

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

March 2024

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

For the period February 2024 to March 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

- **Budget**
 - A balanced budget for 2024/25 was presented to Full Council in February, however there is still work to be undertaken to identify further savings of £250k.
- **Audits**
 - A number of internal audits are nearing completion including AP (Accounts Payable) and Key Controls.
- **Cash Receipting**
 - The team continue to work with IT and customer services to upgrade the cash receipting system.

Revenues

- **Year-End/Annual Billing**
 - The 2024/25 year-end/annual billing work has been successfully completed.
 - The Non-Domestic (Business) Rates paper annual bills were dispatched on 26 February 2024 with e-bills being sent the previous week.
 - The Council Tax annual bills and the benefit notification letters were dispatched on 4 March 2024 with e-bills being sent the previous week.
 - The bills may take longer to arrive this year as we are taking part in a new Royal Mail testing and innovation scheme that takes between 3 – 5 days to arrive, this is to gain further mailing discounts.
- **Empty Properties**
 - The Council Tax Empty Property Premium that charges empty properties an additional 100% charge after 12 months (rather than two years) starts from 1 April 2024. These customers have been notified ahead of annual billing.
- **Collection as of 31 March 2024.**
 - As we head towards the end of the financial year 31 March 2024, there is lots of activities going on to help us maximise revenues and strive to hit our in-year collection targets of 98.20% for council tax and

99.20% for Non-Domestic (Business) Rates (NDR).

- The Council Tax collection as of 12 March 2024 was £87.279M (97.01%).
- The NDR collection as of 12 March 2024 was £24.297M (98.20%).

Estates

• Vacant properties

- Tenant works to the Seaview building are progressing well and they are currently aiming to open around Easter.
- Concessions - License for 7 concession pitches agreed with a higher total income from previous year. 1 newly created pitch has been licenced. 2 additional pitches being marketed but with minimal interest.
- Cornish way letting – one-unit vacant pending letting once tenants reorganised. Two units soon to be relinquished and marketing commencing imminently.
- The Cedars completion of 3 of the 4 agreed leases is expected on or before the 1st of April and the fourth should follow shortly thereafter. The final room in the main building to be let has two parties showing a strong interest. The outcome of the Listed Building review is still awaited.
- Black Swan Loke development works competed with the official opening taking place on the 14th of March.
- Prospective tenant of the former hard standing in North Lodge Park has withdrawn from the letting prior to remarketing of the opportunity.

• Decarbonisation

- Cromer office insulation panelling completed.
- Phase 2 of Sheringham Little Theatre decarbonisation works are awaiting LEP grant confirmation. Works due to commence within 2 weeks of grant funding approval.

• Leases

- Fakenham large industrial unit lease renewal - Constructive meeting held with the tenant. Revised rental level for a new lease has been put forwards, once agreed in principle a paper will be submitted to cabinet for approval.
- Rent review increase and lease renewals for approx. 300 chalet and beach huts are to be completed for 1st April 2024.
- Negotiations continue regarding a lease renewal to North Walsham Football Club.
- Discussions are ongoing with Marrams Bowls Club, Cromer regarding repair works to the building.
- Mundesley seafront unit rent review increases agreed.
- Cabbell Park, Cromer car park lease terms have been agreed. In addition, new lease for sports club in negotiation, subject to plans.
- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way underway.
- Trial letting of visitor centre at Holt County park is agreed and due to commence imminently.
- Identification of possible sites for “click and collect” points has been done. Site surveys to progress imminently to consider viability.
- Consideration and exploration of possible sites for battery boxes on

NNDC land underway.

- Gas Governor lease, Sheringham renewal under negotiation awaiting tenant feedback.
- Donkey shelter – Building redevelopment by community organisation being considered. Currently with organisations architects. Heads of terms for new lease to be agreed, chalet tenants relocated to vacant plots in preparation for project.
- Cromer Council office first floor lease due for renewal. Terms currently being negotiated. Paper to be prepared for Cabinet to consider prior to approval of the lease.

