

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 20 November 2024 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:	Cllr T Adams	Cllr K Bayes
	Cllr D Birch	Cllr H Blathwayt
	Cllr J Boyle	Cllr A Brown
	Cllr C Cushing	Cllr N Dixon
	Cllr P Fisher	Cllr A Fitch-Tillett
	Cllr T FitzPatrick	Cllr A Fletcher
	Cllr W Fredericks	Cllr C Heinink
	Cllr V Holliday	Cllr N Housden
	Cllr K Leith	Cllr R Macdonald
	Cllr G Mancini-Boyle	Cllr P Neatherway
	Cllr L Paterson	Cllr S Penfold
	Cllr P Porter	Cllr L Shires
	Cllr J Toye	Cllr K Toye
	Cllr E Vardy	Cllr L Withington

Also in attendance: Steve Blatch, Chief Executive
Cara Jordan, Assistant Director Legal and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Lauren Gregory, Democratic Services and Governance Officer

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Bailey, Batey, Butikofer, Hankins, Heinrich, Puchard, Ringer and Varley

54 MINUTES

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record, and these were signed by the Chair.

Proposed Cllr Withington, Seconded Cllr Neatherway

55 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None Received

56 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None Received

57 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman updated members on the following civic events she had attended:

- Royal British Legion Branch Standard – Laying up Event - 28 September 2024 – St Nicholas Church – New standard bearer. Royal British Legion is going from strength to strength in Blakeney.
- 50 Years of NNDC Celebration – 02 October 2024 – NNDC

- Thank you to all the staff who brought food and for all the people who put together the montage. It was lovely to see so many old friends.
- High Sheriff of Norfolk's Justice Service – 13 October 2024 – Norwich Cathedral – very interesting, High Sheriff was very grand. very solemn service
- Trafalgar Day Supper – 21 October 2024 – Kings Lynn Town Hall - very interesting evening learnt a lot about Trafalgar Day
- Mayor of Wisbech Cllr Sidney Imafidon – 22 October 2024 – Charity Indian Supper
- Dedication of the Field of Remembrance – 24 October 2024 – Cromer Churchyard – a very nice service.
- Songs that Won the War – 09 November 2024 – Hoveton Village Hall – Great fun. The Jeff Short Swing Band were brilliant had a wonderful time at Hoveton Village Hall.
- Remembrance Parade and Service – 10 November 2024 – Cromer Parish Church – very solemn and memorable remembrance parade and service.
- Remembrance at NNDC Office – 11 November 2024 – NNDC Office - Thought provoking moment of remembrance.

The Chairman then invited Alison Jackson to speak from the Memory Lane Café, Mundesley about their dementia group.

There had previously been a dementia cafe in Mundesley, and Alison and her fellow church warden, Bob White, could really see a need for this to return.

They talked to a number of different people, went to Cameo café at North Walsham and Poppy café in Holt to get ideas of what could be done.

The aim of the group is to help those that are suffering from dementia, those that are caring for those with dementia and those that have lost someone with dementia.

Various volunteers that come and help, from within the area.

The constitution states that the Memory Lane Café aims to hold friendly fortnightly sessions in Mundesley Community rooms, providing drinks, cakes, games and entertainment in a safe and relaxed atmosphere for those suffering with dementia, their support group, be it carers or family and the group comes under the umbrella of All Saints Community Church. The Memory Lane café is a non-religious group that is open to all.

Cllr Fredericks stated that she was very grateful to Alison and Bob for bringing back the much-needed Dementia café and urged people to attend if they thought it could be of help.

Cllr Withington responded that she understood how important the facility is to the residents in Mundesley. She explained that it is possible for people to live well with dementia but that they can't live well with dementia without the support of these amazing groups.

Cllr Neatherway declared that he could not think of anyone who would be better at running this group than the current trustees.

