

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

February 2024

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

For the period December 2023 to January 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

- **Budget 2024/25**
 - The draft budget 2024/25 and forecast to 2027-28 has been produced.
 - 2024/25 shows a balanced position after the inclusion of £974,864 savings bids and a further £250,000 of savings to be identified.
- **Internal Audit**
 - In line with the Internal Audit Plan, several audits have taken place and we are awaiting formal reports.
 - It is anticipated that they will show an improved position however there will be some outstanding audit recommendations that the team will focus on.
- **Statement of Accounts**
 - Work continues to be undertaken on the production of the outstanding Statements of Accounts, however we are still waiting the decision from government as to the approach to be taken by external auditors.
- **Financial Awareness Training**
 - Mandatory finance training was successfully delivered in December, with a further session scheduled for February.
- **Interim head of Finance**
 - Karl Smith was appointed as an interim assistant director for Finance and is supporting the section 151 officer in undertaking their statutory duties.

Revenues

- **Collection as of 31 January 2024.**
 - The monthly Council Tax collection was 90.41% against target of 90.35%. An excess in collection to target of £53k.

- The monthly NDR collection was 91.56% against target of 91.45%. An excess in collection to target of £27k.
- **Government Returns**
 - The council tax and Non-Domestic (Business) Rates QRC3 form reconciled and sent to government by 12 January 2024 deadline.
 - The NNDR1 form reconciled and sent to government by 31 January 2024 deadline.
- **Storm Babet**
 - We have received information from the Senior Flood Risk Officer, working for Community and Environmental Services at Norfolk County Council that we have thirteen properties flooded in North Norfolk between 20 – 25 October 2023.
 - Two properties have been paid the Business Recovery Grant of £2,500 each by the deadline which is funded fully by central government.
- **Year-End/Annual Billing**
 - The 2024/25 year-end/annual billing work has started within Revenues, Benefits, System Admin, IT and Customer Services/Print Room. This team is reviewing processes to make sure the changes expected going forward are implemented correctly by testing procedures before closing systems down on 16 February 2024 for Non-Domestic (Business) Rates and 21 February 2024 for Council Tax and Benefits.
 - The council tax empty property premium that charges empty properties an additional 100% charge after 12 months starts from 1 April 2024. These customers have been notified ahead of next year's annual billing.

Estates

- **Vacant property**
 - Existing and new concession opportunities have been marketed and bids received for new licences from April 2024 with rental increases expected and vacant spaces continue to be marketed.
 - Black Swan Loke development works as public open space is underway.
- **Decarbonisation**
 - Works at Catfield have been completed, which have improved the Energy Performance Certificate rating from E – C.
- **Leases**
 - Rent review increase and lease renewals for approx. 300 chalet and beach huts are to be completed for 1st April 2024.
 - Identification of possible sites for “click and collect” points has been done.

- **Disposal**
 - Sale of a small parcel of land at Wells-next-the-Sea completed.
- **Acquisition**
 - A further residential property for the Housing Team has completed.

Property Services

- **Public Conveniences**
 - The public conveniences and bridge at the Leas Sheringham has been closed due to structural failure. Works to refurbish the right-hand side of the public have been stopped until repairs are undertaken.
 - Tender for Albert Street public conveniences is now live with an expected return end of Feb 2024.
- **Roofing and Walkway Works**
 - Works to promenade roofing and walkway works at various locations which will include the Art Deco building and Red Lion tenanted units at Cromer and chalet roof repairs at Sheringham have been started by the incumbent MTC using the change variation instruction.
- **The Reef**
 - Collaborative working with Estates to undertake remedial works at the Reef, Sheringham. Some works have now been completed.
- **The Pier**
 - Cromer Pier substructure works to Cromer Pier is a work in progress, this is on time and within budget.
- **Housing**
 - Sitting on the Housing Portfolio Working Group to develop systems and process for temporary and refugee accommodation. This includes out of hours call out procedures.
 - Collaborative working with Housing Options on the target hardening scheme for vulnerable persons.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

- **Statement of Accounts**
 - Work continues on the outstanding Statements of Accounts, however no timeline is known for the external audit of these.
- **Budget Monitoring**
 - The Finance team are working on the P10 (end of January 2024)

budget monitoring.

- Preparation for the 2023/24 outturn process will commence including guidance for service managers.

Revenues

- **Training/Development**

- Ongoing internal training of three Level 3 Business Admin Certificated apprentices and external training for an officer studying towards the Diploma in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV) plus a team leader studying towards the level 5 CMI management qualification.

- **Service Improvements**

- Online forms - reviewing and improving the most used customer paper forms including the Long-term empty property review forms as part of our Business Process Review of the current process.
- 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.

- **Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)**

- Working with Love Holt on their request to be the first Business Improvement Districts (BID) in North Norfolk. The start date is likely to be 1 April 2025.

Estates

- **Acquisition**

- A further 2 residential property acquisitions are expected to complete during February/March.

Property Services

- **Recruitment**

- Recruitment for a shared apprentice to cover PS, Housing Options, IHAT has been agreed and will start shortly. It is agreed the Asset and Property Programme Manager will line manage this post.

- **Fakenham Sports Centre**

- Project planning has commenced with Fakenham Sports Centre.

3 Meetings attended

