

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 3 March 2025 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Cllr W Fredericks (Deputy Chair)	Cllr L Shires
Cllr T Adams (Chair)	Cllr A Brown
Cllr H Blathwayt	Cllr J Toye
Cllr A Varley	Cllr L Withington

Members also attending:

Cllr C Cushing
Cllr N Dixon

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Director for Resources / S151 Officer, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets, Legal & Monitoring Officer, Coastal Manager, Director for Place & Climate Change and Director for Communities

Apologies for Absence:

Cllr C Ringer

22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 20th January 2025 and 3rd February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

24 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

25 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

The following question had been received from Mr John Martin. He was not able to attend the meeting, so the Chairman read it out on his behalf:

"What meetings and/or discussions have been held with Norfolk County Council in relation to the proposed content of the local government re-organisation plan for Norfolk, which has to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government on or before 21 March 2025 by Norfolk County Council, and with what (if any) result?"

The Chairman replied that Norfolk County Council (NCC) had their own focus regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), whilst North Norfolk District

Council (NNDC) was primarily concerned with the impact on discretionary services such as coastal adaptation and the local economy. It was likely that NCC would have their own vision. Consequently, discussions with NCC had been limited although it had been agreed to share data and it was hoped that NCC would do the same in return.

The Chief Executive added that a written response would be provided as Mr Martin could not attend the Cabinet meeting. He said that a report would be going to Full Council on 19th March which would outline the Council's response to the Government's invitation to submit interim proposals around unitarisation, for the deadline of 21st March. The same report would be considered by all the District, Borough and City councils during the week commencing 17th March.

26 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised members that they could ask questions as matters arose.

27 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman, Cllr N Dixon, said that there were two matters to report on:

- a) Homelessness Task & Finish Group - the following recommendations were made to Cabinet:

That the:

1. the Portfolio Holder for Housing & People Services writes to central government, setting out the situation in North Norfolk regarding the private rental sector reducing housing stock levels and the key reasons for the withdrawals and asks central government for action to address the progressive stock loss and help this Council retain and even grow private sector stock levels; and
2. Committee should receive a further report on this subject in July 2025 to coincide with the pre scrutiny of the homeless strategy.

The Chairman said that there were three key points:

- To incorporate any benefits from the council tax second homes premium such as investing in the prevention of homelessness, forming partnerships, refurbishing homes etc.
- Working more proactively with partnership organisations
- Need to incorporate, where possible, timelines to the streams of work that were in progress.

- b) Corporate Plan Action Plan 2024/2025 – the following recommendations were made:

Mobile Phone coverage:

- analyse the reasons why mobile phone applications fail,
- produce a map of mobile phone 'not spots' and support providers to improve mobile signal strength
- evaluate how the Council communicates its actions regarding the above to residents and businesses.

Cllr J Boyle said that, on looking at the second recommendation, she believed that it

should read as 'the Portfolio Holder and relevant Director to review options to improve mobile signal 'hot spots', 'not spots' and the reasons why mobile mast applications fail and communicate actions to residents and businesses'.

Cllr Dixon said that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had not confirmed the recommendations yet as the minutes for this meeting had not been approved and he proposed that the second item should be deferred until the Committee had reviewed it.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Dixon and said that the first item would be taken forward and the second one deferred.

Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing, responded to the recommendations from Homelessness Task and Finish Group. She said that she was happy to accept them and any other actions agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. She went on to say that she had attended the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting and responded to all the matters raised and that the Housing Team was working hard to do everything that they could to reduce homelessness.

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, said that he was happy to support the recommendations regarding mobile phone coverage, but would suggest that if the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was supportive, that the Council looked at the wider picture and considered all of the relevant factors that could support improvement in this area.

It was **RESOLVED** that the:

1. the Portfolio Holder for Housing & People Services writes to central government, setting out the situation in North Norfolk regarding the private rental sector reducing housing stock levels and the key reasons for the withdrawals and asks central government for action to address the progressive stock loss and help this Council retain and even grow private sector stock levels; and
2. Committee should receive a further report on this subject in July 2025 to coincide with the pre scrutiny of the homeless strategy.

28 CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2027 - ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2025/26

The Chairman explained that the actions detailed in the Action Plan had been developed in support of the five themes in the adopted Corporate Plan recognising the increasing pressure on the Council's budget, the moves towards establishing a Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk under the Government's English Devolution programme and proposed Local Government Reorganisation which would change the context in which the District Council operated and worked over the next three years, alongside continuing with 'Business As Usual' and maintaining service delivery for the district's residents until any proposals for new unitary councils in Norfolk were agreed.

