COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Tuesday, 20 December 2022 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:	Mr T Adams	Mr D Birch
	Mr H Blathwayt	Mr A Brown
	Mr C Cushing	Mr P Fisher
	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Mr T FitzPatrick
	Mr V FitzPatrick	Mrs W Fredericks
	Ms V Gay	Mrs P Grove-Jones
	Mr C Heinink	Mr P Heinrich
	Dr V Holliday	Mr N Housden
	Mr R Kershaw	Mr N Lloyd
	Mr G Mancini-Boyle	Mr N Pearce
	Mr S Penfold	Mr J Rest
	Mr E Seward	Miss L Shires
	Mrs E Spagnola	Mrs J Stenton
	Dr C Stockton	Mr M Taylor
	Mr J Toye	Mr E Vardy
	Mr A Varley	
Also in attendance:	The Chief Executive, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Democratic Services Manager, The Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny	

92 PRESENTATION - NORTH NORFOLK YOUTH COUNCIL STEERING GROUP

Two members of the North Norfolk Youth Council steering group spoke to members about the work that had been undertaken over several months in preparation for a launch day for the new youth council on 29th January. They shared a promotional video and spoke about the three broad themes that they wanted to focus on in their first year – education, climate and environment and mental health. They asked members to encourage young people in their local communities to attend the launch event and said that they were looking forward to working with members on key issues and decisions that affected young people in the District.

93 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

94 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

95 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

96 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr L Shires declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 11 – North Walsham Market Place Improvement Scheme. She said that she was County Council for North Walsham East and the County Council was overseeing the highways part of the project.

97 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

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

26th November – Chairman's Charity Quiz Night, £226 was raised for the Chairman's charities.

4th December – Civic celebration and community carol concert, Cromer Parish Church.

7th December – Christmas Carol Service, St Mary's Parish Church, Stalham

12 – 16 December – Festive Fundraising week, £713,26 raised for the Chairman's charities

The Chairman reminded members that there was a collection at the end of the meeting if they wished to donate money towards her charities.

98 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader began saying that some bin collections were still being missed, however, they remained below 200 a week, despite the additional challenges faced by the very cold weather. He said he had made direct representations to Serco this week regarding 19 properties which continued to experience repeated misses in their collections. He said that the situation was moving in the right direction but was still not at the standard that was expected. Serco had issued a statement apologising for the impact on residents and setting out their plans on how the issues would be addressed. The Leader read out the statement in full.

The Leader then spoke about the recent announcement by HSBC,confirming that branches in Fakenham and Cromer would be closing. Discussions were ongoing with the operators of the emerging bank hub model and the Leader was intending to visit one of these in the new year. He said that he had concerns about the low figure (40%) of HSBC clients at these branches who were using online banking services but it must be accepted that this was the course of direction for high street banking. He added that options were being explored for Holt, Wells and Stalham hosting bank hubs, as there was an absence of facilities in those towns.

The Leader then referred to several locally-based businesses entering administration, including Joules and M&Co and said it was hoped that a buyer would be found for the latter so that they could continue to contribute to trade in Fakenham and Cromer town centres.

He said that inflation continued to impact on local government finances. The Autumn statement had not provided the level of assistance required to maintain all of the current services. He added it was likely that some authorities would struggle with ongoing financial pressure. So far there had been £340m of lost value in the Levelling Up Fund and this highlighted the challenges of delivering capital projects in current financial climate.

The Leader said that he was pleased to confirm that the Council had agreed to provide £10,000 of funding to the Norfolk Community Law Service, to support the provision of legal advice and debt support to local residents.

He then referred to the loss of Blue Flag status at three of the District's beaches and said that an urgent meeting had been requested with the Environment Agency to try and understand the reasons for the change in status. He said that it was not a result of anything that the District Council had done.

The Leader concluded by reminding members to visit the two local Christmas shows at Thursford and Cromer Pier. He wished everyone a restful festive season.