58 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader, Cllr T Adams began by congratulating the Revenues Service for being declared by the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation Performance Awards the 'Revenues Team of the Year! We are now recognised as the best Revenues Services out of all the District/Borough councils nationally!

He also commented that North Norfolk District Council has become the first non-stock holding Council in the East of England to be awarded the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to people experiencing domestic abuse.

The Leader was also able to confirm that NNDC have now received confirmation of funding from the Government for the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub (FLASH) project.

He said that it was lovely to be able to provide some good news stories at a fairly grim time, showing that the Council remains highly functional despite the numerous challenges currently being faced.

Both members and officers are currently trying to understand the ambiguity of the autumn budget. 62 households are currently in temporary accommodation, but this may increase in the coming days and weeks due to the severe weather protocol. So far, the Council has spent £1.3 million on temporary accommodation this year, without this expenditure the Council would not be considering the cost cutting measures currently under discussion.

Cllr Toye updated members on the Council's Gold award for the Defence Employer recognition scheme. The Council has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, showing its commitment to veteran forces, reservist and cadet forces. A huge amount of work has gone into this. Cllr Toye thanked those officers that have been involved in the work which is important not only to North Norfolk but to the nation.

59 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

The Chairman invited Martin Booth to speak on behalf of the Save Benjamin Court Campaign.

Mr Booth started by providing a bit of background to his question.

Benjamin Court has been sitting empty since July last year, when the County Council decided to withdraw the reablement service from it without any consultation.

The Save Benjamin Court Group are campaigning for the centre to be reopened for reablement and rehabilitation for those discharged from hospital who are not yet ready or able to go home.

He stated that the group were very grateful to the Council and Parish Councils for the support it has shown for this aim.

The NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board conducted a public engagement exercise which included a HealthWatch survey. Of the 295 people who responded – 79% said they wanted Benjamin Court reopened for rehabilitation and reablement. The other 21% said they wanted it reopened for another health use. Despite this at the end of September the ICB said that it did not meet their model of care and have said it is not financially viable. They have therefore passed the building back to NHS Property Services who are now looking to dispose of the building.

This is in light of figures that have been obtained that show that £10 million a month is being wasted on people being in hospital when they are fit to go home but do not

have the necessary care provision or support in place to allow this.

There is now a concern over what will happen to the building as there may be decisions in the future that we need the facility, but the building will be gone and no longer available for this purpose.

Question being asked is: Will the Council directly approach NHS Property Services to ensure the Benjamin Court site in Cromer will continue to be used for health purposes?

Cllr Adams responded to say that the Council has written to the Government again regarding this matter. The outcomes that have been reached are at odds with the "Health in an Ageing Society" report (Professor Chris Witty Annual Report 2023). The Council feels the ICB is moving with undue haste with respect to the disposal of this property. This is a relatively modern clinical setting that could be serving the needs of residents across the District and more specifically those patients at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital who are medically fit to leave hospital but may need time to regain their confidence, be assessed for a care package, need adjustments or adaptations to their homes or secure a place in a supported care setting. We welcome the continued efforts of the campaigners and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee members of this council.

The Council is committed to continuing to question relevant NHS departments including NHS estates over this issue.

Any information received will be fed back to Members and residents through the appropriate channels.

60 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

Cllr Bayes asked Cllr Shires, following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting where it was announced that the Collector's Cabin in Cromer requires a new thatched roof with an estimated cost of £30,000, that given the Council's current financial position a far cheaper option should be investigated. This would also help to reduce the insurance costs as thatched roofs are expensive to insure.

Cllr Shires responded that Officer Stankley is currently investigating this, and further information will be provided at the next Council meeting when this item will be discussed further.

Cllr Vickers asked Cllr Withington why the Council has removed the gates on the Lawn's Children's play area in Fakenham. Officers have said the gates have been removed as they no longer meet safety standards and replacing them would cost £700.00, however there is no money left in the budget for the replacement of these. How is it therefore possible that £65,000 has been set aside for new play area in Sheringham but the Council can't provide £700.00 for a gate in Fakenham.

