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Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 12 March 2025 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

Committee Members Present:	Cllr N Dixon (Chairman)	Cllr S Penfold (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr M Hankins Cllr Fitch-Tillett Cllr Neatherway	Cllr J Boyle Cllr A Fletcher Cllr P Heinrich
Members also attending:	Cllr. Lucy Shires Cllr. Wendy Fredericks	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates and Property Services Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing & People Services
Officers in Attendance	Steve Hems - Director for Communities Customer Services	

264 APOLOGIES

It was noted that Councillors Bailey, Batey, Cushing, Holliday and Housden had tendered their apologies for absences for today's meeting.

265 SUBSTITUTES

It was noted that Councillors Fitch-Tillett and Neatherway were attending as substitutes to fill the vacancies created by the apologies.

266 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

267 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH MARCH 2025.

The minutes were agreed subject to the following amendment.

MINUTE 258 - CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27 ACTION PLAN – TO END OF QUARTER 3 –31 DECEMBER 2024

The Committee agreed the minutes and authorised the Chairman to sign them once the following amendment be made:

Delete:

“Ask that the Cabinet undertakes a review of the available options to:

- a) analyse the reasons why mobile phone mast applications fail.
- b) develop a map of signal "not spots" from data gathered by the current surveying program.
- c) support providers to improve mobile signals strength, evaluate how it communicates its actions regarding this issue to both residents and businesses."

Insert:

"Ask that the relevant Portfolio Holders and Directors review options to improve mobile signal hotspots/not spots and the reasons why mast applications fail and communicate its actions to residents and businesses."

268 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

269 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests were received at the meeting.

270 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

271 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

None received.

272 RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CABINET TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

None received.

273 CORPORATE PLAN ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2025 – MARCH 2026

The Committee received a report that invited to Members comment on the 2023 – 2027 Corporate Plan Action Plan for the period April 2025 – March 2026 that had been presented to Cabinet on 3rd March 2025 for approval.

Questions Responses and Discussion

The mains points of the discussion maybe summarised as follows:

The Committee:

- ❖ **Noted** that the actions detailed in the Action Plan have 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 will change the context in which the District Council operates and works over the next three years, alongside continuing to maintain service delivery for the district's residents until any proposals for new unitary councils in Norfolk have been agreed.
- ❖ **Noted** that the actions proposed seek 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.
- ❖ **Noted** that has been recognised that there is some degree of choice and prioritisation as to the actions proposed for delivery in the period April 2025 – March 2026, although perhaps less compared to previous years given the need to create capacity to respond to and engage with the process of local government reorganisation across the County.
- ❖ **Agreed** that sound management of the authority's staff, property and financial resources to deliver projects and initiatives that will 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.
- ❖ **Noted** the budget to support the longer-term work being undertaken to develop the defence against flooding and erosion had been increased by an additional £150,000.
- ❖ **Agreed** that it is important that the Corporate Plan **(i)** provides a clear direction for what it is doing and why they are doing it; **(ii)** must set out what the Council goals are to achieve in addition to the provision of those core statutory services; and **(iii)** provides the framework for evaluating the Council's performance.

In conclusion the Committee:

The Chairman **Moved** and Overview and Scrutiny committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. approve the Corporate Plan Annual Action Plan for 2025/26 that had been presented to Cabinet on 3rd March 2025.

274 BUDGET MONITORING P10 2024-2025

The Committee was asked to review and comment on the Budget Monitoring

P10 2024-2025 that had been presented to Cabinet on 3rd March 2025 for approval.

Questions Responses and Discussion

A summary of the mains points of the discussion is set out below:

The Committee:

