

# **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**September 2024**

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

For the period July 2024 to September 2024

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

#### **Finance**

##### **Statement of Accounts**

- The draft 2021/21 Statement of Accounts has been published on our website and the public inspection period has opened.
- The 2022/23 draft Statement of Accounts is almost complete, and it is hoped that this will be published in October.

##### **Budgets**

- The first budget monitoring report for 2024/25 has been prepared. The outlines the position for revenue and capital as at period 4 (July). The current full year forecast is a deficit of £1.3m, this is largely made up of additional borrowing costs and investment interest and housing benefit shortfalls.
- A budget timetable has been sent to Budget holders and Assistant Directors outlining key dates for providing information for the 2025/26 Budget process. Detailed savings bids and Fees and Charges have also be circulated.

#### **Revenues**

##### **Collection for 2024/25 as of 27 August 2024.**

- The Council Tax collection was £44.1M which was 46.18% against the 31 August 2024 target of 46.35%.
- The NDR collection was £13.6M which was 51.11% against the 31 August 2024 target of 51.80%.
- There has been excellent progress on some complex debt cases that have included old debts which we have been successful in collecting. Once case saw over £200k paid in council tax!

#### **Estates**

##### **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 and proposal from them has been presented with report to Cabinet outline options.

- Sale of Station Approach putting greens to the Town Council in Sheringham continues to progress.
- Disposal of Highfield Road car park, Fakenham to local housing association is progressing.
- Mundesley Gun Emplacement disposal continues to progress and further area of land to Parish Council.

#### **Acquisition**

- Acquisition of 1 additional property for Housing Team is progressing.
- Supporting Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring 2 areas of land in Happisburgh and a further 2 residential properties are progressing with solicitors instructed.

#### **Vacant property**

- Cornish way letting – one unit vacant pending letting once tenants reorganised. Letting on units 5 and 7 is in progress.
- The Cedars Barns are being advertised with little interest. Vacant Annex to be advertised.
- North Lodge Park hard standing is vacant.
- Small Storage kiosk at Sheringham is let.
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices continue to be marketed to let.

#### **Leases**

- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House are progressing subject to governance approvals. Repair project at the building has commenced and RNLI are due to vacate during September.
- Short term agreement for car parking at Gold Park negotiation continues with solicitors instructed to formalise arrangements.
- Fakenham large industrial unit lease renewal with solicitors instructed.
- 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 progressing with the lease renewal to North Walsham Football Club in consultation with funding body.
- Awaiting tenant confirmation on funding to contribute to repairs at Marrams Bowls Club, and Suffield Park negotiations continues regarding lease renewals.
- Cabbell Park, Cromer car park lease terms and for the football ground have been agreed and progressing.
- 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 are progressing.
- Approx 350 lease renewals completed for beach hut and chalet leases. Review of opportunities for weekly let and leased sites undertaken for O & S meeting October.

## **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 back open to the public.
- Works to refurbish the right-hand side of the Leas at Sheringham are now underway with completion expected in October. This will include a changing places facility.
- Finalising designs with the local member and leader for the play area refurbishment at the Leas Sheringham.
- 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.

### **Collaborative Working**

- 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 with Estates at The Rocket House, The Reef, Watch House and Marrams Bowls Club.

### **Offices**

- Working with Kate Rawlings for energy efficiency and improvement works to Holt Road offices to include improvements to existing roof PV's, electric vehicle charging points and new boilers.
- Works to upgrade / replace fire doors at Holt Road offices is now complete.
- Cromer offices final phase LED lighting project is due to commence September and complete by November.

### **Public Conveniences**

- Looking at ideas for remote accessing to public conveniences as part of existing capital programme.
- Works at Albert Street Holt public conveniences demolition and rebuild are now underway.

### **Capital Programme**

- Working with Countryside and Leisure to deliver an electrical supply and new workshop and office areas (modular builds) at Holt Country Park.
- Works to reposition the lighting columns and footpath at the Marrams footpath Cromer has been halted, deferred post summer holidays due to heavy footfall.
- Current programme of pier are substructure works are complete.
- Pier sub structure survey has been commissioned and will commence in October.
- Working with Leisure Services and Openwide on the Pier backstage refurbishment works planned for January 2025.
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### **Car Parks**

- Discussions around the current car park enforcement service level agreement with Borough Council West Norfolk Kings Lynn which expires early next year.
- Car park income slightly up from same summer season last year.

### **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

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

### **Finance**

#### **Budget**

- Detailed budget working papers are being prepared and will be circulated to budget holders in mid-September.
- Period six (September) budget monitoring report will be prepared for members to provide an update on the Councils forecast outturn position for 2024/25.

#### **Statement of Accounts**

- Work will continue to complete the Councils outstanding Accounts for financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. It was originally hoped that a full audit would be undertaken for the 2023/24 accounts. Central government as part of the national plan to address local government audit backlogs has issued new guidance, this has brought backstop dates forward for the completion of outstanding audits, meaning that our external auditors, Ernst Young (EY) have had to prioritise resources. NNDC will now likely have a Disclaimed Audit opinion for its Statement of Accounts up to and including 2023/24.

#### **Finance**

- Providing that no issues are discovered during the testing phase the new Civica software release will be loaded onto the live system with an aim to go live towards the end of October.

#### **Training**

- During September Members of the Finance and Revenues teams will undertake detailed training on collection fund accounting. Council Tax and Business rates budgets and reporting are key areas within the Council, this training is to address a skills gap in the organisation.

### **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 as to how 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 updated us that key members have resigned, and they are looking for others to take their place. It has been agreed that the start date of 1 April 2025 would no longer be feasible with the earliest suggested start date being 1 April 2026 which has the advantage of reducing some of the costs associated.

#### **System Procurement**

- The Civica Openrevenues system will expire for Revenues and Benefits on 1 October 2025 and work has started on a procurement exercise.

#### **Service Improvements**

- Online forms - reviewing and improving the most used customer paper forms is continuing including the Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Change of Address form.
- We have also started work on the Second Homes Review form which we will roll out to customers ahead of annual billing. This is hoped to be sent via email, text and then paper for those customers who do not have the other methods and is hoped to save approx. £5k in costs.
- 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 hopefully save NNDC paying capita for the current form provided on our webpages.

#### **OPEN Revenues Workflow Disk Space discussion**

- Revenues and Benefit services in conjunction with IT and System Teams are reviewing the amount of disc space being used with a view to the size reducing.

#### **Estates**

##### **Beach Huts and Chalets**

- Beach hut and chalet Annual review to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny October.

##### **Insurance**

- Insurance recharges to tenants.

#### **Property Services**

##### **Capital Programme**

- Working on capital works programme proposals for financial year 2025 / 2026
- Working up tender for car park repairs from current capital fund.

#### **Budget**

- Working on tangible budget saving proposals for financial year 2025 / 2026

**Property**

- Working with EELGA on options for temporary housing solution.
- Project planning has commenced with Fakenham Sports Centre.

**3 Meetings attended**