

# **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**July 2024**

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

For the period March 2024 to July 2024

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

#### **Finance**

- **The Outturn report 2023/24**
  - The Outturn report 2023/24 and associated appendices has been presented to Cabinet and O&SC in July. The outturn revenue position is a £0.937m deficit.
  - The report outlines the service variances contributing to this position and the recommended financing of the shortfall.
  - The report also updates members on the Council's capital programme and reserve balances.
- **Service Reviews**
  - In response to the forecast future budget funding shortfalls the s151 officer has asked service managers to engage in service reviews.
  - Service managers have completed service review templates which has provided the initial facts and figures about services.
- **Monitoring**
  - The Finance team and the AD for Finance, Assets and Revenues are developing a new reporting format for monitoring the council's financial performance.
  - This clearer report will provide Members and senior management with a clear position of the main performance issues and what mitigating action is being taken to minimise overspends.
- **Recruitment**
  - The team welcomed Dan King to the role of Chief Technical Accountant on the 1 July 2024.

#### **Revenues**

- **Collection for 2023/24 as of 31 March 2024.**
  - Actual collection rates of 98.37% for Council Tax collection and 99.29% for NDR collection saw us exceed our in-year collection targets of 98.20% for council tax and 99.20% for Non-Domestic (Business) Rates (NDR) for 2023/24.
  - Both Council Tax and NDR collection for 2023/24 was higher than for 2022/23.
  - NNDC achieved the highest collection rate for council tax and NDR for 2023/24 in Norfolk (see table below). We were the only Council to

increase in-year percentage collection compared to last year's performance.

#### Council Tax

Authority	2023/24 %	Position	2022/23 %	Last Year Position
<b>NNDC</b>	98.37	1	98.27	3
<b>Broadland</b>	97.91	2	98.87	1
<b>Breckland</b>	97.25	3	97.45	4
<b>South Norfolk</b>	97.23	4	98.28	2
<b>Kings Lynn</b>	97.16	5	97.34	5
<b>Great Yarmouth</b>	95.66	6	95.98	6
<b>Norwich</b>	93.44	7	93.85	7

#### NNDR

Authority	2023/24 %	Position	2022/23 %	Last Year Position
<b>NNDC</b>	99.29	1	99.25	1
<b>Kings Lynn</b>	99.10	2	98.14	4
<b>Great Yarmouth</b>	98.16	3	98.16	5
<b>South Norfolk</b>	98.00	4	98.88	2
<b>Broadland</b>	97.47	5	98.44	3
<b>Breckland</b>	97.42	6	97.44	6
<b>Norwich</b>	96.59	7	95.78	7

- **Awards**

- NNDC has also been shortlisted as finalists by the Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV) in in two categories:
  - Revenues and / or Local Taxation Team of The Year (District)
  - Most Improved Team of The Year.

- **Collection for 2024/25 as of 31 May 2024.**

- The Council Tax collection was £19.49M which was 20.45% against target of collecting 20.50% of our full year amount by the end of May.
- The NDR collection was £5.69M which was 21.26% against target of collecting 24.50% of our full year amount by the end of May.

#### Estates

- **Vacant property**

- Tenant works to the Seaview building in Cromer are now completed, and the building is open and trading.
- Concessions - Additional pitches are being marketed but with minimal interest.
- Cornish Way lettings – one-unit vacant pending letting. Two linked units have become vacant and are being advertised, with offers received.
- The Cedars is fully let. The separate building to the front (which was used as a site office during renovation works) and barns within the grounds are currently vacant and plans to let or develop these are being considered subject to the Outcome of the Listing Review. The

Barns are being advertised with little interest.

- Black Swan Loke development works have been completed and the area is open for public use.
- North Lodge Park hard standing is vacant.
- Small Storage kiosk at Sheringham is under offer with planning application submitted.
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices continue to be marketed to let.

- **Decarbonisation**

- Cromer office survey of building has been undertaken and we are waiting for the findings and recommendations report.
- Phase 2 of Sheringham Little Theatre decarbonisation works are awaiting LEP grant confirmation. Works due to commence within 2 weeks of grant funding approval.
- Electric Vehicle Charging opportunities are being advertised to let as a trial at Overstand and Cromer.

- **Leases**

- Short term lease for the RNLI at the Rocket House, has been completed and longer-term lease is in negotiation.
- Short term agreement for car parking at Gold Park is in negotiation to formalise matters and to allow for further discussions for a longer-term lease.
- Lease renewal and rent increase agreed in principle for Cromer Prom asset.
- Fakenham large industrial unit lease renewal – terms agreed subject to Cabinet approval for a new lease and rent increase.
- Rent review increase and lease renewals for approx. 350 chalet and beach huts are nearing completion with over 70% returned. This included a rent increase. Some tenants have relinquished their leases, and these are being offered to customers on the waiting list.
- Solicitors instructed on lease renewal to North Walsham Football Club
- Discussions continue with Marrams Bowls Club, and Suffield Park regarding lease renewals.
- Cabbell Park, Cromer car park lease terms and for the football ground have been agreed.
- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way with rental increases continue.
- Gas Governor lease, Sheringham renewal in negotiation.
- Donkey shelter – Building redevelopment by community organisation being considered.
- Cromer Council office first floor lease due for renewal with short term lease being proposed and longer-term lease for a smaller area being negotiated. The first-floor office may come vacant and be available for letting.
- Lease negotiations to facilitate the FLASH project have commenced.

