

# CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 11 March 2024 at the Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN at 10.00 am

## Committee

### Members Present:

Cllr W Fredericks (Deputy Chair)	Cllr L Shires
Cllr T Adams (Chair)	Cllr A Brown
Cllr H Blathwayt	Cllr P Heinrich
Cllr C Ringer	Cllr A Varley
Cllr L Withington	

### Members also attending:

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett  
Cllr J Toyne  
Cllr L Vickers

### Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Democratic Services Manager, Director for Place & Climate Change, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets, Legal & Monitoring Officer, Director for Resources / S151 Officer, Assistant Director for Planning and Policy and Performance Management Officer

## 30 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment: Minute 26 should read **Clare** Road not Blair Road.

## 31 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

## 32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

## 33 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

## 34 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised members that they could ask questions throughout the meeting as matters arose.

## 35 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The following recommendations were made by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February:

### **Local Economic Strategy & Action Plan:**

(A) that an appendix to the full strategy and action plan be produced to show all the different sectors to the economy in North Norfolk and when available information be provided in the document that sets out the value of each sector to the local economy, and

(B) the strategy part is extracted from the full document into a shorter summary form that could be more quickly read.

Cllr P Heinrich, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, said that there had been a full debate on the strategy and he was happy to accept the recommendations.

### **RESOLVED**

**To accept the above recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**

## **36 BUDGET MONITORING P10**

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced this item. She began by explaining that the forecast gap had widened slightly due to an overspend on temporary accommodation, adding that the reasons for this were set out in section 2.34 of the report and saying that the Council had no choice but to react as it had a legal duty regarding homelessness. She referred to pages 21 – 22, where interest and the potential for borrowing was set out. She reminded members that borrowing was needed for the purchase of waste vehicles but the Council was now in a position where it may be needed to support with cashflow, caused by council tax precept collection. She then asked the DFR to speak about plans to address the deficit going forward. The DFR said that any borrowing would be short-term until interest rates came down. Regarding the current financial position, she said that there had been some windfall income of £135k relating to a VAT issue from 2009 and this would be used to offset the deficit.

Cllr W Fredericks thanked officers for their hard work. She said that it was important to continue to lobby central government and it had been successful in part, as representatives from Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) were coming to visit the district on Wednesday, following extensive pressure. They would be in attendance for several hours to learn about the unique housing-related challenges presented in North Norfolk, due to its demographic and the pressure placed by second homes. She said that she would continue to lobby hard for support when she met with them on Wednesday.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

### **RESOLVED to**

- 1) Note the contents of the report and the current forecast year end position.
- 2) Note the actions to take some short term borrowing and to call back some of the investments that are in our pooled funds.
- 3) Approve the use of the Economic Regeneration Reserve as required as proposed in paragraph 2.25.
- 4) Approve the use of £0.2m of the Treasury Management reserve to cover the overspend as proposed in paragraph 2.42.

- 5) Note that officers will work together to take action to reduce the overall projected General Fund deficit at the for 2023/24.

Reason for the decision:

To update members on the current budget monitoring position for the Council.

**37 REPORTING PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27  
ACTION PLAN 2023-24 - TO END OF QUARTER 3 - 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

The Chairman introduced this item. He explained that only one action had been flagged as being unable to be completed during 2023/2024: 'Working with partners to agree an investment in local housing initiatives, funded through the second homes council tax premium'. This had been delayed due to the legislation that allowed it not coming into effect until 2025. He said that in the meantime, discussions with neighbouring District Councils and Norfolk County Council about the retention of second homes council tax income were ongoing and a report would be coming back with draft proposals.

He then highlighted the following key areas of the report – regarding the Local Plan Examination, the Council was now awaiting feedback. Coastwise drop-in events had been very successful so far. Huge success had been achieved in bringing a banking hub to Holt and the completion of the Cedars Building in North Walsham.

Cllr C Ringer, Portfolio Holder for Waste Management, said that regarding Action No.2 – 'Develop a response to the waste and resources strategy', although it was highlighted as green, that was due to the work that had been undertaken by the Council, which was on target. The one risk associated with this was central government's insufficient allocation of funds to roll out the food waste collection programme, which was taking longer than the Council would like.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr C Ringer and

**RESOLVED**

To note the report.

**38 LOCAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN**

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, Cllr Heinrich, introduced this item. He began by thanking officers for all their hard work. He said that page 65 of the report set out the range of consultations and discussions that had taken place and this ensured that it was a strategy that worked with the Council's partners to support the best economic development and growth. Cllr Heinrich said that he supported the recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman said that the case studies in the document highlighted key successes. He asked for a timescale for the production of an Executive Summary.

It was proposed by Cllr P Heinrich, seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt and

**RESOLVED**

To endorse the Economic Strategy & Action Plan and recommend to Full Council its formal adoption.