99 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

100 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman asked if Cabinet members wanted to provide an oral update to their written reports.

Cllr R Kershaw informed members that the Government had advised that the Levelling Up Fund announcement was delayed until the end of January 2023.
Cllr L Shires said that she wanted to highlight the excellent work that Customer Services had been undertaking since September 2022, particularly their efforts to reduce the wait time for telephone callers. She said that 5 new members of staff had been recruited and all but two of them were taking calls already. The average wait time had begun to improve and was now at an average of 4 minutes. All new staff members would be fully trained by mid-January. In addition, a member of the digital scanning team had been seconded into Customer Services for a short time to help through the winter period. In anticipation of voter ID letters going out to residents, an additional option had been added to the telephone 'menu' which would direct calls to the Elections Team. This was a new proactive, interdepartmental approach to dealing with key issues that arose and needed additional support. Early in September the voicemail service had to be turned off due to an overwhelming number of calls and the service was now being staggered over peak hours and all customers were called back before the end of the day. The Council was exploring the use of a chat function and liaising with Breckland and Great Yarmouth Councils to see how they utilised this. The intention was to trial a chatbot to help people find the service that they needed.

Cllr Shires said that the Council was getting ready to launch the customer service satisfaction survey so the team could better understand how what they did well and how they could improve. She added that in the last 6 weeks there had been an increase in signposting by the team to other services, including cost of living support and referrals to the food and energy banks. She thanked the Customer Services Team for their support in this. She then read out a case study which highlighted ongoing support and contact from a vulnerable customer. They had been referred to the Help Hub team which had helped them with accessing additional financial support.

The Chairman then invited members to ask questions:

Cllr P Heinrich asked Cllr E Seward about the newly released Local Government financial settlement figures and whether he had any further information to share with members. Cllr Seward replied that they were provisional figures and a consultation period would now follow. However, the direction of travel for NNDC for the next financial year looked clear. In terms of funding from central Government, there would

be considerably less in cash terms than the current year. This would add considerable pressure on the Council's production of a balanced budget.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked Cllr N Lloyd to explain the percentage of the 57% reduction of the Council's carbon footprint from 2018/19 to 2021/2022 was due to decarbonisation of the National Grid. He also asked for detail about the areas where the carbon footprint had increased. Cllr Lloyd said that he would provide a written response to the first question. Regarding the increasing footprint, he explained that more staff members were returning to work in the office after Covid, which meant more car journeys and the use of heating throughout the building and an increase of water usage. It was a constant challenge and the Council had done well to achieve a 50% reduction already. He said that focus was needed now on specific measures over the next few years if the Council was to achieve net zero by 2030.

Cllr Dr V Holliday asked Cllr L Shires to explain how one third of the Customer Services team had been in post for less than 12 weeks at the time of the Serco waste collection changes, when it should have been anticipated that call numbers would rise considerably. Cllr Shires replied that Serco should have been taking the majority of the calls. She added that Customer Services was often a 'stepping stone' for staff to gain experience before moving onto other roles at the Council, so a relatively high turnover was not unusual.

Cllr E Vardy asked Cllr R Kershaw about the reference in his written report to the first year of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. He said it wasn't clear how the money would be spent, given it needed to be spent during the current financial year. Cllr Kershaw said that it had only been agreed in early December and the first tranche of 20% would arrive in April 2023. Therefore, nothing would be spent during the current financial year.

Cllr C Cushing asked Cllr Kershaw why the Council's Economic Growth Strategy had been withdrawn. He said that other Districts had made this a priority and queried why it was not considered to be a priority for NNDC. He said that it was a key document that sat alongside the development of the Local Plan. Cllr Kershaw replied that it was impossible to plan strategically at the moment given the volatility in the national economy and therefore a digital hub was being set up to help provide support to businesses.

