

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

### **COUNCILLOR SHIRES - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, ASSETS AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

For the period July to September 2023

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

##### **Finance**

- An internal Audit on Procurement and Contract management has been undertaken, this is currently in the review stage, and we are awaiting the draft report from TIAA.
- The anticipated completion of the 2020/21 Financial Statements Audit has been delayed further by additional queries from the auditors. It is still hoped that this will be finalised shortly.
- The team are currently working on budget papers to assist managers in preparing their base budget for 2024/25 and forecasts up to 2027/28. Capital Bid forms and Fees and Charges information have already been circulated.
- Recruitment into our vacant accountancy assistant post was unfortunately unsuccessful. Working with HR we will review the job description and advert content with the aim of re advertising as soon as possible.

##### **Revenues**

###### **Norfolk & National 2022/23 Collection Update**

- It has been confirmed by Government that NNDC came joint second highest in council tax collection for 2022/23 within Norfolk and were joint 31<sup>st</sup> out of 309 authorities nationally top 11% with top quartile being within the top 25%.
- It has been confirmed by government that NNDC came top in Non-Domestic (Business) Rates collection for 2022/23 within Norfolk and were joint 14th out of 309 authorities nationally top 5% with top quartile being within the top 25%.

###### **Collection as of 31 August 2023.**

- The 31 August monthly Council Tax collection was 46.34% against target of 46.10%. An excess in collection to target of £217k.
- The 31 August monthly NDR collection was 51.70% against target of 47.25%. A significant excess in collection to target of £1.07m.

###### **The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF)**

- This scheme is aimed at providing support to households not eligible for the

automatic [Energy Bills Support Scheme GB](#) (£400 payment paid by energy suppliers).

- There have been 357 applications paid totaling £142,800.

#### **Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP)**

- This scheme is where payments are made of £200 to support households that use fuels other than gas to heat their homes.
- There have been 520 applications paid totaling £104,000.

#### **Government Consultations where responses have been submitted:**

- Business Rates Improvement Relief: Draft regulations consultation by 28 August 2023 &
- Proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the council tax premiums by 31 August 2023.

### **Assets**

#### **Vacant Premises**

- Works to The Cedars has completed with 3 proposed tenants and marketing continuing for the vacant space. Open day is planned for 7<sup>th</sup> September.
- Leases for Seaview and the Former Tennis Courts leases are subject to gaining planning consent.
- Vacant unit at Cornish Way will be advertised following completion of decarbonisation works.
- Small storage unit, Sheringham prom has become surplus to requirements and will be advertised to let.

#### **Decarbonisation**

- Works at Catfield units is due to start shortly. Site visits continue across the portfolio including the Councils largest industrial unit at Enterprise way, Fakenham to assess it for potential improvements as part of the lease renewal.

#### **Lease renewals and rent reviews**

- Unit 6 Catfield, lease has completed.
- Lease terms for desk space have been negotiated for Flagship at the Cromer office.
- Lease renewal for 2 parking areas and retail shop are progressing with increase in rent proposed.

#### **Disposal**

- Enabling land at Sheringham, is progressing through the option agreement process.

#### **Other projects -**

- Options appraisal report for Rocket House, Cromer (Cabinet – September)
- Marrams Bowls Club repairs - proposals due at Cabinet later this year.

### **Property Services**

- Cromer pier substructure works commence on 20/09/2022 and are expected to continue for until October 2023. Additional works have been identified and works have been programmed to include these.
- The Vicarage Street, North Walsham PC replacement is currently out to tender with final returns by 26/09/2022. Demolition works have been completed and rebuild works have commenced and completion is expected by end July.
- Project enabling works are progressing at Albert Street public conveniences however we are waiting for a budget to be confirmed.
- Planning application now submitted and party wall notices due to be served on affected properties.
- There is a risk here that we fail to complete the works and register the Changing Places by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 we will miss the funding opportunity.
- Refurbishment works to the Lees public conveniences at Sheringham. 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the works is complete with the left-hand side now reopened. Works to the right-hand side to commence in October.
- The next Phase of the LED lighting improvement has been put on hold due to the necessity for a full tender exercise.
- Resource of funding now required for further phases. This is the lower ground floors to the east and west end of the building and the upper floor.
- Property Services are supporting the “Tackling homes in disrepair” scheme. The pilot scheme has commenced and is progressing well. The pilot will run until end March 2023.
- Property Services also continue to support Housing Options with the temporary accommodation.
- A quotation exercise for no60 Links Avenue Cromer has been undertaken and the works awarded. Works will commence on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September with a three-week turnaround.
- Our compliance officer now has systems and procedures agreed with our corporate health and safety officer to ensure NNDC is compliant with statutory requirements in respect of our assets. This includes all the temporary accommodation stock as well as scheduled and recorded inspections of high use and vulnerable assets (footpaths, amenity lighting etc)
- Car park management contract with Borough Council Kings Lynn West Norfolk continues but is due for renewal by March 2024.
- Potential increase in R&M budget necessary to keep the car parks in good operational order.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

### **Finance**

- The second budget monitoring statement (to end of September 23) 2023/24 will shortly be prepared for November Cabinet. This will update members on the Council's current financial position along with an estimated Outturn position.
- The commencement of the Budget Process 2024/25 including forecasts to 2027/28. Including Medium Term Financial Strategy, Fees and Charges and Updated Capital programme.
- 2021/22 and 2022/23 completion of Statement of Accounts and preparation for the external audit process. NNDC is not alone in having these significant delays in audit process, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) are looking at a range of measures to improve timeliness. These measures include limiting auditors' opinions and changes to the Code of Audit Practice.
- Recruitment to the vacant Chief Technical Accountant post is planned for early September 2023.

## **Revenues**

### **Training/Development**

- Ongoing internal training of two Level 3 Business Admin Certificated apprentices and external training for a team leader in level 5 CMI management qualification.

### **Service Improvements**

- Reviewing and implementing service improvements suggested by staff including a direct debit online form to save NNDC paying capita for the current form provided on our webpages.

### **Government Consultation**

- Responding to a government consultation on business rates avoidance and evasion.

### **Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)**

- Working with Love Holt on their request to be the first Business Improvement Districts (BID) in North Norfolk

### **CTB1 government return - New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grant**

- Next month will require NNDC to complete the CTB1 government return. This works out the New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grant entitlement that NNDC will receive from government for increasing the number of council tax properties and reducing the long-term empty properties since the same time last year.

## **Assets**

- Rent review and lease renewal for over 300 leased beach hut sites and chalets to implement by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Fees and charges to be established for weekly lets and O & S report to be prepared.

## **Property Services**

- Play equipment repairs and maintenance programme. Lack of budget for play equipment replacement meaning some kit being withdrawn. New play areas

being handed down to Property Services via the section 106 agreements, but we have no direct access to further budget to maintain / replace the equipment.

- Consideration for next 5-year pier substructure survey. This will identify the necessity and provide high level budget estimate costings for a further rolling programme of structural works to maintain the integrity of the pier.
- Need to consider where we go with Weybourne public conveniences. Disproportionally expensive to operate and no additional budget.
- By end March 2024 we should have 7 changing places facilities registered and online.

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**3 Meetings attended**

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