Reason for the recommendation:

Adoption by the Council will serve to illustrate the importance and value that NNDC places on its role in helping to create a vibrant, healthy and sustainable local economy.

### **39 FORMER SHANNOCKS HOTEL SITE, SHERINGHAM**

The Chairman began by saying this case demonstrated the difficulties faced by local authorities when attempting to bring empty sites back into use. He said that the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process had been started some time ago and it had taken a while to explore every possible avenue whilst trying to work with the landowner. He said that it was a costly process and he knew the site had impacted on the town. He concluded that the correspondence that had been received that morning could not be discussed in public session.

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, referred members to page 140, section 1.4 of the report, which set out the timeline for the process so far. She said that the site had been left empty and untended for 18 months now and a decision needed to be taken now.

Cllr W Fredericks commented that this process was incredibly difficult and had taken a huge amount of officer time so far. She said that work had been ongoing throughout the process behind the scenes at officer level.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Cllr Brown that he had an interest in this matter. He asked for clarification on his interest. She explained that it was not a direct interest but the decision taken today could have an impact on a property that he owned as a leaseholder. Cllr Brown said that he would abstain from taking part in the discussion and from voting, adding that he did not accept the category of an 'indirect interest'.

The Assistant Director for Planning (ADP) then introduced the report. He said that it had been a long and complicated process to reach this point where a final decision needed to be taken. He outlined the two options – to keep going and compulsory purchase the site or to withdraw from the process, leaving it in the ownership of the current owners.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their hard work on this complex project.

Cllr L Withington said that she had a good understanding of some of the complex issues around this site, as a former town councillor and now local district member for Sheringham. She said it was regrettable that the process had not been started in 2017, as concerns had been expressed in the town as early as 2010. She said that the town had now lost confidence that the landowners would complete the development of the site in a timely manner or at all. She therefore urged Cabinet to move forward with the CPO, adding that it would send a strong message to other landowners with similar sites. She added that there were now some repairs required to the neighbouring site due to it being exposed following the demolition of the Shannoeks Hotel and the landowner had not allowed access. She said that this behaviour was indicative of the landowner's attitude to the site and the challenges presented.

Cllr L Vickers said that it was important to see the bigger picture of the whole of North Norfolk, especially with budgetary challenges. She urged officers to consider the blight caused by the derelict building at 9 Norwich Street, Fakenham. The

Chairman asked her to only discuss the former Shannocks Hotel site as this was the matter under discussion.

Cllr L Vickers said that she had concerns that there was a conflict of interest that could impact on decision-making. The Chairman replied that this was not relevant, adding that Cllr Brown was a victim of the situation at 9 Norwich Street, Fakenham. Cllr Vickers said that her concerns related to the residents of Fakenham. She did not agree with the Chairman that this was becoming a political issue.

Cllr L Shires said that the community of Sheringham had waited for 14 years to get to the point of being able to draw this to a close. She was disappointed that the discussion was straying into other areas.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett said that the discussion was becoming difficult. She had some sympathy with Cllr Vickers as the issue in Fakenham highlighted that the Administration was not addressing concerns and issues in other parts of the district. The Chairman replied that 9 Norwich Street was not on the agenda for discussion. The Sheringham site was at a far more advanced stage and the focus was on reaching a decision regarding how to progress with this. He added that there were a lot of avenues that needed to be followed regarding the Fakenham site to secure the future of the building.

The Assistant Director for Planning (ADP) advised members that the owners of the former Shannocks Hotel site, Sheringham, were aware of the report and had provided comments. He then drew attention to paragraphs 3.2 – 3.5 of the report which set out the work that had been undertaken by the Council to date, including demolition. However, he added that there were no indications that any development was about to commence on the site and due to its prominent position on the seafront, it could be considered that priority should now be given to addressing these issues.

Cllr L Withington welcomed the ADP's comments regarding demolition and said that the town was very grateful that it had been done. She also said that it was widely acknowledged that NNDC had done everything to engage with the owners of the site. Ample time had been allowed for them to respond and take action but they had not done so. She added that because the process had been undertaken so thoroughly, she was confident that any appeal against the CPO would not be successful.

The Chairman said that this was a lengthy and costly process and the public did not always appreciate this. He said that the rest of the discussion on this item would take place in private session.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

## **RESOLVED**

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.

*At 10.40am the meeting went into private session, returning to public session at 11.43am.*

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

**RESOLVED**

1. To continue with the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process and authorise the Director for Place & Climate Change to complete the service of the General Vesting Document relating to the former Shannoeks Hotel site, Sheringham.
2. To bring back a report to Cabinet outlining the options for future use of the site.

Reason for the decision:

To provide a clear position for discussions with the current owners and to thereafter enable officers to conclude matters.

**40 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**41 PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The meeting ended at 11.46 am.

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Chairman