

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2017 in the Council Chamber, North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer at 9.30 am.

Members Present:

Committee: Cllr K Ward (Chairman)

Cllr S Butikofer

Cllr J English

Cllr V Gay

Cllr S Hester

Cllr M Knowles

Cllr B McGoun

Cllr N Pearce

Cllr R Reynolds

Cllr N Smith

Cllr G Williams

Officers in Attendance: The Corporate Director (SB), the Corporate Director (NB), the Head of Finance and Asset Management, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the HR Manager, the Communications and PR Manager, the Health and Communities Team Leader, the Policy & Performance Management Officer, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Officer.

Members in Attendance: Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds, Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Cllr P Grove-Jones, Cllr M Millership, Cllr R Price and Cllr J Rest.

The Chairman welcomed the Vice Chair, Mr G Williams, back to work and congratulated all those involved in the successful Greenbuild event which had been held at the weekend.

35. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr N Coppack and Mr E Seward.

36. SUBSTITUTES

Mrs B McGoun, for Mr E Seward.

37. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions were received.

38. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 July 2017 were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising: Garden Bins (Minute 29)

In response to a question from Mrs S Butikofer regarding garden bins, the portfolio

holder, Mrs A Claussen Reynolds, reported that the waiting list had now been released. Keir and NNDC were in the process of contacting those on the list to arrange payment. Delivery would be made when payment was received. Two vehicles had been dedicated for this purpose, one of which was working a double shift. 260 bins had been received for delivery and 480 would arrive later. It was aimed to clear the waiting list within 6 – 8 weeks.

In response to a question from Mr J Rest it was confirmed that customers could have more than one garden bin, as long as they paid for all of them.

39. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To be taken, if necessary, at the appropriate item on the Agenda.

41. PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None

42. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

The Chairman and Vice Chairman had discussed the working style of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. One of the purposes of the Committee was to look at policy development and this role was not being fulfilled. It would be good to have broader discussions on relevant topics, e.g. the Coastal Partnership.

Mrs A Fitch-Tillett and the Corporate Director (SB) clarified some confusion regarding the Coastal Partnership, explaining that there were two organisations.

- a) Coastal Partnership East: this was founded in June to manage the coast between Holkham in North Norfolk and Landguard Point in Felixstowe. The partnership, brought together the coastal management resources and expertise from Gt. Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council.
- b) The Norfolk Coast Partnership was responsible for the management plan for the area of natural beauty (AONB). It comprised North Norfolk District Council, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and Norfolk County Council. The Partnership received a significant contribution from DEFRA and was about to review its 5 year management plan. It would be good to strengthen our relationship with this organisation. The Democratic Services Manager would contact them.

The Chairman asked Members to speak to her, the Vice Chair or the Democratic Services Manager about any relevant topics they wished to explore. She had talked to the portfolio holder, Mrs J Oliver, regarding the Asset Management Plan and the Asset Commercialisation Strategy. This would be added to the Work Programme. The purchase of the Community Shop at Itteringham had raised questions about other assets of community value.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reminded the Committee that Standing Orders required any suggested topics should be put on the agenda for October, under item 8, for Member decision on how to move forward.

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

None

44. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Mr R Price declared an interest in this item as a Member of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Norfolk and Waveney Joint Health Committee and Norfolk County Council.

Mr G Williams declared an interest as a Member of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The report had been written by the HR Manager and the Health and Communities Team Leader. It aimed to identify how the Council supported its staff to maintain and improve their mental health and, through the provision and direct delivery of services and engagement with other organisations, worked to influence, maintain and improve the mental health and reduce health inequalities for the resident population of North Norfolk.

