

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 5 October 2022 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:	Mr T Adams	Ms P Bevan Jones
	Mr D Birch	Mr H Blathwayt
	Mr A Brown	Dr P Bütikofer
	Mrs S Bütikofer	Mr C Cushing
	Mr N Dixon	Mr P Fisher
	Mr T FitzPatrick	Mrs W Fredericks
	Mrs P Grove-Jones	Mr G Hayman
	Mr P Heinrich	Dr V Holliday
	Mr N Housden	Mr R Kershaw
	Mr G Mancini-Boyle	Mr N Pearce
	Mr S Penfold	Mr J Punchard
	Mr J Rest	Mr E Seward
	Miss L Shires	Mrs J Stenton
	Dr C Stockton	Mr M Taylor
	Mr E Vardy	Mr A Varley
	Ms L Withington	

Officers in attendance:

The Chief Executive, The Monitoring Officer, The Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)

55 IN MEMORY OF PAUL NEALE

The Chairman opened the meeting by asking members to observe a minute's silence in memory of Paul Neale, a much loved member of staff who had died suddenly on 7th August. She also asked members to keep Her Majesty the Queen in their thoughts, following her recent passing.

56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Cllrs A Fitch-Tillett, V Gay, V FitzPatrick, C Heinink, N Housden, N Lloyd, G Perry-Warnes, E Spagnola, J Toye and A Yiasimi

57 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

59 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

60 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman spoke about civic events that she had attended since the last meeting of Full Council:

- 2nd September – Chairman of Norfolk County Council's Annual Summer Reception, Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse
- 4th September – NNDC Chairman's Civic Reception, Southern Comfort Mississippi River Boat
- 11th September – North Norfolk District Council, reading of the proclamation
- 18th September – memorial service for Her Majesty the Queen, St Mary's Church, Stalham
- 28th September – Mayor of Great Yarmouth's civic reception, Hirst's Farm Shop & Café
- 2nd October – Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association Harvest Festival Service, Norwich Cathedral

The Chairman finished by reminding members that she was holding a quiz night at Stalham Town Hall on 22 October to raise funds for her two nominated charities.

61 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader, Cllr T Adams, began by saying that it had been a very difficult period for the Council and beyond. He paid tribute to Paul Neale and said that his thoughts were with his family, his friends and his colleagues. He was greatly missed.

He went onto speak about the many commemorative events held across the District for Her Majesty the Queen and the very special proclamation ceremony for King Charles III. He thanked the Corporate PA team for their excellent work in supporting this.

The Leader then said, that along with many Members, he had been moved by recent events in Pakistan and Ukraine. He said that he had learnt recently that North Norfolk had the second highest number of Ukrainian guests in the County, which residents should be proud of.

Cllr Adams then commented on the recent increase in the number of missed bin collections being reported. He said that this was due to a change to the rounds to improve efficiency and reduce the number of journeys back to the depot. With an increase in housing growth in the District, it was good practice to review the routes for the collection lorries and ensure that journey times were maximised. He acknowledged that there had been some issues due to several new drivers having to familiarise themselves with the routes and a delay to some collections following the bank holiday for the funeral of Her Majesty the Queen. He reassured members that things were starting to improve and he was hoping to join one of the crews soon to see what the role involved and so he could better understand the challenges that they faced.

The Leader then thanked the Council's Legal team, for their recent successes including good results for several legal challenges. He also commended the Estates Team, which had worked very hard to complete the sale of Parklands, near Fakenham.

He concluded by congratulating Cllr J Punchard on his recent promotion to Station Manager for the Norfolk Fire Service.

62 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

63 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader informed Full Council of the following change to Outside Body appointments:

Cllr H Blathwayt to replace Cllr Dr C Stockton as a substitute on the Wash & North Norfolk Coast Marine Special Area of Conservation Management Group and Coastal Partnership East.

64 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman asked Cabinet members if they wished to provide an oral update to their reports. Cllr E Seward informed members that the 2019/2020 final accounts were now completed and signed off by the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee and the Council's external auditor.