- **Disposal**

- Enabling land at Sheringham, continues to progress through the option agreement process.
- Proposed sale of Station Approach Putting Greens in Sheringham progressing.
- Consideration of disposal of Highfield Road car park to local housing association is underway.
- Potential disposal of small parcel of land in Mundesley following encroachment investigations.
- Mundesley Gun emplacement meeting scheduled towards end of March to consider disposal further.

- **Acquisition**

- One further residential property for the Housing Team is due to complete on the 22nd of March. Funding for 2 additional residential properties has been secured, market currently being reviewed for suitable properties.

Property Services

- **Public Conveniences**

- The public conveniences and bridge at the Leas Sheringham have been closed due to structural failure.
- Budget has been approved and repair works will commence shortly.
- Once these repairs have been completed works will recommence on the refurbishment works to the public conveniences therefore securing the external changing places funding.
- Tender for Albert Street public conveniences has now been awarded with works due to commence shortly therefore securing the external changing places funding.
- Demolition of the existing public convenience at Highfields Road Fakenham is being planned and will commence shortly

- **The Leas**

- Finalising designs with the local member and leader for the play area refurbishment at the Leas Sheringham. We are looking to promote inclusion going forward with NNDC play areas and are supporting the everyone has the right to play initiative, and this refurbishment provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate our commitment.
- Working with the local member to develop a programme of works for general improvements to the amenity area to the west of the Leas public conveniences. Initial proposals here would include removal of

the ornamental water features in their entirety and refurbishment of the horse box shelters and the shelter by the yacht pond.

- **Black Swan Loke**
 - Successful completion of works to Black Swan Loke North Walsham. Excellent example of collaborative working with Estates and up to 77% upcycled and surplus construction material used to keep costs inside of the budget.
- **The Reef**
 - Collaborative working with Estates to undertake remedial works at the Reef, Sheringham. Some works complete but works in progress continue.
- **Cromer Offices**
 - Works to upgrade / replace fire doors at Holt Road offices is currently WIP, on target and within budget.
 - Tender for Cromer offices LED programme 2nd / 3rd phase works is now live.
- **The Marrams**
 - Works to reposition the lighting columns at the Marrams footpath Cromer have commenced.
- **Cromer Pier**
 - Cromer Pier substructure works to Cromer Pier WIP. On time and within budget.
 - Budget for next pier sub structure survey has been agreed and the route for procurement of this specialist piece of work is being deliberated.
 - This includes full rope access solutions below the decking and divers in the water to assess the condition of the sacrificial concrete encasements of the pile legs.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

- **Year-end Close down 2023/24,**
 - Guidance has been prepared and circulated to budget managers and key personnel. This is a busy time for the finance section ensuring the correct treatment of expenditure and income relating to 2023/24 and preparing the final budget monitoring/outturn position against Revenue and Capital for 2023/24.
- **Audits**
 - Early external audit work with Ernst and Young (EY) to try and resume a more normal timeline for the audit process.
 - Prior year outstanding audits for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

- **CIVICA**
 - Financial management system software upgrade, timing to be confirmed.

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.

Estates

- **Year End**
 - Year-end service charge reconciliation and reporting of updated service charge budgets for 24/25.
- **Beach Huts**
 - Beach hut and chalet weekly lets for 24/25 to go live from 22nd of March.

Property Services

- **Recruitment**
 - Recruitment for a shared apprentice to cover PS, Housing Options, IHAT has been delayed. It is agreed the Asset and Property Programme Manager will line manage this post.
 - Property Services have been asked to accommodate a work experience member to the team for a short period.
- **Car Parks**
 - Working up tender for car park repairs from current capital fund.
- **FLASH**
 - Project planning has commenced with Fakenham Sports Centre.
- **Capital Works**
 - Busy capital works programme for financial year 20224 - 2025