

-CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL-

16 November 2022

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

For the period October to November 2022

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

FINANCE

The finance team continue to work to prepare financial reports, including:

- Outturn Report 2021/22 approved by Full Council
- Budget Monitoring P4 2022/23 taken through committee cycle
- Statement of Accounts 2019/20 Signed off by external Audit and published on the Council's website
- Discussions were undertaken with Ernst and Young about completing the 2020/21 Audit process and dates were agreed for November 2022.
- The finance team have been meeting and working with Budget holders to discuss 2023/24 budget requirements.

The team are still working with Civica to implement a new finance system in December 2022.

ASSETS

Disposal of assets. Sale of Parklands has completed at a value of £1.7m. Solicitors progressing the transfer of amenity land at West Beckham and Sheringham to the Town and Parish Councils and transfer of Mundesley Gunning placements to community group. Stalham Public Open space transfer to the Council has completed and Heads of Terms now issued to the Town Council.

Planning application for the enabling land at Sheringham is progressing through the due process with determination anticipated December.

Vacant Property –Former playgroup building and café at North Lodge Park, Cromer has received 10 expressions of interest which are being assessed.

The Cedars lease proposals are being further considered following a report to Cabinet. The Cedars barns have received 3 proposals that are being assessed by officers.

Decarbonisation of Assets – Sheringham Little Theatre and Cromer Tennis Club assets and tenants have been visit for initial discussions around opportunities. Programme of asset reviews will take place on a priority list of

assets that will be impacted by Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and Housing portfolio.

LEGAL

Eastlaw continues to advise and assist the Council with reference to its contracts, planning and other matters. The team has recently worked on the following matters of note:

- with the Revenues department to recover a substantial and significant business rates debt and
- with the Environmental Health department to successfully defend an appeal at the Residential Property Tribunal relating to an improvement notice, served upon a landlord, to protect tenants from hazardous living conditions.

FOI request figures show that the Council's current performance at responding to requests within the statutory 20 working days is at 94%. The national target is set at 90%. The legal service continues to provide advice and assistance to the wider Council in order to assist in this area and support the corporate responsibilities.

There has been a recent audit of the legal service which is at the draft report stage.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The team has been very busy, holding two prospective candidates events on 28 September and 7th October, in a hybrid format, for anyone wanting to find out more about standing for election in the District Council election in May 2023.

The NNDC Town & Parish Council Engagement Forum met virtually on 10th October. The focus was on the Local Elections in 2023 and the session was well attended, with several attendees providing positive feedback.

Briefings have been held for members on key topics including second homes and nutrient neutrality.

A campaign was run during the summer to recruit a steering group for the new Youth Council. Five young people came forward and met for the first time on Monday 24 October, with the support of the British Youth Council, they are working on shaping the youth council and will be running a communications campaign to recruit new members over the next few weeks.

Recruitment for two new Independent Person (to advise on Standards complaints) is underway. The closing date is 11th November. There has been considerable interest so far.

REVENUES

Collection as of 30 September 2022.

Council Tax collection was 54.84.08% against target of 54.75%, excess in collection of £76k compared to the previous months of a shortfall in collection.

NNDR collection is 53.41% against target of 47.25%, an excess in collection of £1.74M. This is partly caused by the remaining Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) awards that were applied in September 2022 for the 2021/22 year and carried forward as a credit to the NDR 2022/23 charge.

Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme.

The national CT Energy Rebate Scheme closed on 30 September 2022 and we managed to pay the remaining eligible customers who hadn't received their payment before this date however the government has since extended this date.

The total rebate amount awarded to NNDC council tax customers is £6,114,900.

Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

The total relief amount awarded to NNDC business customers was increased from £1,231,879 to £1,562,395.

This was the remaining funds that had not been paid which would have been claimed back by government by the end date of the scheme date of 30 September 2022.

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

Government Returns:

- **CTB1 Completed on time.**
- **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.

Quarterly Check Ins all team leaders and staff completed by end of October 2022.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

FINANCE

The following matters are forthcoming:

- Completing budget discussions and analysing the overall Financial Forecast
- Completion of the 2021/22 Audit entries
- Completion of the 2020/21 Audit process
- Continuation of the implementation and testing of the new finance system

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The team is beginning preparations for the intake of new members in May 2023. The induction programme is starting to take shape and we will finalising it in the coming weeks, with the input of the Member Development Group.

The Youth Council will launch their recruitment campaign on 1st December and there will be a launch event at the end of January 2023.

REVENUES

Papers

Supporting Finance with the paper: Council Tax Discounts & Premiums for 2023/24

Government Returns:

Business Grants

CT Energy Rebate Scheme

The CARF & Retail Relief Return

Council Tax and Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Annual Billing

3 Meetings attended