Questions and Discussion:

- a) Mrs B McGoun observed that the report did not include mental health support for Members. The Corporate Director (SB) replied that this could be considered further in conjunction with HR and Democratic Services. Members also had recourse to the bullying procedures and the Standards Committee. However, bullying wasn't always linked to mental health issues.
- b) The HR Manager said that the Employee Assistance Programme had originally included Members but that this facility had been withdrawn. She and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services were discussing re-instating it. The service covered a range of issues. There was a confidential helpline, independent of the authority. The Council also has approximately 22 trained mental health first aiders who could be available for Members as well as for staff.
- c) The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said that King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council provided counselling for Members. NNDC might consider helping Members in a similar way. She and the HR Manager were the first points of contact for Members requiring help.
- d) Mrs S Butikofer asked if there was a rise or fall in numbers of staff using the Employee Assistance Programme. The HR Manager responded that numbers were up and down, and usage was over a range of issues. The scheme was actively publicised and was also discussed at JSCC.
- e) Mrs Butikofer asked a question about attendance at Outside Bodies. The Democratic Services Manager explained that her Team captured this information by regular contact with the Outside Bodies. An annual report was made to Full Council in May and the figures were available for inspection in Democratic Services.
- f) Mr N Smith expressed concern that Members were unable to make a difference when they attended Outside Bodies. He expressed further concern about provision for mental health emergencies. The Corporate Director (SB) said that the Trusts in Norfolk and Suffolk had been placed under special measures, but that the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust now had mental health triage units in hospitals. The Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trust had recently opened a new ward at Hellesdon Hospital for post-natal depression.
- g) Referring to a previous discussion at Full Council about appointing a mental health champion, Mrs Butikofer asked why this hadn't been progressed. The Corporate Director (NB) explained that mental health provision fell under a number of services.

He recalled that there had been no particular enthusiasm when the subject of appointing a champion had been discussed, but it was a Member decision. He would discuss it with the Leader. The Chairman said that it was important that the role was taken by someone who was passionate about it and suggested that anyone who felt strongly that they wanted to take it on should speak to the Corporate Director (NB).

- h) Mr R Reynolds commended the report but observed that it missed the recognition of mental health illness. People in deep depression felt that they had no one to turn to. It was up to others to recognise that they were unwell. He asked if this could be looked at. The HR Manager said that this could be considered. Some mental health training is to be rolled out to managers and a similar programme could be delivered to Members. If there was a particular interest from anyone a Member(s) could also be trained as Mental Health First Aiders.
- i) Mr Reynolds and the Chairman said that it was necessary for Members and others to be able to recognise mental health problems in others generally, but especially in ward work. Mr S Hester said that mental health issues could be hard to spot and that there was a stigma attached which could deter sufferers from seeking help. It was a big problem which would get worse as the pressures of life increased. Prevention was important. Issues that manifested at work might not necessarily be caused by work. Mr Hester applauded the report and asked for a 6 monthly review.
- j) Ms V Gay agreed with Mr Hester, saying that many of us lived lives that were not conducive to good mental health. She suggested that woodlands should be given more attention in this capacity.
- k) Mrs P Grove-Jones expressed concern about lack of resources for mental health care in the area. However, the Committee heard that the PCC had taken on a 5th mental health nurse who could go out with the police.
- l) In response to a question from Ms Gay, the HR Manager confirmed that an updated bullying policy had recently been published.
- m) The Corporate Director (SB) said that it was important that the Council was clear about its responsibilities as an employer, as a Member Community and to the wider community.
- n) Mr R Reynolds asked if the Health and Communities Team Leader could look for any guidance on recognising mental health issues and bring it back to the Committee.
- o) In summary the Chairman expressed appreciation for the report and ongoing work. Consideration of mental health issues should include Members. Concerns had been expressed regarding budgetary and resource issues. Members needed to be aware of this when they sat on other committees.
- p) The Health and Communities Team Leader informed the Committee that dementia and dementia support was also being looked at. The Norfolk Help Hub had also been formed so that intervention could be possible before legal enforcement became necessary. The next update would include the Hub.

RESOLVED

To note the report, to review it in 6 months and that a Mental Health specialist should be invited to speak to the Committee.