The Chairman invited members to ask questions:

Cllr P Heinrich asked Cllr A Brown how much extra work was being generated for planning officers by the Government, due to mixed messages, lack of clarity on the future planning policy and the many issues around nutrient neutrality. Cllr Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning, replied that there were significant challenges. They had begun with the White Paper issued in 2020. These had been effectively abandoned, and local authorities were still awaiting updated guidance. The Council's planning team continued to work very hard to serve the public and planning decisions remained above the national standard set for planning authorities. Cllr Brown said that the nutrient neutrality issue had placed additional challenges on officers and the reintroduction of investment zones would add further pressure. There was some positive news regarding nutrient neutrality. Royal Haskoning, consultants to the Norfolk Authorities, had recently undertaken an audit and were due to announce revisions to the original boundaries set out by Natural England, with some key areas being excluded in the future. Cllr Brown concluded by saying that the Council was hoping to move to the next stage for progressing the Local Plan in early 2023, when there would be a clearer idea of how nutrient neutrality would impact on the District going forwards.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked about the joint venture between Natural England and Anglian Water regarding a mitigation plan. He asked for more information about what the Council was doing to try and address the problems caused by nutrient neutrality. Cllr Brown replied that the Natural England calculator would add approximately £5000 to each new dwelling. The auditing and calculation measures brought in by the Council's own consultants would reduce this by between 30 – 50% which would have a huge impact on affordable housing in particular. He said that he understood that Natural England would accept the revised calculator as it was evidenced based.

Cllr Dr V Holliday asked the Portfolio Holder for Environment how the Council was intending to work with Serco (the Council's waste collection provider) to improve customer service following the introduction of changes to the waste collection rounds. She said that two residents had contacted her to say that their waste had

not been collected since the change-over date, despite several emails to customer services. She said that she had raised the matter of customer services at the recent member briefing and was told that additional training would be put in place. She sought reassurance that the situation would improve soon. In Cllr Lloyd's absence, the Leader requested more information from Cllr Dr Holliday so that he could look into it and provide a full written response.

Cllr N Dixon said that he wished to put a question to the Leader, Cllr Adams. He said that the Administration had stated that it was keen to learn from past mistakes and he wondered if the Leader could elaborate on what actions had been taken following the publication of the 2019/2020 Audit results report, particularly regarding the reference to the inappropriate behaviour of two councillors. The Leader replied that he felt all the matters had been addressed via the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee (GRAC). There had been some poor practice inherited from the previous administration that had been corrected. He said that he wanted to look forwards now. A Police investigation and an external audit had found that no one had benefitted from the procurement work referenced in the results report. There had also been no concerns regarding the cost of that work. His priority was to focus on the key issues affecting residents now such as the cost of living crisis, nutrient neutrality, energy costs and affordable housing. He concluded by saying that the Council was running very well and the new management structure cost less than the previous one. He felt that this was 'smoke and mirrors' and that the main opposition group was focussing on the past.

Cllr J Rest referred to page 51 of the agenda and asked Cllr Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets, about the vacant building in North Lodge Park, Cromer. The closing date for expressions of interest was 12th September and he asked whether the Portfolio Holder could provide an update. Cllr Seward replied that he had not been provided with any details yet. He was due to have a meeting with the Estates Team soon and would be able to provide details after that.

Cllr S Penfold asked Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing, how the issue of nutrient neutrality was impacting on the building of affordable homes in the District. Cllr Fredericks replied that currently, 110 affordable homes could not be progressed. She added that she was concerned about future numbers as the problem could deter planning applications.

Cllr P Fisher asked Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, whether the District had seen a recovery in visitor numbers since the pandemic. Cllr Kershaw replied that during 2021, 6.02m visitor trips were made to North Norfolk, generating £365m – an increase over 2020, which indicated that numbers were recovering quite well.

Cllr G Hayman asked Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environment, about the ongoing rat problem in Cromer. He said that work to address the issue had been undertaken on the west side of the promenade but he wondered what more could be done on the east side as it was an issue at all levels. The Leader, Cllr Adams, replied in Cllr Lloyd's absence. He said that there was extensive work being undertaken to deal with the issue, including baiting on both the east and west sides of the town. He acknowledged that it was a problem but it should be recognised that it was a case of just managing the issue as food sources were prevalent on the cliff tops in particular. In addition, there were some locations in the east that were on private land which could be quite challenging to access. He suggested that Cllr Hayman spoke to officers about any specific locations that he was aware of and they could update him on whether they were being dealt with.

