

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

27 April 2022

COUNCILLOR E SEWARD - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, ASSETS, LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & REVENUES

-For the period March to April 2022-

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

ESTATES & ASSETS

- Disposal of assets. 7-9 Bridewell Street, Walsingham has a sale agreed and progressing through the legal transaction. The due diligence for Parklands sale has been completed including interviews being held with the bidders 2 members from the Parklands Residents Association attended. It is proposed to report to O & S May and Cabinet thereafter. Enabling land at Sheringham has an option agreement nearing completion which will result in a planning application being made by the purchasers for a hotel complex.
- Vacant Property – Lease for the 3 Hornbeam North Walsham units is nearing completion. Viewings and lease negotiations continue to be undertaken at The Cedars. Office space at Fakenham Connect has interest from the health sector and terms are being negotiated. Vacant Cromer property at the Melbourne slope and collectors cabin have generated letting enquiries. North Lodge Park lease proposal to cabinet May.
- Beach hut and chalet programme of advertising and review of additional space to identify additional sites is being undertaken, seeking to generate additional income. Works at Overstrand to beach hut plots has been completed and we are investigating opportunities to remove and store the huts over the winter to reduce the risk of damage in the future.

LEGAL

- Legal services provide a corporate framework enabling the Council to respond to Information Requests, such as Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests. There is a national target response rate of 90% and the Council has a current response rate of 93%.
- Leases: renewal –Melbourne slope Childrens Amusements – completed 12 April 2022; The Reef Lease– further amends may be necessary due to rights to be granted to the adjacent enabling site; Lease Oddfellows Hall, Sheringham – draft lease with Tenant – hope to complete by end of April; Art Deco retail space Lease – draft out to tenant’s solicitors
- Fakenham connect – Deed of Variation to head lease from NCC completed. Under lease to DWP out for signature. Completion due shortly

- Public Open Space transfer – Market Lane Wells. Hopkins site. Transfer Deeds approved –waiting to authority to complete
- Eastlaw is assisting with a prosecution relating to animal welfare and the keeping of dangerous wild animals

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- The team has been very busy recently resourcing additional committee meetings and hosting member briefings and workshops.
- The NNDC Town & Parish Council Engagement Forum met virtually on 28th March, with over 40 representatives in attendance. The next meeting will take place on 4th July and will focus on community led housing and affordable housing schemes.
- At the Cabinet meeting on 28th March 2022, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a Youth Council, with initial support provided by BYC (British Youth Council). We have already been contacted by some students at local schools who read about the youth council and are keen to get involved.

REVENUES

- Grants – Omicron Hospitality & Leisure Grant (OHLG) grant scheme has now come to an end and all final applications have been processed, fraud checked and paid.
- A recent government table published on the 15th March 2022, showed North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) to be the 7th highest council in the country for paying the most OHLG business grants.
- Council Tax collection currently stands at 98.04% versus target of 98.20%
- National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) collection currently stands at 99.19% versus target of 98.70%,
Both figures are provisional and subject to confirmation from accountancy in the coming weeks
- The new Covid 19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) relief has now been tested and applied to all identified eligible business rate accounts for the 2021/22 financial year that did not get previous covid related reliefs. This generated credits for the 2021/22 financial year which have now all been transferred up to the current 2022.23 financial year and offset against the new charge.
- Year End Billing & Rollover – Both NNDR and Council Tax year end billing has now successfully been completed with approximately 55,000 Council Tax and 8,000 NNDR bills being issued.
- The automated part of the processing of council tax valuation officer schedules has now been tested and is now being used in live. This is now saving considerable processing time which can be reallocated to other challenges.

- £150 Energy Rebate Scheme – This is now in full development stage and we have procured and purchased the software solution to help us manage the cases and this is being developed and tested currently.
- Following appropriate checks, customers paying their Council Tax by Direct Debit, payments will be dispatched by BACS and a letter of confirmation will be sent. Customers who do not pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit will instead receive a letter directing them to the Grant Approval application portal where they can formally make their claim, input their bank details, and following checks, payment will be dispatched by BACS.

This is creating significant additional work for the Revenues team outside of business as usual and will continue to do so until the scheme closing date 30th September 2022.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

FINANCE

Upcoming Reports – a number of finance reports are due to be considered by Cabinet over the following months;

- 2021/22 Outturn report – this report will cover the Council's financial performance for the previous financial year and forms part of the closedown of the 2021/22 accounts.
- Treasury management annual report – this report provides Members with an update on the treasury performance for the previous year.
- Debt management annual report – this report provides Members with an update regarding the Council's debt management performance for the previous financial year.

Accounts – the finance team are busy preparing the 2021/22 accounts the drafts of which are due to be completed by the end of July. The audit of the 2020/21 accounts is scheduled to start in July with the 2021/22 audit following in February 2023 ahead of approval by the Governance, Risk and Audit Committee (GRAC).

REVENUES

Omicron Hospitality & Leisure Grant (NNDR) reconciliation work

£150.00 Energy Rebate (see above)

Quarterly Return Collection (GRC) 4 (Government return on end of year collection figures)

Working with IT to establish a time scale for developing a list of online forms

Following advertisements for for two level 3 Business Administration Apprentices, without suitable candidates, work continues towards this recruitment.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Preparations will commence over the summer for promoting the 2023 District Council and Parish elections to prospective candidates. Democratic Services will work in conjunction with the Elections team on preparing information and supporting any promotional events.

LEGAL

Eastlaw is working with the planning department with matters relating to nitrate neutrality and with the Arcady appeal.

Legal Services is delighted to support the National Apprenticeship Scheme and has been successful in recruiting a Legal Services Apprentice who joins the team this April.