45. BUDGET MONITORING PERIOD 4

The report summarised the budget monitoring position for the revenue account and capital programme to the end of July 2017. The overall position at the end of July 2017 showed an under spend of £857,491 to date for the current financial year on the revenue account. This was currently expected to deliver a full year under spend of £91,185. The budget was closely monitored throughout the year.

The budget for 2017/18 included savings and additional income totalling £558,300 and a virement of £45,000. There was a small variance in investment income but a year end variation was not currently forecast. The Council was in a positive position.

Questions and Discussion:

- a) In response to a question from the Chairman regarding the timescale for insurance payments for the storm surge, the Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that sometimes such payments could take a long time but, on this occasion, it was hoped that it would be in the next few months and that all financial loss would be recouped.
- b) To a question from Mr J Rest about Housing Strategy, the Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that the agreement with Victory Housing Trust was time-limited and due to end.
- c) Business Rates Retention Scheme: a report outlining the scheme was due to go to Cabinet in October.
- d) Vacant posts in Benefits Administration: 4 new posts had been created and were currently being recruited. It was expected that they would all be filled.

RESOLVED

To note the contents of the report.

46. MANAGING PERFORMANCE Q1 2017/18

The report provided a first quarter progress report of the performance of the Council. More specifically it reported on the delivery of the Annual Action Plan 2017/18 and progress against targets. It gave an overview, identified any issues that might affect delivery of the plan, the action being taken to address these issues and any further action needed that required Cabinet approval.

The position was positive in a period of significant activity which had included 2 elections. Planning performance (determinations) had improved significantly. It was hoped that this could be maintained or further improved with the introduction of the pre-determination process.

Areas in red included:

- a) Visitors to country parks: there had been some improvement but it was possible that some targets had been unrealistic.
- b) Flytipping: the Head of Environmental Health had been asked to investigate response.

Questions and Discussion:

- a) Flytipping: Mrs B McGoun observed that the average waiting time was getting worse and that this was a reputational issue. The Corporate Director (NB) said that the contractor was being defaulted accordingly and that lessons learned would be of value when negotiating the new contract. Mrs P Grove-Jones said that the charges at recycling centres encouraged fly tipping. The Corporate Director (NB) explained that this was beyond the Council's control. However, fly tipping was increasing nationally. NNDC had a zero tolerance approach and, whenever appropriate, it was subject to prosecution. Successful prosecutions were publicised. The responsibility was on the householder who should ensure that anyone disposing of their rubbish had a waste transfer certificate. Education was necessary and could be the subject of a

campaign. Typically white goods, furniture, garden material and tyres were tipped. Mrs S Butikofer asked the portfolio holder, Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds, to lobby Norfolk County Council to hold more amnesty days in North Norfolk. The Corporate Director (NB) also undertook to speak to the relevant officers at County Council. However, it was believed that the Sheringham recycling centre didn't have the capacity for an amnesty day.

- b) The Council would pick up certain bulky items for a modest charge. This was publicised on the NNDC website. The Benjamin Foundation would collect good items of furniture which were able to be reused.
- c) Cost of fly tipping to NNDC: the Corporated Director (NB) would provide a written response for inclusion in the minutes.
- a) Average wait time, Customer Services (CS057): this referred to customers who came to the office without an appointment. The Corporate Director (NB) explained that although the waiting time had gone up slightly, it was still within the target time of 10 minutes. In addition, the figures only provided a snapshot over a short period of time. Any number of factors could influence the waiting time; June was a peak time because of elections in any case, but where a trend was established, extra staff cover had been provided eg over the lunchtime period to alleviate the problem. Last year the target had been met. Through the Digital Transformation Strategy customers were encouraged to do business digitally, so that less resources were being provided for face to face transactions. The Chairman noted that it was possible also that there could be a correlation with an IT outage at that time. To a question from Mrs P Grove-Jones, it was explained that planning had experienced a decrease in people coming into reception as a result of the digital improvements. Mrs Grove-Jones believed there were other areas, e.g. housing, where customers preferred to deal with someone face to face. She was assured that there would always be a safety net for those who couldn't or preferred not to do digital transactions.
- b) In response to a question from the Vice Chairman, the Corporate Director (NB) explained that targets put forward by Heads of Service were challenged. Some were historic and others changed over time. They should be stretching but not impossible. A lot of work had gone into encouraging visitors to sports centres. Country parks were influenced by weather and other factors. The Country Park Christmas events last year however had been very successful.
- c) Percentage of Priority 2 Audit recommendations: there had been very few, but they hadn't been implemented by the due date. They would be addressed before the next review. Members of the Governance, Risk and Audit Committee had received a very positive report from Internal Audit.
- d) AAP 16/17 02 A 04 – timelines: the Corporate Director (SB) would ask the Housing Strategy and Community Manager to provide a response in writing before the next meeting.