Cllr Dr C Stockton asked Cllr Kershaw to provide an update on future plans for the Bacton Gas Terminal. Cllr Kershaw replied that £1.3bn of investment had been secured to help generate blue and green hydrogen and keep the terminal going for the next 30 years.

Cllr A Varley asked Cllr A Brown, how the planning reforms set out in the levelling up legislation, would impact on service delivery for residents in North Norfolk. Cllr Brown replied that the Bill would introduce extensive planning reforms and was currently in the report stage. He said that there were several issues. The first being amendments to amendments, which highlighted the challenges posed by changing existing planning laws. In addition to this, a lot of the new measures were created through secondary legislation which limited scrutiny. He said that the proposals also failed to introduce measures for tackling the impact of climate change and the cost of living crisis. This seemed at odds with the original intention of allowing communities to have a greater say in planning matters in their local areas. Instead, there was an unworkable proposal for 'street votes' which would allow neighbours to hold referendums on property developments in their street or local area. The consensus amongst local authorities was that this was a complex and potentially

contentious concept that could lead to division in local communities. He concluded by saying that he welcomed the ability to double planning fees.

Cllr S Penfold asked the Leader about the County Deal for Norfolk and the likely impact on the District Council. Cllr Adams replied that the proposed deal was not of great value as it was not index-linked and there was no new money. He said that he had been surprised to hear the suggestion that it could be used to pay the interest on Council borrowing and cautioned against this. He concluded by saying that devolution was inevitable but the Council needed to push for real benefits for the District.

Cllr N Pearce asked Cllr V Gay about the recent loss of Blue Flag status for three of the District's beaches. He wondered if she had any information regarding the water quality metrics that had led to this degradation. Cllr Gay replied that the Environment Agency tested for e-coli and faecal contamination. She added that they had been moved from excellent to good. She said that she did not have any further information at this time, however, the Leader had secured a meeting with Anglian Water in January and there would also be a meeting with the Environment Agency. She said that the Council had no power to control the contamination levels in the North sea but it would do everything that it could to find out what was causing the problem.
The Chairman said that there was sufficient time to allow Cllr Varley to follow up on his question to Cllr Brown. Cllr Varley asked if the planning elements of the levelling up legislation would have implications for the Council's Local Plan. Cllr Brown replied that several local authorities had taken the decision to pause the development of their local plan in light of the new Bill. The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was also anticipated, hopefully in the New Year. These factors, together with the ongoing issue of nutrient neutrality, were causing significant challenges for planning policy. However, the Council was intending to accelerate the Local Plan and submit it to the Planning Inspector in early March 2023. He added that the new measures would make planning policy far more complicated and required that two more documents were 'bolted' onto the Local Plan. There was an ethos to move towards a more centralised plan-making system and this was causing some issues regarding local consultation. For this reason, the Council wanted to have the Local Plan adopted under the current rules and it wanted to deliver a plan-led planning system rather than a developer-led system.

Cllr H Blathwayt asked the Leader whether it was a coincidence that the two MPs for North Norfolk voted in October 2021 against the Lord's amendment preventing the dumping of sewage in bathing waters and now one year later, 3 blue flags had been lost. Cllr Adams replied that he feared it wasn't a coincidence and hoped to be proven wrong. He reminded members that there were still three blue flag beaches in the District and the Council would continue to work with the relevant agencies to ensure that water quality was at the highest standard.

101 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES & PANELS AND OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED to make the following changes:

Cllr J Toye to replace Cllr A Yiasimi on Development Committee
Cllr H Blathwayt to be appointed as a substitute on Development Committee

Cllr W Fredericks to replace Cllr T Adams as a substitute on the Norfolk County Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Panel

102 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 05 DECEMBER 2022

1. Fees & Charges 2023 – 2024

The Chief Executive introduced Tina Stankley, the new Director of Resources. He then said that following the announcement earlier that day regarding the provisional Local Government financial settlement, it was suggested that this item be deferred to allow for further consideration and revisions by Cabinet, ahead of the Budget preparation process.

