

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

December 2024

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

For the period November 2024 to December 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

Audit of Accounts

- Our EY external auditor plans to issue his audit opinion before the deadline date of 10 December 2024 for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statements of Accounts, these are disclaimed under the Government's reset and recovery legislation.
- The draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is being completed. It is planned to publish these on our website before Christmas.

2025/26 Budget

- Assistant Directors working with budget managers have submitted savings bids totalling over £1.8m for 2025/26. There is still a shortfall on the General Fund budget, but the position will be updated when the business rates income is forecast. This cannot be completed until the NNDR1 form is prepared in January 2025. Detailed budget papers are being presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 20 January 2025.

Revenues

Collection for 2024/25 as of 26 November 2024.

- The Council Tax collection was 72.79% as at 26 November 2024 against the 30 November 2024 target of 73.15%. This equates to £340k to be collected over the remaining few days in November.
- The NDR collection was 75.77% as of 26 November 2024 against the 30 November 2024 target of 74.95%. This equates to an increase of £215k in collect already before we reach the end of November.
- Revenues continue to work well with legal on several cases that are progressing through the courts to increase revenue for NNDC.

Estates

Vacant property

- Cornish way letting – There is interest from existing tenant to relocate to a vacant unit, a further unit is being marketed with some interest following the tenant vacating.

- 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. Lift to this unit would require upgrading.

Leases

- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House are progressing subject to governance approvals. Refurbishment 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 the 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 reconfigured area is being considered. This is expected to create additional space with initial discussions with potential public sector tenants.
- Lease negotiations to facilitate the FLASH project are progressing and the land has been registered.
- The beach hut and chalet waiting list – people on the list are being contacted in relation to the weekly lets sites becoming available for 5-year leases following the Cabinet decision 4th November. The rent review is being further considered.

Disposal

- 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 is nearing completion.
- Disposal of Highfield Road car park in Fakenham to local housing association continues to progress.
- Mundesley - a disposal of amenity land to Parish Council continues to progress.

Acquisition

- Supporting Housing colleagues to review a potential property as temporary

accommodation.

- Supporting Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring 2 areas of land in Happisburgh and a further 2 residential properties are progressing, and completion is expected shortly.

Property Services

Public Conveniences

- All works at the Leas public convenience are complete. This facility will reopen on Monday 2nd December including the changing places facility.
- Works at Albert Street Holt public conveniences rebuild are progressing. Completion is expected in December securing the changing places funding.

Collaborative Working

- Collaborative working with Estates to deliver numerous projects
 - the Chalet roof repair works, including the Art Deco building and Red Lion tenanted units at Cromer and chalet roof repairs at Sheringham.
 - The Rocket House, The Reef, Watch House and Marrams Bowls Club.
- Working with Climate & Environmental Policy Manager 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.
- Holt Country Park - Working with Countryside and Leisure to deliver an electricity supply. Modular buildings have been installed and are operational providing a new workshop and an office.
- Collaborative working with Countryside on a bid submission for funding for an educational unit at Holt Country Park.

NNDC Offices

- Cromer offices final phase LED lighting project is in progress and will be complete by the end of December.

Marrams

- Works to reposition the lighting columns and footpath at the Marrams footpath Cromer has seen the first phase successfully completed and reopened to the public.

Car Park Enforcement

- Discussions around the renewal or not of the current car park enforcement service level agreement with Borough Council West Norfolk Kings Lynn are progressing.

The Pier

- Current programme of pier substructure works are 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 exercise is now complete and under evaluation.

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.
- Collaborative working with Estates and Housing Options on feasibility of purchase and conversion of a possible property for temporary accommodation.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

Staffing

- Recruitment for a Chief Technical Accountant is underway.

Audit

- As per the internal audit plan, the key controls audit, covering key financial risk including banking and treasury, will begin in January 2025.
- Interim external audit work for 2024/25 will be undertaken, this will include transaction sample testing from analytics data supplied.

Budget Monitoring

- The period 10 budget monitoring report will be prepared for members, this will forecast the likely Outturn position and will be the final estimated position prepared before the actual Outturn report is produced in June.

Revenues

Second Homes Work

- North Norfolk District Council has voted to implement the premium charge from April 2025 and is still 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.

System Procurement

- The Civica Open revenues system will expire for Revenues and Benefits on 1 October 2025, and we are in the process of procuring with the successful tender.

Training/Development

- One team leader is 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. We have gone live with a new council tax direct debit form that replaces one by Capita. We are working on a Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Change of Address form.
- 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.
- Work has been completed on the Second Homes Review form which will be rolled out to customers ahead of annual billing in March 2025. The plan is to send this via email, mobile text and then paper for those customers who do not have digital methods to keep the costs down.

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. 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

- Asset valuation procurement
- Asset Management Plan

Property Services

Bids/Tenders

- Capital works bids for 2025/2026 submitted. Awaiting outcome.
- Budget saving proposals for 2025/2026 submitted. Awaiting outcome.
- Working up tender for car park refurbishment from current capital fund.
- Working up tender brief for new asset management system.
- Consultant Contract tender exercise is now complete and under evaluation

Temporary Accommodation

- Working with EELGA on options for temporary housing solution. Awaiting outcome.

Staffing

- Property Services multi skilled operative shift pattern changes have been implemented. This will mean no Saturday working or out of hours call out service.
- Estates are handing over to Property Services their current project workload. Presently this includes the Rocket House and Watchhouse in Cromer and remedial works at the Reef North Walsham.
- Property Services will continue with the programmes through to delivery.

3 Meetings attended