RESOLVED

To note the report.

47. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER

The letter was received annually and detailed those complaints against the authority which had been received by the Local Government Ombudsman – that is, complaints by customers who weren't satisfied after their complaint had been dealt with under the Council's 3 part procedure.

There had been 19 new complaints (3 had been held over from the previous year) but only one (a Planning matter) had been upheld. Most had been referred back to the Council – usually because they hadn't gone through the proper procedure.

Questions and Discussion:

- a) Financial redress re upheld complaint: the Policy and Performance Management Officer would be asked to respond in writing. The amount would have been calculated according to the ombudsman's scale.
- b) Usually it was a planning decision, rather than procedure, that was the subject of a complaint. Complaints tended not to be from the applicant but by someone who was uncomfortable with the outcome.
- c) Environmental services complaints tended to be neighbour nuisance disputes.
- d) Apologies often dispelled complaints.
- e) Persistent complainers were being dealt with more robustly.
- f) Sometimes it was useful to learn from a complaint.

RESOLVED

To note the Letter.

48. FUTURE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chairman and Vice Chairman had discussed this topic between themselves and with Democratic Services. Discussion was ongoing and included how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might work more effectively. The Committee's Terms of Reference were broader than scrutiny and receiving Cabinet reports and included the power to bring in external expertise.

In the Committee Structure committees had been service-based with all Members having a degree of involvement. The Cabinet Structure, with the scrutiny process holding the executive to account, had streamlined the process. This often meant that "back benchers" fell through a gap. For this reason it was important to improve Overview and Scrutiny to engage more Members. Scrutiny itself was only part of the role. The other key role was policy and looking outside the Council for significant issues which impacted on the community.

It was important to manage overloaded agendas. Task and Finish Groups – which would report conclusions to the main Committee - or Overview and Scrutiny Panels would help with this but it was important to be clear about the task, the resource implications for officers and the timescale. It was in the power of the Committee to create Task and Finish Groups but Panels would have to be put into the Constitution. Each political group would be asked to discuss this, and how it might be taken forward. Mrs S Butikofer suggested that 2 Members from each group should meet with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Manager.

Ms V Gay observed that it was important that anyone appointed to a Task and Finish Group was willing and interested. Members were asked to speak to the Chairman or Vice Chairman if they wanted to be involved.

The Corporate Director (SB) warned that the Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party had been formed to support the Local Plan and should not be taken as a model for a Scrutiny Panel.

49. THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

- a) The Asset Management Plan was likely to be deferred to December.
- b) Financial Strategy would come to the meeting of 30 October.
- c) In reply to a question from Ms V Gay it was explained that an item on Stearman's Yard concerned access across a piece of land which didn't require Member authority.

RESOLVED to note the Cabinet Work Programme for the period 01 September – 31 October 2017.

50. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

- a) PCC update: it was suggested that the Area Commander should be invited to attend after the review of the traveller incidents was published in October.
- b) Review of Crime and Disorder/ Update on Arts and Culture: the Chairman had agreed that some updates could be made via briefing notes. This would include these topics.
- c) The Splash feasibility report would come for pre-scrutiny in November. Other leisure projects would come to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED to note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Update.

The meeting ended at 12.16 pm.

Chairman