- ❖ **Understood** that this report provided an update on the Council's financial performance and projected full year outturn position for 2024/25 for the revenue account, capital programme and reserves statement as at the end of January 2025.
- ❖ **Noted** that as of 31 January 2025, after adjusting for all known variations and full year forecasting by service managers the General Fund projected surplus was £0.048m for the full year 2024/25.
- ❖ **Decided** that the annual budget process is probably the single biggest, most complex exercise that the Council undertakes as part of its annual cycle.
- ❖ **Acknowledged** that effective in-year monitoring is not about looking at numbers; it's about understanding the financial health of the Council in real-time and identifying potential challenges or opportunities.
- ❖ **Agreed** that getting this process right is vital to the Council's success and contributes significantly to what it achieves for the communities that it seeks to serve.
- ❖ **Recognised** that without a sustainable budget supporting long-term financial resilience other plans and aspirations may well founder.
- ❖ **Noted** that the net cost of services full year forecast position is an underspend of £0.734m. This is the net figure after adjusting for savings in staffing and professional fees, some of which were to be funded from reserves. Where these savings have occurred there has also been an equal adjustment made to the use of reserves so that the Council is now forecasting a use of reserves of £4.090m rather than the budgeted £4.491 i.e. a saving of £0.401m in the use of earmarked reserves.
- ❖ **Noted** the main reasons for the Corporate Leadership/Executive Support pf £0.241m underspend is as follows **(1)** £0.147 in Employee Costs related to reductions in contracted hours and having vacant posts where there has been staff turnover; and **(2)** £0.076m in supplies and services including printing and publication expenditure.
- ❖ **Noted** that there will be a recommendation that full Council approve an increase the 2024/25 capital budget for the Mundesley Coastal Defence scheme from £6.206m to £7.637m, following the award of additional grant funding from the Reginal Flood & Coastal Committee and the Environment Agency to fund inflationary costs to the project over its lifetime.
- ❖ **Noted** that the Council is awaiting the outcome of a bid to the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee from NNDC for £0.750m to both replace the previous £0.250m contribution from Anglian Water that will not be forthcoming and to seek additional funding to cover the costs towards

- reducing the risk of coastal erosion.
- ❖ **Noted** that the total capital expenditure for 2024/25 as at period 10 was £22.321m compared to an updated full year capital budget of £39.740m, leaving £17.419m to be spent by the year end.
 - ❖ **Noted** an increase the 2024/25 capital budget for the Cromer Coastal Defence scheme from £10.106m to £10.250m. This is covered by additional grant from the Environment Agency to fund inflationary costs over the project's lifetime.
 - ❖ **Noted** the swing in the General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme that is due to a large underspend of over £0.7m on employee costs, some further significant savings on supplies and services, improvements in income levels for both services and investment.
 - ❖ **Noted** that officers had worked extremely hard to address the financial position and many teams have held vacancies to generate the employee savings, and this had put pressure on the existing workforce and service delivery.

The Chairman Moved and Overview and Scrutiny committee **RESOLVED** to

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

275 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered a programme setting out the current work programme of the Councils Cabinet.

Accordingly, the Chairman **MOVED** and Overview and Scrutiny committee **RESOLVED** to note the current work programme of the Councils Cabinet.

276 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Democratic Services (Scrutiny) Officer advised the Committee that there had been a change to the workplan since the last meeting. The changes were summarised as follows:

1. Consideration of the Council's People Strategy had been deferred to May 2025.
2. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Report 2024/25 programme evaluation and programme for 2025/26 would be considered in April 2025.
3. The future of health services in Norfolk and Waveney to be considered in April **e.g.** potential changes to the GP Out of Hours Service, GP practices, the Norwich Walk-In Centre, and the Vulnerable Adults

- Health Inclusion Hub in Norwich,
4. Crime & Disorder Update to invite the PCC to discuss their plans for North Norfolk in either June or July 2025.

The Chairman **MOVED** and Overview and Scrutiny committee **RESOLVED** to that the revised committee's work plan be agreed.

277 ACTION TRACKER

The Committee received and noted an update from the Scrutiny Officer on progress made with topics within its action tracker. A summary of key points discussed is set out below:

1. The Director of Resources to produce a timetable in consultation with the Scrutiny officer for the Committee out the key events as the budget is developed throughout the year such as which committee meetings it will be reported to and periods of public consultation.
2. Peer Review –Action Plan considered at the January 2025.
3. Food Waste – The outcome on the financial allocation and the anticipated capital costs that the Council would incur in relation to food waste collection – Update required.
4. Water Summit – Seek clarification of the outcome of the East of England Water Summit.
5. East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust – Requires updating.
6. North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative – Awaiting report from the Portfolio Lead Member on the development of a Toolkit.
7. Budget Monitoring – Update on the Governance, Risk and Audit Committee consideration of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
8. Homelessness Task and Finish further update in July 2025.

278 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHECK LIST

The Committee received and noted a Member Development Check List.

279 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The agenda circulated contained no exempt/confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

The meeting ended at 11.30 pm.

Chairman