

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

November 2024

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

For the period September 2024 to November 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

Accounts

- The draft 2022/23 Statement of Accounts has been published on our website and the public inspection period is open. The 2023/24 Statement of Accounts will be published before the end of December which is well before the backstop deadline of February 2025.

Budget

- Cabinet have reviewed budget savings proposals submitted by Assistant Directors at a recent Business Planning meeting. A second round of identifying savings is taking place to find further savings
- The Period 6 budget monitoring report has been prepared. This outlines the position for revenue and capital as at the end of September. The current full year forecast is a deficit of £0.995m. Two thirds of this is attributable to the cost of temporary accommodation and then borrowing costs exceeding the budget.

Revenues

Collection for 2024/25 as of 30 September 2024.

- The Council Tax collection was 55.11% against the target of 55.10%.
- The NDR collection was 60.53% against the target of 59.00%.
- There has been excellent progress on some complex debt cases that have included old debts which we have been successful in collecting.
- Congratulations to the Revenues Service who were highly commended for the IRRV Performance Awards 'Most Improved Team of the Year' and then won the Revenues Team of the Year Award at the recent national IRRV annual awards ceremony.

Estates

Vacant properties

- Cornish way letting – one-unit vacant pending letting once tenants reorganise. Unit 5/7 is occupied.

- The Cedars Barns are being advertised with little interest; however land is being let temporarily as a compound. Vacant Annex has some interest from an existing tenant.
- North Lodge Park hard standing is vacant.
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices maybe required to facilitate the Flash project.

Leases

- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House are progressing subject to governance approvals. Repair of the building is progressing.
- Short term agreement for car parking at Gold Park continues to progress as an interim arrangement until terms over a longer-term agreement are agreed.
- Fakenham industrial unit lease renewal with solicitors is expected to complete shortly with an increase in rent.
- Solicitors continue to progress 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 lease renewal is progressing at Suffield Park.
- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way with rental increases continue.
- Donkey shelter – Building redevelopment by community organisation being considered.
- Cromer Council office first floor lease short term lease being progressed and longer-term lease for a smaller area being considered. The first-floor office may come vacant and be available for letting either as a whole or part of the exiting footprint.
- Lease negotiations to facilitate the FLASH project are progressing.

Disposals

- Enabling land at Sheringham. The option agreement is to be further extended for a period of 6 months to enable the purchaser time to apply for planning consent for an amended scheme, alongside this advertising of the site for sale, will also commence.
- 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 has completed. A separate area of land to Parish Council continues to progress.

Acquisition

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

Property Services

The Lees

- Works to refurbish the right-hand side of the Lees at Sheringham are due for

completion in October. This will include a changing places facility.

- 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. The play area design has been approved. Installation has been deferred until later this financial year allowing current capital works ongoing to be completed.
- The amenity area to the west of the Leas public conveniences - Initial proposals 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.

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.
- Working with Officer 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.
- Cromer offices final phase LED lighting project is due to commence first week in November with a 4 week programme.
- Working with Countryside and Leisure to deliver an electrical supply and new workshop and office areas at Holt Country Park. The modular buildings have now been installed and are operational.
- 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

Albert Street

- Works at Albert Street Holt public conveniences demolition and rebuild are now underway.
- Completion is expected in December securing the changing places funding.

Car Park Enforcement

- Discussions around the current car park enforcement service level agreement with Borough Council West Norfolk Kings Lynn which expires early next year.

Pier

- Current programme of pier substructure works is complete.
- Pier sub structure survey is currently work in progress with the report expected in December.

- Working with Leisure Services and Openwide on the Pier backstage refurbishment works planned for January 2025. Tender is due back on 20 November.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

Statement of Accounts

- Work will commence on the production of the draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts. This will be published before the recommended backstop date. Once completed the Council will be back on track to meet pre Covid statutory deadlines.

Budget

- Working papers completed in conjunction with service managers will be pulled together to produce the first draft position of the 2025/26 base budget which will be presented to Cabinet in January.

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.
- There is additional work needed here to communicate to residents of the potential increase and implement measures to reduce avoidance of the premium.

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 Open revenues system will expire for Revenues and Benefits on 1 October 2025 and the tender bids are in and Revs, Bens and IT are in the process of scoring these.

Training/Development

- We have a have a team leader nearing completion of her level 5 CMI management qualification, one Revenues Officer now starting the level 3 certificate in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV) and another officer looking to start within the next twelve months.

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 nearly completed the work on the Second Homes Review form which we hope to roll out to customers ahead of annual billing. The plan is to send this via email, text and then paper for those customers who do not have digital methods to keep the costs down.
- 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 is nearing completion.

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. We are close to capacity and have agreed to implement processes to delete and archive old electronic accounts and documents stored that are no longer needed by the services. This work is important and needs to have a resource and to be tested before it is implemented in our live system. It is hoped a rolling plan to undertake this exercise can start so we are in a much better place before annual billing starts in January/February 2025 and we need to create and save another year's worth of data. Once this is up to date, then it will become an annual exercise.

Estates

Beach Huts and chalets

- Implement changes to rents and Beach hut and chalet weekly lets following Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet.

Assets

- Asset valuation procurement
- Asset Management Plan

Property Services

Forward Plan

- Capital works bids for 2025/2026 submitted.
- Budget saving proposals for 2025/2026 submitted.

Procurement

- Working with Debs Beckles (Procurement Officer) to issue a consultant contract early next year. Tender is now live for this and due back in December.

- Working up tender for car park repairs from current capital fund.
- Working up tender brief for new asset management system. Current contract expires June 2025 with no further extension allowed.

Staffing

- Property Services multi skilled operative shift pattern changes effective from week 44 – week 11 2024. This will mean no Saturday working or out of hours call out service.

3 Meetings attended