RESOLVED

To defer the Fees and Charges 2023 – 2024, pending further consideration by Cabinet

Two members abstained.

2. Treasury Management Half Year Report

Cllr E Seward, introduced this item. He referred members to the figures on short-term borrowing and highlighted the increase in interest rates from 0.36% to 2.65% and which was starting to have an impact on short-term borrowing costs.

RESOLVED
To approve the Treasury Management Half Yearly Update

Two members abstained.

3. North Walsham Market Place Improvement Scheme

Cllr N Housden said that he wished to raise the following point of order:
To propose a notice without motion under section 15.1 s (page 26 of the Constitution):

To 'require that a report be made to a future meeting where the person responsible has declined or failed to arrange for a report'. He said that the report as currently presented did not contain sufficient detail for members to reach a decision. Moreover, despite repeated requests from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for additional information, this had not been forthcoming, and he believed that members could not reach a qualifiable or accurately informed decision regarding the recommendations before them. He therefore proposed that the item be deferred to the next meeting of Full Council.

Cllr C Cushing seconded the proposal.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, Cllr Kershaw, to respond. Cllr Kershaw said that the proposals had been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet Working Party for Projects also regularly reviewed the project. The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee attended these meetings and no questions were raised. Additional information had been sent to all Members by the Corporate Business Manager in the last two days. He said that costs were rising at 40% and the project needed to be completed by March 2023 and it would be unwise to delay it further. He said that it was an excellent project and could potentially be de-railed if it was delayed further.

The Scrutiny Officer then read out the following statement from Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who was not able to attend the meeting:

'In respect of the N Walsham Market Place Improvement Scheme I have to say the following as Chairman of OSC:

In the nearing 4 years I have Chaired OSC this is the least comfortable recommendation it's made to Full Council. The merit of the overall Scheme or the need to deliver it wasn't challenged. Around an hour was spent on this item; firstly, to understand the reasons why information requested in Oct and during the Dec Cabinet meeting hadn't been supplied in timely or adequate manner. Secondly, this was crucial to OSC understanding how the contingency fund for the Scheme had been spent and, more recently, what the £400k would be spent on and why no mention of such a significant request hadn't been made during earlier reports to OSC. There was insufficient information given during the meeting to answer crucial questions about how, where, when and why the extra money was needed. Moreover, concerns were raised about "project creep", rescoping and descoping of various parts of the Scheme and how they variously impacted on costs and funding needs. Concern was also raised about project governance and management, especially of risk and cost escalation, and would there be further requests for funding. The lack of transparency and justification was a major concern. In order not to delay matters, and knowing it would be discussed at this meeting tonight, OSC pragmatically took a leap of faith and agreed the recommendation subject to the following 2 caveats and that OSC will review the Scheme progress in a scheduled report to OSC in Jan 23:

1. *That Full Council be supplied with a much more detailed explanation and breakdown of the spend of the £400k, so that it can be satisfied on its justification - you will have to decide tonight on whether that's been done?*
2. *That GRAC reviews the project governance and management of the scheme; in particular, regarding changes to its scope, risk rating & mitigation and whether it complied with the project management template developed by GRAC It also needs to look at lessons learnt and ensure appropriate remedial actions are taken.*

That concludes my submissions on behalf of OSC.'

The Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr S Penfold, confirmed that there had been a robust debate by the committee and further actions had been requested. However, the committee had supported the Cabinet recommendations and in recent days, further information around costings had been provided to members. He felt that this was sufficient reassurance to proceed with the decision.

Cllr N Housden said that the Portfolio Holder's response was factually incorrect. He said that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had asked for figures in September, October, November and December. The December information came to members at 4pm the day before the Full Council meeting and the figures did not 'stack up'. They did not provide the detail that had been requested and did not set how they related to the final completed works on site.