- **Disposal**

- Enabling land at Sheringham, option agreement was extended for a period of 4 months to enable the purchaser time to respond to a purchase condition.
- Sale of Station Approach putting greens to the Town Council in Sheringham progressing.

- Disposal of Highfield Road car park, Fakenham to local housing association is progressing.
- Mundesley Gun Emplacement disposal continues to progress.
- **Acquisition**
  - Purchase of 3 residential properties completed during this period with a further purchase progressing on behalf of the Housing Team.
  - Supporting Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring 2 areas of land in Happisburgh, with independent valuations having been commissioned and terms being negotiated.

## **Property Services**

- **The Leas**
  - Repair works to the bridge structure at the Leas are complete and the bridge is back open to the public.
  - Repairs to the Leas public convenience (left hand side) post water ingress due to bridge failure are complete and open again.
  - Works to the right-hand side have recommenced. This will include a changing places facility.
  - 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.
- **Roof Repairs**
  - Collaborative working with Estates to deliver the Chalet roof repair works. This includes the Art Deco building and Red Lion tenanted units at Cromer and chalet roof repairs at Sheringham.
- **Collaborative Working**
  - Collaborative working with Estates at The Rocket House, The Reef, Watch House and Marrams Bowls Club.
- **Holt Road Offices**
  - Working with the Climate and Environment team to make energy efficiency and improvement works to Holt Road offices.
  - Fire door upgrades/replacements at Holt Road offices are complete.
  - Cromer offices LED programme 2nd/3rd phase works is to commence July/August.
- **Public Conveniences**
  - Albert Street public conveniences demolition/rebuild with a changing places facility will begin soon. It is a 12-week programme.
  - Demolition of the existing public convenience at Highfields Road Fakenham is complete.
- **Holt Country Park**
  - Working with Countryside and Leisure to deliver an electrical supply

and new workshop and office areas (modular builds) at Holt Country Park.

- **Marrams**
  - Works to reposition the lighting columns and footpath at the Marrams footpath Cromer has been rescheduled until after the busy summer holiday period.
- **Car Parks**
  - Discussions continue around the current car park enforcement service level agreement with Borough Council West Norfolk Kings Lynn which expires early next year.
- **Cromer Pier**
  - Cromer Pier substructure works are expected to be complete by July.
  - The next pier sub structure survey is will begin later this summer.
  - Working with Leisure Services and Openwide on the Pier backstage refurbishment works planned for January 2025.
- **Housing**
  - Collaborative working with Housing Options on the target hardening scheme for vulnerable persons.
  - Continue to work with Housing Options on inspecting and maintaining temporary accommodation and refugee accommodation.
- **Staffing**
  - Property Services have accommodated a work experience member of the team for a short period.

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

### **Finance**

- **Year End 23/24**
  - The team will be working on preparing the draft Statement of Accounts and the detailed working papers due by 30/09/24.
  - Ernst and Young (EY) are due to commence our audit in mid-October.
- **Budget Monitoring**
  - The Period 4 budget monitoring 2024/25 (to the end of July 2024) will be prepared using the new template and reported to members in September (the earliest opportunity with the August recess).
- **Software Updates**
  - Software upgrades to important financial system software and detailed testing are scheduled over the next couple of months.
  - The cloud-based cash receipting software upgrade testing phase is already in progress with a go-live date scheduled for the end of July.
- **Service Reviews**
  - Support to the service review process will continue as required.

## **Revenues**

- **Second Homes Work**
  - North Norfolk District Council has voted to implement the premium charge from April 2025 and is in discussions with Norfolk County Council to see if a proportion of the additional Council Tax receipts generated from the premium in North Norfolk can be used to address the acute housing pressures which exist in the district – through investing in new social housing developments with Housing Association partners.
- **Business Improvement District (BIDs)**
  - The Holt BID has been doing much work on their BID and have entered discussions with NNDC again to move this forward with a possible implementation date of 1 April 2025 although the costs of the BID is likely to be a key factor.
- **System Procurement**
  - The Civica Open revenues system will expire for Revenues and Benefits on 1 October 2025 and work has started on a procurement exercise with local site visits/teams calls of other software users.
  - A procurement advert has been issued and a system specification has been drafted.
- **Training/Development**
  - The three internal Level 3 Business Admin Certificated apprentices have successfully completed their apprenticeships. Two of these entered the national apprenticeship awards which has been previously won by a Revenues apprentice.
  - One officer is near finishing the Diploma in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV) plus a team leader is near finishing the level 5 CMI management qualification.
- **Service Improvements**
  - Online forms - reviewing and improving the most used customer paper forms is continuing.
  - The Long-term empty property review forms as part of our Business Process Review of the current process has been completed and is now live with updated webpages.
  - 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**

- **Consideration to advertising opportunities**
- **Disposal/transfer of surplus land identified.**
- **Renovation of Rocket House, Cromer.**

## **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.
- **Procurement**
  - Working with the Procurement Officer to issue a consultant contract early next year.
- **Car Parking**
  - Working up tender for car park repairs from current capital fund.
- **FLASH**
  - Ongoing project planning with Fakenham Sports Centre.

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### **3 Meetings attended**

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- None