The actions proposed therefore sought to balance the capacity of the organisation to deliver, taking into account the staff and financial resources available to the Council, the need to focus on supporting the transition of services into any new unitary council(s) and the potential to access external funding or partnership resources, with the aspirations laid out in the Corporate Plan. He said that it was therefore recognised that there was some degree of choice and prioritisation as to the actions proposed for delivery in the period April 2025 – March 2026.

He set out the key actions that would be focussed on going forward and explained that the number of targets had been reduced and the focus would be on strategic project delivery rather than policy development.

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, referred to 'Investing in our Local Economy and Infrastructure', item 2, and the reference to Stalham and the High Street Task Force. He encouraged all communities to develop a vision, such as a neighbourhood plan, which would help them focus on opportunities and funding and help the Council assist them with their vision for the future.

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning, said that following on from a question asked at Full Council by the Local Members for Stalham, arrangements had been made to meet with them and progress some of the matters raised.

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates and Property Services, referred to Action 5, and proposals to safeguard the Council's tourism infrastructure assets in the face of local government reorganisation. She encouraged any local communities which had an asset which they wanted to safeguard going forward, to contact the Council. The Chairman agreed, adding that several communities had already been in touch. He acknowledged that it was a real concern, particularly those that were discretionary assets. North Norfolk had a particularly rich tourism related asset portfolio and it was imperative that this was protected for the future.

Cllr L Withington, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, commented on how well engagement with the parish and town councils had been received. She highlighted three forthcoming events focussed on business engagement.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

RESOLVED

To approve the Corporate Plan Annual Action Plan for 2025/26.

Reason for the decision:

Sound management of the authority's staff, property and financial resources to deliver projects and initiatives which support improved service delivery and positive outcomes aligned to the previously agreed Corporate Plan themes and seeks to position North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses strongly in the context of any proposals to establish a Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority through the English Devolution proposals and any related programme of local government reorganisation in Norfolk which seeks to replace the existing two-tier County and District structure of local government with unitary councils.

29 BUDGET MONITORING P10 2024-2025

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates and Property Services, introduced this item. She said that the latest budget monitoring report, set out where the Council was at year end rather than 'in the moment' and this had enabled officers to see where changes could be made to improve the financial position and this was now demonstrated by a more positive update in the period 10 report. She thanked the Finance team for their hard work and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their engagement and input. She drew members' attention to the changes to the Capital Programme (page 45 onwards) and this was mainly due to additional grant funding.

Cllr Shires concluded by reminding Cabinet members that there was a forecast deficit for the following year and work would be starting soon on the budget setting process for 2026/2027.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED to

1. Note the contents of the report and the current forecast year end position.
2. Continue the work to minimise the risk of a General Fund revenue deficit for 2024/25.
3. Seek approval from full Council to make all the changes to the Capital Programme as laid out in paragraph 5.5 of the report.

Reason for the decision:

To ensure robust ongoing monitoring of the Council's budget and expenditure.

30 COASTWISE - HAPPISBURGH COMMUNITY CAR PARK - DELEGATION OF APPOINTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR AND LEASE ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman said that there was an exempt appendix for this item and if any member wished to discuss anything within that document, the meeting would have to go into closed session.

Cllr H Blathwayt, Portfolio Holder for Coast, was invited to introduce the report. He said that the project had been in the planning phase for some time now and whilst the weather was clement, it was hoped to progress it as soon as possible. The Chairman said that it was an important scheme for Happisburgh and he welcomed the commencement of the work.

The Coastal Transition Manager said that it was a good opportunity to continue working with the parish of Happisburgh and the support of the local community was greatly appreciated.

Cllr L Shires said that this project had started when she was local member for Happisburgh and she welcomed it reaching this stage. She thanked the Coastal Transition Manager for his hard work in progressing this, sometimes in the face of considerable challenge, and said that his continued engagement and focus had resulted in a strong relationship with the parish.

Cllr A Varley referred members to section 9 of the report which set out the Net Zero aspects of the project and he was very pleased to see the amount of work that had gone into mitigating the carbon impact of the scheme.

It was proposed by Cllr H Blathwayt, seconded by Cllr A Varley and

RESOLVED

- That Cabinet authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with Coastal Portfolio Holder and Head of Finance, to undertake the appointment the of Happisburgh Car park construction contractor, following tender appraisal.
- That Cabinet authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with Coastal Portfolio Holder, Estates Manager and Head of Finance, to agree to the

surrender of Happisburgh Parish Councils current lease for the Beach Road car park and enter into a new lease for the relocated car park off Lighthouse Lane.

Reasons for the Decision:

- To enable transition of current car park away from erosion risk.
- To build community resilience to coastal erosion.
- To support the viability of the community through the continued revenue generated by the car park.
- To provide examples of coastal transition and generate learning to support national coastal adaptation.
- To contribute to the delivery of the Coastwise programme

31 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

32 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 10.32 am.

Chairman