Cllr Withington passed this question to Cllr Shires.

Cllr Shires replied that she wasn't aware of this matter and asked that Cllr Vickers provided information of her conversations in an email so that this could be addressed.

Cllr Leith requested that Cllr Brown provide an update on the Local Plan consultation progress.

Cllr Brown answered that the next round of the Local Plan journey is a public consultation, which was launched on 7 November and will run until 19 December. The consultation focuses on additional sites and provision for additional small growth sites in villages being included. Online submission system allows submissions via a form, email, letter and in person.

Initially there was a couple of issues with this system, but these have now been resolved. So far 23 submissions have been received online and 7 offline, all of which have been responded to in a timely manner. These will then be submitted to the inspector, and he will revisit in the spring. If the modifications can be agreed it is hoped the Plan can be adopted in May.

Planning training will be held on Friday morning at 9.30am in the Boardroom – every member is invited – this will enable you to be a member or substitute member of Development Committee 9.30am

Cllr Taylor enquired whether Cllr Fredricks felt that bigger ideas were needed in light of the £9 million black hole the Council is facing to address the pressure on temporary accommodation.

Cllr Fredericks thanked Cllr Taylor for highlighting the fact the Council have not been properly funded for the last 14 years. This situation is critical, and we are doing everything we can, we have bought 25 units of temporary accommodation, which is saving the Council a vast amount of money. Currently the Council is looking at a £1.3 million net cost of temporary accommodation in nightly paid accommodation and if we hadn't bought these 25 properties this would have been double.

This authority is doing incredibly well and the Housing Team are recognised across the country as being leaders in the field. Homelessness figures are falling as we have been trialling a new allocations scheme that seems to be working. The new allocations scheme will be coming to Cabinet following the completion of the consultation. This consultation supports what we are doing is the right thing. If you are worried about homelessness, please approach the Council as early as possible. Teams are here ready and willing to support.

Now looking to the government funding allocation to see how we allocate funding for homelessness prevention and further temporary accommodation properties.

Cllr Taylor queried if the owners of two very large buildings within the Stalham ward, one a former hotel and one a former hospital building with approved planning applications had been approached with a view to the Council acquiring these buildings for temporary accommodation facilities.

Cllr Fredericks responded that yes, these properties have been looked at. The hotel is not viable – cannot be brought back into use for temporary accommodation as it would cost too much money to bring it up to the required specifications – fire regulations, EPC standards. Catfield property haven't been able to approach the owner due to a bereavement within the family but would be happy to progress this further if contact details can be provided.

Cllr Fredericks to get Housing Strategy Manager to send the report on the Stalham hotel to Cllr Taylor.

Cllr Fletcher questioned Cllr Toye on how the distribution of grants for local economy

projects translates to employment and the flourishing of the local economy generally.

Cllr Toye replied that the graphic was created through GIS mapping. In time everyone should have access to this system and will be able to interrogate. 87% of North Norfolk has a rural context. 88% of businesses are in the micro category of 10 or less employees. Much economic activity goes on in hinterland. 51% of businesses in North Norfolk survive past 5 years whereas this figure is just a third nationally. We have higher than national average occupancy rates high for industrial units and shops, which is growing business rates income. Local economy addressing some green issues, ensuring people do not have to travel. Benefitting the whole economy

Cllr Vardy asked if Cllr Adams could confirm if food waste collection will be mandatory by 2026 and what the Council doing about this.

Cllr Adams answered that in due course there will be reports to Council on this issue. Currently a business plan is being prepared regarding the introduction of food waste and plastic film collection. There will be a cost involved in this as we will be introducing a new round of collections, new vehicles and bio-digestion.

The fact that every Council in the county that is looking towards introduction will be looking to buy new waste caddies means that there may well be some supply and demand issues.