Cllr V Gay, said that as a local member for North Walsham, as far as she was aware that had not been any project 'creep' for the scheme. She added that there had been an unprecedented level of scrutiny via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and

now at Full Council. In addition, there was a project board which had accorded fully with the governance framework in line with audit requirements. She said she felt that the time for lessons learnt would be once the project was completed.

Cllr J Toye said that he had attended the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting when additional information had been requested and he understood the reasons for this, however, the funding model and the timescales within which it had to be spent, made it clear to him that members had to take a 'leap of faith' and make the commitment.

Cllr L Shires said that Cllr Housden had mentioned that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not received information. She said that if the Committee were not satisfied with the quality of the information provided, yet had supported the recommendation to approve the additional funding, it did not make sense. Cllr Housden replied that, as stated in the statement read out by the Scrutiny Officer, the recommendation was made with the caveat that the additional information was provided before the Full Council meeting so that members could make an informed decision. He added that he personally had requested information on the contingency figures several times at Overview & Scrutiny Committee and this had still not been provided.

Cllr P Heinrich said that it needed to be recognised that the original 'wish list' for the project was much more extensive than the project that was now proposed for completion. In fact, several things had been removed from the scheme to ensure that costs did not spiral. He added that it was one of the most successful of the Heritage Action Zone projects in the country and the Council had a moral duty to see it through to completion. If it required a small amount of additional money then so be it.

Cllr N Housden outlined all of the questions that he had raised at Overview & Scrutiny Committee which had still not been answered.

1. If the scheme was reduced, had a cost revision been completed which would confirm that the project would be completed within existing budget and on time, what would that final cost be and are there savings?
2. What would the additional cost, if any be, if the project was completed as a reduced scheme but a further bidding round was undertaken to raise the additional finance and what time scale was envisaged for the raising of funding and then site mobilisation to undertake the works?
3. What are the specific benefits (within the report but not detailed) to capitalise on greater outcomes if a further £400k was committed to the project?

The Chairman then asked Cllr C Cushing, seconder of the motion, to speak:
Cllr Cushing began by saying that the oversight of the project seemed to be shambolic. He said that when the report was presented to Cabinet, requesting the additional funding, both himself and the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, had asked why had the request suddenly come forward, when only two months previously, Members had been told that the project was running on track. He went onto say that a detailed breakdown of the £400k had been asked for as well as further information as to what had happened to any contingency funding. He reminded members that four out of nine Cabinet members were elected members at either district or county level and although, it was understandable that they had an allegiance to North Walsham, they needed to be seen to be open and clear and be challenging of any figures that were presented.

Cllr Cushing said that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had reluctantly agreed to support the recommendations on the proviso that the detailed figures were provided before they were considered by Full Council. He said that members had been surprised to hear at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting that a substantial amount of the project was being managed by the County Council. He concluded by saying that this was public money and it was important that all proposals were fully scrutinised.

Cllr Kershaw said that this funding was to finish the scope of the project. It was not an extension but members needed to be aware that costs had risen hugely due to inflation caused by the wider economy. He said that he was happy to have a meeting to discuss the figures once they were available but the project could not be delayed any further as it would end up costing more in the long run.

Cllr Housden requested a recorded vote.

When put to the vote, 19 members voted against the motion to defer, 11 voted in favour and two abstained. The motion was therefore not supported.

The Chairman advised members that the vote on the original, substantive motion would now be taken. Cllr T FitzPatrick requested a recorded vote. When put to the vote, 19 members voted in favour, 11 against and 1 member abstained.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**

That £400,000 be allocated from the Business Rates Retention Reserve for the completion of the NWHSHAZ place-making scheme.

Cllr E Seward said that he objected to Cllr Cushing implying that Cabinet members were not even-handed when considering proposals. Cllr Vardy raised a point of order. He said that the vote had been taken and there should be no further discussion on the item.

