

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

05 October 2022

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

For the period July to September 2022

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

#### **Finance**

**Audit 2019/20** – the Statements have been updated for agreed Changes, our interim s.151 officer is working with EY to try and resolve infrastructure asset issue.

**Audit 2020/21** – work on this Audit has been temporarily suspended as it has been agreed that the 2019/20 audit should be signed off before the final work is completed.

**SOA 2021/22** – Work is being undertaken to complete the necessary final year end entries and produce a Statement of Accounts. The date is still to be confirmed.

**Finance System Upgrade** – Civica are working with the NNDC implementation team to provide a working system to enable us to do full User Acceptance testing (UAT)

#### **Estates and Assets**

Disposal of assets. Solicitors have issued draft contracts regarding the sale of Parklands. Solicitors instructed in relation to disposal of community assets at West Beckham and Sheringham to the Town and Parish Councils and transfer of Mundesley Gunning placements to community group.

Planning application for the adjoining Reef site at Sheringham is progressing through the due process with determination anticipated in October.

Vacant Property –Former playgroup building and café at North Lodge Park, Cromer has been advertised and expressions of interest are due by 12<sup>th</sup> September.

The Cedars lease proposals are being considered with report to Cabinet. The Cedars barns have been advertised and proposals received will be assessed. Leases - Lease proposal for the collectors cabin has been approved by cabinet and solicitors will be instructed. Notice has been given by the landlord (NCC) of offices at Kings Arms Street, north Walsham to vacant Feb 2023

#### **Legal**

Eastlaw has been providing legal services to the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, and to two other external organisations.

Eastlaw is dealing with various legal cases and matters for the Council, including progressing health and safety cases to prosecution; working with the estates team to assist with leases and land transfer matters; providing legal assistance to the planning directorate with regard to planning enforcement notice appeals, and issues relating to nutrient neutrality.

Eastlaw is working with housing options presently to set up a rent guarantor scheme as part of the reduction in homelessness drive, enabling those who may struggle to be accepted for privately rented accommodation due to credit issues.

Freedom of Information request figures show that the Council's current performance at responding to requests within the statutory 20 working days is at 98%. The national target is set at 90%. In July, 41 requests were received and 40 of those were responded within the statutory timescales.

### **Democratic Services**

**Youth Council** – the campaign to recruit young leaders for the steering group has been extended to the end of September at the request of local educational establishments. Once this group is in place, they will work together on shaping the Youth Council, with the aim of having it up and running by January 2023.

**Prospective Candidates events** – the Member Development Group has been working on a new format for these events, which have been very popular in the past. They will be in a hybrid format and take place on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September between 6pm – 8pm and 10am – 12pm on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Democratic Services.

Livestreaming of Council meetings continues to be popular, with several meetings reaching over 100 views. Subscribers to the e-democracy channel now number 121 and we hope to build on this in the coming months.

### **Revenues**

#### **Collection as of 31 August 2022.**

Council Tax collection was 46.08% against target of 46.10%, shortfall of collection of £14k compared to the previous months of £89k and £324k.

NNDR collection is 53.41% against target of 47.25%, an excess in collection of £1.52M. This is partly caused by the Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) awards that were applied at the close of 2021/22 and carried forward as a credit to the new NDR 2022/23 annual bills.

#### **Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme.**

We closed our CT Energy Rebate Scheme on 30 June 2022 for those applying online, with final payments made on Friday 1 July 2022.

Out of 40,952 eligible customers, we have paid approx. 95% of our customers entitled to the £150.

The remaining customers have had the £150 transferred against their council tax account on 4 July 2022 with revised demand notices and letters issued.

The total rebate amount awarded to NNDC council tax customers is £6,115,500.

**Government Returns:**

- **Business Grants** – we continue to reconcile these and report data to government on a regular basis.
- **CT Energy Rebate Scheme** - we continue to reconcile these and report data to government each month.
- **CARF & Retail Relief Return** - we continue to reconcile these and report data to government each month.

NNDC is in the top quartile for paying out Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) as a percentage of allocation given. The government statistics show NNDC were 70 out of 310 authorities which is in the top 22% (quartile being within top 25%).

**2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

**Finance**

Budget setting 2023/24 - detailed working papers will be going out to budget holders during September.

Budget Monitoring P6 – the team will prepare a position as at the end of September 2022 to inform members of the current year’s financial position.

Civica Finance System Upgrade – work will continue to build a test system after which work will commence on testing and training.

Audit 2020/21 - Completion of 2020/21 work is anticipated in the next couple of months.

**Estates and Assets**

Investigating possible location for new changing places toilet facilities in relation to availability of Lottery funding.

**Legal**

Eastlaw are looking at data protection training/update options for officers and Members

**Democratic Services**

**Town & Parish Council Forum** – the next meeting of this group will take place virtually on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October and all clerks and parish councillors are welcome to attend. This session will focus on the local elections in May 2023.

**Domestic Abuse Forum** – this group will be reconvening in the Autumn, following a change in wider Norfolk support – with NIDAS now in place.

**Revenues**

**Government Returns:**

NNDR3

Business Grants

CT Energy Rebate Scheme

The CARF & Retail Relief Return

**Papers**

Debt Report for 2021/22 outturn figures

**3 Meetings attended**