Officers will keep members informed once more information is known.

Cllr Vardy replied to ask Cllr Adams if when this proposal is being worked up budgetary implications will be forefront of the discussion.

Cllr Adams confirmed that any budgetary implications are being looked at closely before any changes are made.

Cllr Penfold congratulated Cllr Fredericks for the speed of staff in the Benefits team in processing new claims and enquired whether the £1.2million of additional benefits claimed so far this year has improved the wellbeing of families and resulted in fewer families losing their accommodation.

Cllr Fredericks confirmed that it is vital that we keep this team and the work they are doing going. So far they have brought in £1.23 million of additional benefits that people are entitled to but would not otherwise have received. This has paid a fundamental part of preventing people becoming homeless by ensuring people can pay their bills. The team have proved their worth time and time again. The work will get harder for the Benefits team because of the changes to Universal Credit.

Cllr Cushing enquired whether Cllr Adams endorsed the response by Steffan Aquarone MP to the announcement that Viaro Energy the new owners of the Shell terminal at the Bacton Gas site had proposed that the site should accommodate a small nuclear reactor by saying that *“nuclear was not a renewable option and goes against the grain of everything we are doing in North Norfolk”*.

Cllr Adams stated that he would look to learn about any proposal. The Council is seeking discussions with Viaro. The announcement came without any prior knowledge within the local government sector and the local community. Cllr Adams went on to say that he wasn't surprised that such proposals are being brought forward, as we are going to need electricity for hydrogen production, electrolysis and desalination. He stated that we needed to learn more about the potential for such

developments before the Council comes to any conclusions, or position on Viaro's proposals, and he would try to keep everyone informed as details emerge.

Cllr Cushing was delighted that Cllr Adams was considerably more open-minded about these developments than perhaps was the local MP. A small nuclear reactor could provide power for 250,000 homes and provide excellent employment opportunities for high level jobs.

Cllr Adams responded that as yet we don't know if this is a domestic electricity supply, we are still have a lot to learn.

Cllr Toye stated that he is working with the County Council to develop an Energy Plan for Norfolk, to understand and hopefully address constraints in local electricity and water supplies so this is being looked at not only at a local level but also a County level.

Cllr Boyle enquired of Cllr Adams whether the upgrading of septic tanks as part of the mitigation for Nutrient Neutrality that is working to release housing areas, could it be easily rolled out in other areas.

Cllr Adams deferred to Cllr Brown.

Cllr Brown answered that yes the first tranche of grant money from Government has been used by Norfolk Environmental Credits to support schemes to replace failing septic tanks to provide advantages and benefits in the Nutrient Neutrality calculation for the District. This will release credits for developers to buy if they cannot provide onsite mitigation to enable developments to proceed. At the moment there is only one approved contractor, but it is hoped that there will soon be a second contractor that can complete the work. The real game changer will be purchasing land with the grant money that will be used for further mitigation.

Cllr McDonald asked about the changes in law that affect the time in which enforcement action can be taken.

Cllr Brown replied that some people look to develop land without obtaining planning and if four years lapsed, deemed planning permission could be applied for. This would mean that the property owner would not need to apply for planning permission to regularise the development. This 4-year period has now been extended to 10 years. Initially this should relieve some pressure on our enforcement team but may mean we need more resource in the future to undertake reviews.

61 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

The Chairman introduced this item and invited the Leader to speak. The Leader, Cllr Adams, informed members of the following changes:

Cllr Fredericks to be appointed to the Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party.

Cllr Brown to be appointed to the Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board replacing Cllr Ringer.

The following appointment was a Full Council decision and Cllr Adams proposed the following appointment, seconded by Cllr Toye

It was put to the vote and RESOLVED that Cllr Brown would be appointed to the Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board.