4. Former Shannocks Hotel Site, Sheringham

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement, introduced this item. He explained that it was a long-standing matter and formed part of the compulsory purchase procedure. He said that although the landowner had demolished the building in 2021, it was incumbent upon them to progress with developing the site. There was no evidence of this and steps needed to be taken now to progress the CPO process.

Cllr C Heinink, Local member for Sheringham thanked everyone for progressing this matter.

RESOLVED

To confirm support for the serving of the General Vesting Document to take ownership of the site as soon as possible

To approve the additional capital budget for the full valuation cost as set out at section 6 of the confidential appended report, and an additional £10,000 to cover the costs associated with the purchase of the property to be financed from the Capital Projects Reserve and Delivery Plan Reserve.

103 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 DECEMBER 2022

It was confirmed that there were no further recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

104 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The Chairman of the Standards Committee, Cllr H Blathwayt, introduced this item. He explained that a panel of members and the Monitoring Officer had recently undertaken interviews for two Independent Persons (IPs), to replace the current Independent Person, Alex Oram, who had come to the end of their term of office. He thanked Mr Oram for his excellent support over the years and explained to members, that due to nature the role, which required providing advice on Code of Conduct matters, it was felt that it would be a good opportunity to appoint two IPs to ensure resilience and avoid any potential conflict of interests. He concluded by saying that he was very pleased to inform members that the appointment panel was recommending that Charles Monteith and Hannah Brown were appointed as the Council's Independent Persons.

It was proposed by Cllr H Blathwayt, seconded by Cllr J Rest and

RESOLVED

To appoint Charles Monteith and Hannah Brown as Independent Persons for a term of 4 years.

105 REVIEW OF POLLING STATIONS

The Chief Executive introduced this item. He explained that polling stations across the District were reviewed periodically to assess their suitability ahead of the 2023 Local elections. The review would only seek to make changes where existing arrangements were deemed to be unsuitable due to issues such as poor accessibility, comfort of staff or condition of hire. Any proposed changes would be implemented from 4th May 2023, when the District and Parish elections were being held.

The Chief Executive said that there were a small number of changes proposed, which he set out. He said that there was only one proposed withdrawal of a polling station – at Thornage, as it was currently sited in the vestry of Thornage Parish church, which was very small and cold. It was therefore proposed that it was moved to the polling station at Briningham Village Hall. He added that the proposed change to Thursford had been withdrawn as the parish council felt that the current venue at the Methodist Chapel remained suitable.

The Chairman invited members to speak:

Cllr P Fisher said that Holkham was supportive of the proposed change of venue. He asked whether the Election Team conferred with Parish Councils as the clerk had indicated that they had not been contacted about the proposed change. The Chief Executive said that the report was seeking support to commence the consultation process and that residents and parish councils would be consulted.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett said that she was pleased to hear there would be a consultation

regarding the changes proposed for Overstrand as she felt that it was unlikely the proposals would be supported.

Cllr N Housden asked about Wicken Green and whether there would still be a Portacabin used at the next election. The Chief Executive said that he would provide a written answer as he did not have that information to hand. He added that a portacabin had been used previously as there was no electricity supply at the community centre building. Cllr T FitzPatrick commented that it was a tent in 2021 rather than a portacabin.

Cllr A Brown said that he noted the proposals for Thornage with concern. The new ID requirements would already impose restrictive new measures and now residents would also have to travel to Briningham to vote. He added that although there was parking at Briningham Village Hall, it was sited on a sharp bend and could be difficult to access and exit. He said that as far as he was aware, the Chairmen of both parish councils were not aware of the proposals. Cllr Brown concluded by saying that he understood the outcome of the consultation would come back to a later meeting of Full Council for approval and he was concerned that there would not be sufficient capacity at the next scheduled meeting on 22 February to give it full consideration as it was the budget setting meeting. The Democratic Services Manager said that options were being explored for the scheduling of an additional meeting of Full Council in late February / early March so that members could consider the Local Plan ahead of its submission and the outcome of the Polling Stations review.