Cllr C Cushing asked Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, why his written report was so brief. He asked whether that was all that was happening within his portfolio. Cllr Kershaw replied that there was a lot that was going on. The Council regularly engaged with local businesses across the District and establishing their concerns. Many were finding the energy crisis particularly challenging and this was impacting on their wider business functions – including the recruitment of apprentices, which they were reluctant to commit to in such a volatile environment. He said that there was a new film in production at West Raynham and there had been an increase in new hospitality companies investing in the District.

Cllr S Butikofer asked the Leader whether he agreed that it would be helpful if Norfolk County Council could be more informative about their assets in the North Norfolk area, so that the two councils could work collaboratively to secure the best outcomes for the residents of North Norfolk. She referred to Holt Hall, where the sale had fallen through. There had previously been a request for it to be used to house refugees but this had been refused as was in the process of being sold. The Leader agreed with Cllr Butikofer and said that Holt Hall was an example where things could have been done differently and there was a good opportunity for the County Council to engage with the community.

Cllr G Hayman asked Cllr V Gay, Portfolio Holder for Culture, about the decline in sales for the Cromer Pier show. He asked what contingencies were in place to reduce the strain on the operator and what the Council was doing to promote the Pier show. Cllr Gay was not present and it was agreed that a written response would be provided.

65 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 06 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The following recommendations were made by Cabinet to Full Council:

1. Outturn Report 2021/2022

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr P Heinrich and

RESOLVED to approve:

- a) The provisional outturn position for the General Fund revenue account for 2021/22;
- b) The transfers to and from reserves as detailed within the report (and appendix C) along with the corresponding updates to the 2022/23 budget;
- c) Allocate the surplus of £615,740 to the General Reserve;
- d) The financing of the 2021/22 capital programme as detailed within the report and at Appendix D;
- e) The balance on the General Reserve of £2.33 million;
- f) The updated capital programme for 2022/23 to 2025/26 and scheme financing as outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix E;
- g) The roll-forward requests as outline in Appendix G are approved.

One member abstained.

2. Budget Monitoring 2022/2023 – Period 4

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

RESOLVED

That £130,000 is released from the Major Repairs reserve to increase the existing capital budget for Fakenham Connect.

Cllr J Rest voted against. One member abstained.

3. Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/2022

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

RESOLVED

To approve the Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/2022

One member abstained.

4. Debt Recovery 2021/2022

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr P Heinrich and

RESOLVED

To approve 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.

66 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 28TH SEPTEMBER 2022

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, informed Council that all of the Cabinet recommendations had been considered by the Committee at the meeting on 28th September and no further recommendations were made.

67 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Chief Executive introduced this item. He explained that, following a request from Trunch Parish Council, NNDC had agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review within the parish to consider a reduction in the number of seats on the parish Council from eleven to seven. He said that, having undertaken a comparison with other parishes with a similar number of electors (885) that it would be more appropriate to reduce the number of seats to nine rather than seven.

Cllr G Hayman, local member for Trunch, said that he was supportive of the proposals. He said that he was aware that the parish council was struggling to fill vacancies and that he had a wider concern that more effort needed to be made to encourage people to serve on parish councils. The Chief Executive thanked him for his comments and said that the Council's Democratic Services Team had recently held two events to encourage people to stand as candidates in the District Elections in 2023. He had also written to parish and town council clerks advising them of their obligation to encourage people to put themselves forward and to promote the local elections in the coming months. In addition, the Council's Town and Parish Council Engagement Forum had also outlined the assistance that could be offered to clerks who required support in this area.

Cllr H Blathwayt said that it was incumbent on all members to attend parish council meetings as doing so increased the relevance of elected representatives.

Cllr G Hayman asked whether the Council had a statutory duty to hold prospective candidates' events, and if not, whether they were a good use of officer resource given the financial pressures on the Council. He then referred to the impact of 'sectional' behaviour in some parishes which was causing problems and in some cases, forcing people to leave. The Chief Executive replied that there was no legislative requirement to hold them but the Council chose to do so as it gave anyone who was not aligned to a political party the opportunity to find out more about the process.