62 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 04 NOVEMBER 2024

Car Park Fees and Charges

- a. Fees for the Council's Standard Car Parks be increased by 10p per hour, 20p per hour for Resort Car Parks, and 30p for the Coastal Car Parks.
- b. No Evening or Seasonal Charges be introduced at this time.
- c. Season Ticket prices be increased in line with inflation.
- d. Coach Car Parking Charges be increased £2.5 hr / £13 for 24hr. No weekly charge to be introduced at this time.
- e. 3hrs Car Parking be offered for leisure users at Victory Leisure Centre. Hornbeam Road (North Walsham) to be as standard but charged via app only with permit holders also having usage.
- f. Beach Road and Gold Park (Mundesley) be re classified as a Resort Car Park.
- g. To proceed with consultation on the updated Off-Street Parking Places Order.
- h. Car Parking fees and charges be reviewed again in 2025/2026

Cllr Cushing asked if it would be possible to take recommendations B to H on block: but proposed that recommendation A should be changed so there was no increase in the fees on Standard car parks.

Cllr Cushing explained that the proposal initially was for a flat rate increase of 20p per hour across all car parks, which would have raised £410,000. At the time it was explained that the Council were looking to raise circa £400,000 from this proposal and it was then other permutations were discussed. At the time he had suggested no increase for the Standard car parks. Standard car parks only represent 9% of income and therefore the 10p increase would only raise £32,700. If we looked at the proposals currently put forward, he stated they will actually raise over £473,000 well above the £410,000 that was initially proposed.

Cllr Cushing therefore proposed that losing the £32,000 increase through the 10p per hour rise across the Standard car parks, the Council would still raise £440,000. This would provide a great deal of support to the shop owners in inland towns such as Fakenham, North Walsham and Stalham. So, while this proposal would have no impact on the Council, as it is such a small amount of money to the Council it would provide big support for businesses.

Cllr Shires responded that she was very grateful for the support across all parties with rising to the challenge of the financial deficit. She welcomed the seriousness to which everyone had taken the conversations.

She recognised that the Overview and Scrutiny committee had been very bold with their discussion on the proposed increases and was very grateful to them for this. Increases have been looked so that they are in line with inflation, as we need to cover the maintenance of our carparks. Tried to do this as fairly as possible. Residents in resorts and coastal areas need to visit shops and town centre businesses in their local towns as well.

Parking permits provide best value for money for those residents who want to use the car parks regularly.

We do need to raise in line with inflation across all car parks.

Cllr Cushing formally proposed the change of no increase in Standard car parking tariffs. The point is we don't need to do anything we don't want to. £32,000 will be negligible against a budget of many millions of pounds. The Council should be looking at its economic development priorities to help enhance the economy in our local market towns. Cllr Cushing stated that his proposal was endorsed by Fakenham Town Council and also the Town Council in Stalham. Still raising well above what was proposed to be raised when these fee increases were first put forward.

Cllr Taylor confirmed he was happy to second the amended proposal to support Stalham business owners.

Cllr Penfold took issue with Cllr Cushing's comment of £32,000 not being a lot of money, when one of his members previously stated that £30,000 for the Collector's Cabin roof was quite a large amount of money. Cllr Penfold suggested that Cllr Cushing Couldn't have it both ways - £32,000 either is or isn't a large sum of money. The increase will be for increased maintenance costs and upkeep of the car parks.

Cllr Adams agreed with Cllr Penfold. £32,000 is a lot of money and if the £32,000 is removed from the car parking income it will need to be found elsewhere. Inflation has impacted the cost of services. Discretionary services are provided in the inland towns as well as in coastal and resort areas and these have all increased in costs. The car parks have ensured we have been able to fund discretionary services across the district. Needs to increase on a relatively frequent basis to keep up with the increasing costs.

All here to represent our communities but we need to take responsibility for the budget as a whole.

Cllr Vickers stated that Cllr Penfold was comparing apples and pears. The roof of a kiosk in a park could not be compared with the many local businesses in Stalham, Fakenham and North Walsham.