RESOLVED

To agree the commencement of an Interim Polling Place review, including consultation with the parishes / polling districts which are proposed for a change to their current arrangements, in line with the proposed timetable.

106 DRAFT PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2023 - 2024

The Democratic Services Manager introduced this item. She explained that the calendar of meetings was produced annually and presented to Full Council for approval, following extensive consultation with officers and members.

RESOLVED

To adopt the programme of meetings for 2023-2024

107 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None received.

108 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None received.

109 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

The Chairman invited the proposer of the motion, Cllr C Cushing, to introduce it. He began by saying that it was a non-partisan issue and he hoped all members would support it. He said that many members would have seen images of plastic rings caught around seals' necks, causing deep wounds and extensive suffering. He said

that North Norfolk was fortunate to have a number of seal populations and the Council was already signed up to the 'Safer Seals' campaign, promoted by the Friends of Horsey Seals, which highlighted how beach visitors could safeguard seals.
Cllr Cushing went onto say that in November 2022, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council had passed a motion to ban flying rings from their beaches, adding that if NNDC followed suit, then the majority of Norfolk's coastline would be protected. He said that he was aware that the legislation 'lagged behind' what was being proposed but the main aim was to protect the seals and if notices were erected along the coast, educating the public, then it would have a large impact on reducing the use of flying rings. He said that he would welcome any attempts by the Council to ensure that the legal enforcement regime was strengthened.

The seconder of the motion, Cllr E Vardy, reserved his right to speak.

The Chairman informed members that an amendment had been submitted by the Leader, Cllr T Adams. She invited Cllr Adams to introduce it. He began by confirming that he had shared it with the Group Leaders in advance of the meeting. He acknowledged that himself and Cllr Cushing both wanted to achieve a ban on the use of flying rings on beaches in the District, but it must be acknowledged that there was no legal framework to enforce it at the present time. He explained that he had been doing work on this for some time. It was a big issue and it affected the public's perception of the District's beaches. Unfortunately, the current enforcement framework was aimed at protecting people not animals and it was just not possible to prohibit or ban the use of flying rings. He said that Kings Lynn & West Norfolk BC had good intentions when they passed their motion but it was just an advisory ban and could not be enforced. He said that he was therefore putting forward the following amendment:

Full Council RESOLVES to:

- *Note the good work already undertaken by our Leisure and Localities Team in conjunction with the Friends of Horsey Seals to raise awareness of these issues and discourage the use of these items on our beaches, and ask for this awareness campaign to continue if possible, and if desired by our partners at Friends of Horsey Seals and RSPCA East Winch, until such time that a ban is possible.*
- *The Leader meets and discusses the issues with North Norfolk's MPs in conjunction with the Friends of Horsey Seals and the RSPCA, if they wish to join us, to press for the need for additional powers for local government to ban the ring frisbees on our beaches.*
- *Continue engagement with the Friends of Horsey Seals and the RSPCA East Winch to understand the scale of issues in North Norfolk.*
- *Continue to monitor the usage of rings using our Foreshore Officers and consider their ability to engage with beach visitors on this issue as and when time allows them to do so.*
- *Discuss with the RNLI, the providers of our beach lifeguard provision, their ability to monitor usage of rings during their work on our beaches, alongside their other monitoring activities which already includes the observation of numbers visiting our beaches.*
- *Engage with retailers in North Norfolk about the issues with ring frisbees .*
- *Post further general communication messages from the spring onwards across social media platforms.*
- *Consider the benefits of advisory signage on our beaches and Promenades asking that the rings are not used.*

Cllr N Lloyd seconded the amendment.

The Chairman asked Cllr Cushing if he was prepared to accept the amendment. He confirmed that he was, as the intention was to put the protection and safety of seals first.

The Chairman confirmed that the amendment would now become part of the substantive motion. She then opened the debate.