It was proposed by Cllr G Hayman, seconded by Cllr R Kershaw and

RESOLVED

That Trunch Parish Council be reduced to a membership of **nine (9)** which would better reflect the size of its electorate and is within the same range as other councils which also have nine seats (as shown in the attached appendix to the report)

68 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None received.

69 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None received.

70 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

The Chairman began by reminding members that there was a total of 30 minutes for motions. Three motions had been submitted and she suggested allocating ten minutes for each.

1. Freezing of Council Tax

Cllr J Rest introduced the motion. He said that it was self-explanatory, and it was important to give residents some assurance that the Council was trying to ease the financial pressures that many of them faced. Cllr J Punched seconded the motion. He said that the Independent Group was seeking a commitment from the Administration to support the motion. The only caveat would be if there was an order from the Government for councils to raise council tax to increase revenue. He requested a recorded vote.

Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance, responded. He said that the motion was simply asking the Administration to give consideration to freezing council tax when the financial planning procedure commenced and he was therefore supportive. He added that it was certainly an approach that the Administration aspired to, as demonstrated by their decision to freeze council tax in 2021. Cllr Seward reminded Members that the amount raised directly by NNDC via council tax was less than 10 pence in every pound, so the proposals would have a limited impact on the Council's revenue. He concluded by saying that meeting this aspiration would depend to a large extent on the financial settlement from central government.

Cllr C Cushing said that he was supportive of the motion and the Conservative Group had opposed previous council tax increases by the Administration and his group had frozen it for seven years. Cllr Seward responded that a Government grant had been provided to enable local authorities to freeze council tax previously.

Cllr Hayman sought clarification on whether the motion could be put forward at this time as it was not during the budget setting process. The Chief Executive replied that the motion was requesting that consideration should be given when the budget setting process began. It was not requesting a clear commitment at this time.

It was proposed by Cllr J Rest, seconded by Cllr J Punchard and

RESOLVED

To give consideration to freezing the 2023 council tax, when the financial planning procedure commences.

That the Authority will continue to look at ways that will help more vulnerable residents at this time and into the forthcoming winter months.

2. Cost of Living Crisis

Cllr L Shires introduced the motion. She said that people were currently very anxious as to how they were going to get through the winter with escalating costs across the board. Many of them were having to choose between eating and heating. She said that the situation was unprecedented. There were four simple steps set out in the supporting statement to the motion and she encouraged members to support them.

Cllr W Fredericks, seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Cllr C Cushing said that there was much to commend the motion and his group was supportive of all of the recommendations except the final one, which requested the lobbying of local MPs for a reduction in VAT to 17.5%. He explained that the Government had already put a lot of measures in place to assist with the cost of living crisis, and had spent tens of billions of pounds in providing support, including the energy rebate scheme and the extensive energy support scheme. He added that if there had been some consultation with his group prior to the meeting, then an agreement could have been reached on how to support the motion together. The Chairman asked Cllr Shires to clarify the issue regarding the reduction in VAT. She replied that it was included within the broader proposal to write to MPs requesting support for action to limit the impact of the cost of living crisis via a series of measures.

Cllr E Vardy said that he was broadly supportive of the motion but said it was important that a cost of living summit should be evidence based to ensure that it was impactful.

Cllr T FitzPatrick said that he was disappointed about the lack of consultation on the motion. He said that there should have been more engagement with partners, referring to an announcement earlier that week by the County Council that it was using £6.7m of Government money for this very purpose. It seemed strange that there was no mention of Norfolk Community Foundation and the work they were doing in this area. He questioned whether it was a genuine concern that nothing was being done when in fact there was lots of work being undertaken.

Cllr S Butikofer said that Woking Borough Council had recently held a similar, very successful summit and there could be some engagement with them to ensure that it was evidence based and worked well. She added that the motion was submitted before the County Council announced the additional funding. They would be invited to participate in the summit.