Cllr Toye interjected that beyond anecdote there is little published evidence that links parking charges to town footfall. Lack of signage and ability to find businesses can make it difficult. The increased income can be used to support businesses through our economic growth processes. If we don't put the car parking charges up, the Council will need to find additional funds from elsewhere which could result in the reduction of other services.

Cllr Paterson enquired as to the inflation rate being used as the inland fees show an inflation of 12% but current inflation sits at 4%.

Cllr Shires answered that the figures were based on the accumulated inflation since the prices were last increased. Fees have not been increased annually, but this is something that will be looked at annually moving forward.

Cllr Fredericks asked when the Council last raised car parking fees and stated that if we do not increase fees does that mean the costs would fall to Council taxpayers rather than those that use the facilities.

Cllr FitzPatrick refuted Cllr Toye's comment and stated that the federation of Small

Business say the opposite, that parking charges can have a direct impact on the number of people visiting towns. There is always the differential, meaning that some places will pay more for car parking. Currently the places that are really affected are small towns. North Walsham may have seen a revival but that is not the same in Stalham, Fakenham and even Holt. A car park in Fakenham is just about to be closed so there will be a saving in maintenance costs for this, on top of the saving of closing the public lavatory. Really important that we support our market towns. It is a small amount of money, but it is about being seen to do the right thing by supporting market towns.

Cllr FitzPatrick supported freezing the car parking fees for market towns and allowing prosperous towns to take the weight.

Cllr Toye stated there was no doubt that the car parks are required but alongside this comes the responsibility to maintain them, if we don't increase fees, it will be harder for people to accommodate larger price increases that will be required in the future. If there are no people in town, it is not because of car parking charges.

Cllr Vardy responded that he sees no issue with an inflation-based increase in car park fees. Car parks generate about £700,000 net profit per annum, it would be very useful if there was some kind of communication strategy to explain use of profits for discretionary services. Improved toilets and other facilities, benefits to economy in a positive way.

The Chair moved to take a vote on the proposal that fees for the Standard car parks do not increase.

In Favour – 11

Against – 18

Abstain – 1

Proposal Failed

Cllr Adams explained that the Council has seen £500,000 in inflationary pressure. The increase in car parking fees will help to ensure we are able to run facilities and maintain assets. Assets across the district cost a lot of money to maintain. Car parking fees contribute to ensure we are able to accommodate so many visitors. Revenue is put to use supporting services. These car parking fees are still lower than many other comparable coastal areas. Revenue is now being eaten into by other pressures across the Council, sustaining assets is becoming increasingly challenging.

The Chair moved to a vote on proposal A

In Favour - 17

Against - 11

Abstain - 2

The Chair moved to a vote on proposals B to H

Favour – 30

Against – 0

Abstain – 0

63 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 16 OCTOBER & 13 NOVEMBER

There were no recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the November Full Council. Recommendations for December will be brought to the

December Full Council.

64 UPDATE ON THE BENJAMIN COURT FACILITY, CROMER

The Chief Executive recognised the decision and recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting of 16 November 2025 with respect to the Benjamin Court facility at which there were three recommendations made. The first of these related to the availability of data detailing those people who were medically fit for discharge from acute hospitals in Norfolk but could not leave due to needing assessment for care packages, adaptations to their homes or other support. It has not been possible for this to be updated since the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of the 16 October due to staff absence. The Council has made enquiries of the Norfolk virtual ward pilot scheme, which has only gone live relatively recently, and the Council are seeking responses from Norfolk Adult Services and the Norfolk First Support Programme looking at the availability of carers, which was raised by local stakeholders as part of the engagement with Health Watch. Currently there has been no response to these enquiries.

Data in July suggested 20% of beds in the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and slightly lower number in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Kings Lynn and the James Paget at Gorleston are occupied by people medically fit for discharge but were waiting for a care package to be set up to allow them home, for adaptations to their property or for a place in a care home

This comes at a huge cost with the cost of a bed in an acute hospital being three times as much as a reablement, convalescent or recuperation facility, where care is provided but not medical intervention.