Cllr N Lloyd said that he welcomed support from across the groups on working together on addressing this issue. The amendment added strength to the motion and additional actions. He thanked Cllr Cushing for bringing it forward and hoped that it would highlight the issue with the public.

Cllr H Blathwayt reiterated that it required everyone's support. He said that he had previously asked a national retailer to remove plastic rings from their shelves but they had refused. It was also important to remember that any rings being discarded further upstream would eventually find their way into the sea and injure seals. He concluded by saying that he absolutely supported the motion.

Cllr J Rest asked why it took a Notice of Motion from an opposition group to bring this forward if it was considered to be of such importance to the Administration.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for the Coast, said that she was delighted that the motion had come forward. She said that she had been tackling this serious issue since she first saw a seal with a ring around its neck. She suggested that local retailers could be provided with stickers stating that they were a seal friendly shop. Cllr Fitch-Tillett concluded by saying that this motion fitted in very well with the 'Motion for the Ocean' which had been supported last year.

Cllr S Penfold said he hoped that all members would support the motion and suggested that the Council worked with other coastal authorities on lobbying Government to strengthen the legal framework.

Cllr N Housden said that he would abstain. Although he was very sympathetic to the aims of the motion but believed that he was involved with a lot of wildlife charities and most of these campaigns were aimed at single species conservation, whereas the focus should be on wider species conservation. Dealing with an issue such as this was just the tip of the iceberg. The real challenge was that far more was needed to protect wider bio-diversity. He was fully supportive of what was being proposed but it did not address the challenges faced by wider bio-diversity.

Cllr Dr V Holliday said that there could be stronger signage. In many places, dogs were not allowed to protect birds and that worked very well, so there was more that could be done and if Kings Lynn & West Norfolk BC felt it could be achieved then surely NNDC could take the same approach.

The Chairman then invited Cllr E Vardy, seconder of the motion to speak. He said that every journey began with a single step. The beaches belonged to the seals and other wildlife, not people and the public encroached on their area and we must respect them. He applauded the cross-party support for the motion and said that he hoped it would be supported. He concluded by saying that it would be good for retailers to be monitored to see if there was a change in approach to selling flying rings.

Cllr C Cushing finished the debate by thanking all members for their excellent remarks in support of the motion. He supported Cllr Dr Holliday's suggestion for increased signage as most people would comply, regardless of whether it was legally binding.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input.
It was proposed by Cllr C Cushing, seconded by Cllr E Vardy and

RESOLVED

1. To note the good work already undertaken by our Leisure and Localities Team in conjunction with the Friends of Horsey Seals to raise awareness of these issues and discourage the use of these items on our beaches, and ask for this awareness campaign to continue if possible, and if desired by our partners at Friends of Horsey Seals and RSPCA East Winch, until such time that a ban is possible.
2. That the Leader meets and discusses the issues with North Norfolk's MPs in conjunction with the Friends of Horsey Seals and the RSPCA, if they wish to join us, to press for the need for additional powers for local government to ban the ring frisbees on our beaches.
3. To continue engagement with the Friends of Horsey Seals and the RSPCA East Winch to understand the scale of issues in North Norfolk.
4. To continue to monitor the usage of rings using our Foreshore Officers and consider their ability to engage with beach visitors on this issue as and when time allows them to do so.
5. To discuss with the RNLI, the providers of our beach lifeguard provision, their ability to monitor usage of rings during their work on our beaches, alongside their other monitoring activities which already includes the observation of numbers visiting our beaches.
6. To engage with retailers in North Norfolk about the issues with ring frisbees .
7. To post further general communication messages from the spring onwards across social media platforms.
8. That the Council's website is updated to make the public and retailers aware of the issue.
9. To consider the benefits of advisory signage on our beaches and Promenades asking that the rings are not used.

One member abstained.

110 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

111 PRIVATE BUSINESS

112 FORMER SHANNOCKS HOTEL SITE, SHERINGHAM - EXEMPT APPENDIX

The meeting ended at 8.04 pm.

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Chairman