Cllr G Hayman said that he wished to propose an amendment. He proposed that recommendation 1 should be struck out as it was not appropriate to thank officers for work that they were paid to undertake. Cllr Stenton seconded the amendment. Cllr L Shires did not accept the amendment. When put to the vote it was not supported with 2 members voting in favour, 19 members voting against and 9 abstentions.

Cllr T Adams said that he was supportive of the motion, He said that whilst he accepted Cllr FitzPatrick's point that there was a lot being done already, it must be acknowledged that all members had seen an increase in the number of residents seeking support and there were particular areas of concern in some parts of the district regarding a lack of access to the energy bank. Also, North Norfolk had a higher number of residents accessing council tax support. Cllr FitzPatrick replied that he did not feel that the Leader had responded to any of the points that he had raised.

Cllr W Fredericks spoke as seconder of the motion. She said that her local food bank was receiving an increase of 40% in referrals since last year and it was important that all the key agencies were brought together to address the problems that residents faced.

Cllr L Shires concluded the debate by saying that the motion was not political. It was about helping residents to feed their families and heat their homes. She added that officers often had to deal with residents in difficult circumstances that they could not always help. It was about dealing with the cost of living crisis which was a huge issue for a lot of local families. Cllr Shires requested a recorded vote. It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

RESOLVED by 21 votes in favour and 9 abstentions.

1. Thank officers for the additional work already being done support residents amid this crisis
2. To hold a 'Cost of Living Summit', the outcome of which will be reported to Cabinet, along with any recommendations
3. To ask the Leader and Chief Executive to explore various options for providing additional support to our residents
4. To ask the Leader to write to relevant government ministers and our local MPs to ask for urgent action to relieve the cost-of-living crisis through such measures

3. Sewage Outflows Data

Cllr L Withington introduced the motion. She said that there were still issues with sewage outflows as demonstrated by recent events in Wells and to ensure that members were knowledgeable about the issues, they needed to be confident that the data provided by Anglian Water was accurate and reliable. This did not seem to be the case and it was almost impossible for members to assess and scrutinise the

situation in the District without access to accurate data. Cllr Withington referred members to the detailed recommendations set out in the motion. Cllr H Blathwayt seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Cllr N Dixon proposed the following amendment. It was seconded by Cllr Dr V Holliday.

'This Council therefore RESOLVES to ask Anglian Water to confirm the following for the North Norfolk Coastal beaches, chalk bed rivers (like the Glaven and Stiffkey) and the rivers Bure, Ant and Wensum be added to the data request at Action 2 of the 11 May 22 OSC Meeting Minutes and therefore reported to OSC for consideration in due course'

Cllr Dixon said that the amendment widened the set of proposed actions. Sewage outflows were also an issue for the district's chalk stream rivers which were subject to storm water discharges. He said that he agreed with the concerns regarding the accuracy of data.

Cllr Withington accepted the amendment and it became part of the substantive motion.

Cllr J Rest said that it was important that a timeline was agreed with Anglian Water as to when they could attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and provide a response. The Chief Executive said that this was a reasonable request but it must be recognised that Anglian Water's attendance had to accommodate their business needs and align with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme. All efforts would be made to ensure that it was resolved as soon as possible.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle said that Anglian Water should be ashamed of themselves and the approach that they were taking.

Cllr H Blathwayt seconded the motion. He thanked Cllr Dixon for his amendment. He added that members needed accurate information to make informed decisions.

It was proposed by Cllr L Withington, seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt and

RESOLVED unanimously

To ask Anglian Water to confirm the following for the North Norfolk Coastal beaches, chalk bed rivers (like the Glaven and Stiffkey) and the rivers Bure, Ant and Wensum be added to the data request at Action 2 of the 11 May 22 OSC Meeting Minutes and therefore reported to OSC for consideration in due course:

- How many current storm outflows in the North Norfolk area are not being monitored?
- How many storm outflows which discharge onto bathing beaches have monitors which are all fitted and working?
- How many storm outflows which discharge onto shellfish beds with regular harvesting have monitors which are all fitted and working?
- How many official bathing sites with storm outflows present do not have monitors fitted and working in place?
- An outline of the plan to bring forward the implementation of monitoring of sewage discharge points, indicating the scale of the project and the timescales involved and the expected improvements to water quality

71 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

72 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm.

Chairman