With regard to our representation to NHS England Property Services, the Council haven't received any communication regarding the marketing or disposal of the facility. This however does not come as a surprise, given the ICB position was only determined at the end of September.

The Chief Executive stated that he was happy on the basis of Mr Booth's question for the Council to instigate an approach to NHS Property Services directly to understand what their intentions for the Benjamin Court facility are as understanding their approach would be helpful to the campaigners, local stakeholders and residents so that as a Council we can consider our position further.

In the HealthWatch engagement response there was also suggestion that there was a demand for a small office for the community nursing team to be based out of in the Cromer area, which currently operated out of the Benjamin Court facility. It is felt that this could be accommodated within the Council's offices, and we have been in contact with the service provider to see if these requirements can be met.

Cllr Adams welcomed the endorsement that the Council do seek to make contact with the NHS Property Services team and report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee as we learn more. It is important that we keep this issue in the public domain. The winter will be very challenging in terms of the pressures put on NHS acute services across the county.

Cllr Withington asked that the Council keep monitoring the figures of those in acute hospital beds that are fit for discharge, especially in line of the virtual ward introduction. Especially as the capacity of this service is thought to only be 15 patients a day, which is not a significant number of people for a service covering the

whole of North Norfolk. It will therefore be interesting to see how the service impacts on discharging people safely into the community.

Cllr Dixon confirmed that in respect to the recommendations set out by Overview and Scrutiny there was an expectation that the matter would be considered at this meeting, but there was no expectation that there was going to be an outcome but that this would be ongoing work in progress. There is a lot that has and continues to progress, and there is still some more work that can be done. Some clarity will be required in the justification of data one way or the other and we must allow time for this to happen.

Cllr Fredericks acknowledged that when we think of care and carers, we think of two or three visits during the day, but it is the night times when the individuals and carers are most at risk. It is the night times that would be the biggest benefit of this facility. It is possible to provide care during the day, but it is very difficult to get carers for nights. Having a facility that looks after vulnerable people 24 hours a day cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, at the meeting in July our voices went unheard, and the decision was a forgone conclusion. So therefore, we must fight on and if there are other ways of using the building to the benefit of our communities we will find them.

The Chief Executive responded to Cllr Withington's question about data collection by explaining that the Council does have a Data Analyst who is giving her attention to this. The Council are using contacts within the wider health and social care setting to build our understanding. The data shows that 200 bed nights at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (approx. 20% of all beds) are being used to care for people in hospital who are medically fit for discharge rather than in an environment where more individualised or family care could be provided, particularly in Benjamin Court where there were individual ensuite rooms where people can be supported throughout the day and night by family, partners and carers. Staff would have oversight throughout the night, but this could be ameliorated in the daytime by people who want to assist with their family member's care.

The Chief Executive further stated that if you live in the North Norfolk District, if you have retired here or you age here, and your partner becomes incapacitated, and you are dependent on public transport, friends or neighbours to take you to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital requires a significant commitment to go to the hospital every day. The value of a facility like Benjamin Court that assists those in the North Norfolk area cannot be underestimated in terms of the quality of life and care benefits.

The value of the facility was outlined in the HealthWatch consultation process, and the submissions people submitted. The conclusion of HealthWatch Norfolk was that those issues should be investigated further by the ICB before any decision is made, but this didn't happen.

The Chief Executive stated that he is on record as part of the Healthwatch engagement process, of saying that the Council understands that the local health and social care system is under very acute pressure but having centralised facilities in Norwich some distance from much of North Norfolk does not meet the needs of our communities and demographics.

65 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None Received

66 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None Received

67 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

None

68 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None

69 PRIVATE BUSINESS

None

The meeting ended at 7.42 pm.

Chairman