1.8m, of which NNDC was contributing £900k. In addition a further £0.4k had been received from the Norfolk Strategic Fund and £0.5k from the Business Rates Pool. He concluded by saying that there had been some delays to the overall project as it was the biggest housing delivery programme that the District

had seen and the scheme was complex, with constraints around highway works during the summer season. He concluded by saying that the legal agreement with the site owners was currently being finalised.

The Leader said she was pleased to see the project was finally moving forwards.

3. Sheringham Leisure Centre

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cllr V Gay introduced this item. She said that the project had over-run a little due to issues with materials and labour. It was anticipated that the budget overspend would be £130k. However, it should be noted that the contractor may be required to pay costs to the Council for each week that the project over-ran. Cllr Gay said that one of the main impacts of the delayed completion related to resources and the delivery of other work streams whilst officers focussed on this. The Chief Executive agreed with the focus and attention that officers were currently giving to completion of the project. He said that he had written to the contractors regarding the resolution of snagging issues and the confirmation of a completion date. The response suggested that focus and additional resources were being given to the final push to complete the project. He added that the Council did not want a rushed end to completing the project and possibly compromising the quality. Cllr Gay agreed, saying that the centre was intended to last for 30 years and it was important to get it right.

4. 110,000 Trees Project

The Climate & Environmental Policy Manager introduced this item in the absence of the Portfolio Holder. She said that a Tree Planting Strategy had been prepared and would be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in November. She confirmed that since the commencement of the project, over 20k trees had been planted, with a further 40k planned during the planting season between October 2021 and March 2022. The Council had been offered some funding from DEFRA to plant 'mini' forests. Officers were currently exploring options on NNDC land for delivery of these. Regarding risks, the Climate & Environmental Policy Manager concluded by saying that the project was progressing in line with the targets set out in the strategy.

5. Production of new Local Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Cllr J Toye, introduced this item. He said that the Plan was now close to being finalised for Regulation 19 consultation. The changes proposed by the Government to the planning regime had now been put on hold, which meant the project could now move forwards.

The Planning Policy Manager said that the Regulation 19 Plan was now complete. Any responses to the consultation would be considered by the Inspector and any adjustments could be made ahead of final approval by Full Council. He added that the formal signing off of the site allocations by Cabinet had not been done yet but it was hoped that this could be done within the next month or so.

Cllr N Dixon asked for clarification on when the consultation for Regulation 19 would begin. The Planning Policy Manager said that a specific date had not yet been agreed. Publication depended on an updated viability assessment. This may require further changes to the Plan. He said that a report would come to the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party soon regarding the consultation arrangements, adding that the consultation was likely to start in early January with an 8 – 12 week

response period.

Cllr Dixon said that a lot of parishes were very interested in the Regulation 19 Plan. The Planning Policy Manager said that his team would put some additional information on the website.

The Chief Executive sought clarification regarding Cabinet sign-off for going out to consultation. He said that the best approach would be to take a report to Cabinet in late November, stating the intention to consult on the Plan and sign off all of the documentation.

The Director for Place and Climate Change said that the consultation should not take place over the Christmas period and that a January start date was achievable. Cllr V Gay asked how the Working Party would report its discussions. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Governance, Risk and Audit Committee would receive an update regarding the project management framework model and the operation of the Cabinet Working Party and the Scrutiny Panel(s). The Democratic Services Manager added that the minutes of the Working Party meetings would be reported through to Cabinet and that the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee would update the committee on any outcomes and actions. She sought clarification on how the meetings would progress in the future.

The Chief Executive said that it was anticipated that the Community Renewal Fund may come forward for the next meeting (depending on the Government's timetable) and the two coast protection schemes – at Mundesley and the Phase two scheme at Cromer.

Cllr N Dixon referred to the earlier comments regarding reporting to Governance, Risk and Audit Committee and he said that he was supportive of the committee having an opportunity of reviewing whether the project management framework was being applied and was operating in the way that had been anticipated. He said he hoped that this could happen sooner rather than later.

The Project and Programme Manager said that this initial meeting had been relatively brief as many of the projects were in the early stages but that as the projects evolved there would be more reporting on exceptions and risks and it was possible that the process would need to be reviewed to be ensured that full, substantive discussions could take place.

The Leader agreed, saying that these meetings were important for governance and transparency. She thanked everyone for their input.

6 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 16.43 pm

Chairman