

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

**Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 October 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 V Gay

Cllr S Hester

Cllr M Knowles

Cllr N Pearce

Cllr E Seward

Cllr R Reynolds

Cllr N Smith

**Officers in Attendance:** The Corporate Director (SB), the Corporate Director (NB), the Head of Economic & Community Development, the Coastal Manager, the Health and Communities Team Leader, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Officer.

**Members in Attendance:** Cllr P Grove-Jones, Cllr M Millership, Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Cllr N Coppack, Cllr J Rest and Cllr G Perry-Warnes.

**Also in Attendance:** Bill Parker, Head of Coastal Partnership East

## 51. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr N Smith, Cllr J English and Cllr G Williams.

## 52. SUBSTITUTES

None

## 53. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions were received.

## 54. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2017 were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising: Future Working Arrangements of the Committee (Minute 48)

The Chair, Vice Chair, Cllr R Reynolds and Cllr V Gay had met on 6 October to discuss future working arrangements of the committee. It had been a useful and positive meeting. The next step would be talks with the political groups, after which there would be recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Proposals would be

circulated to all Members.

#### **55. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None

#### **56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **57. PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None

#### **58. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER**

None

#### **59. RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CABINET TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS**

None

#### **60. PRESENTATION – COASTAL PARTNERSHIP EAST (CPE)**

The presentation (a first year update) was made by Bill Parker, Head of Coastal Partnership East.

- a) The Partnership had been formed in April 2016 and comprised North Norfolk District, Great Yarmouth, Waveney and Suffolk Coastal councils.
- b) Reasons for setting up the Partnership included:
  - Challenges of recruiting coastal engineers.
  - Even distribution of the workload over all four authorities.
  - Ensuring there was expertise available across the authorities.
  - More impact on national organisations, e.g. DEFRA.
  - Better procurement opportunities.
  - Coherent approach to funding.
  - New opportunities beyond Norfolk and Suffolk – selling expertise elsewhere to levy income and ease the burden on taxpayers in coastal communities.
- c) All CPE staff were employed by their own local authority, the processes of the Partnership were embedded in each authority and the aims were within NNDC's Corporate Plan. The NNDC revenue spend for this year was £310,000. All money from NNDC was spent in the District.
- d) CPE recognised that it was necessary to deliver value for money.
- e) The Partnership had a 3 year business plan which was available for circulation to Members.
- f) The Partnership's Annual Action Plan:
  - Knowing our coast
  - Delivering for communities
  - Capacity and capability

g) Major projects:

- Lowestoft Flood Risk
- Sizewell C
- Great Yarmouth Harbour
- Broadland Futures Initiative

h) Projects in North Norfolk:

- Bacton – a large project, recently approved by Cabinet.
- Mundesley (in 2018 or 2019)
- Cromer Phase 2
- Trimingham (research into understanding of cliffs and why they fail)
- Measured term contract (minor repair and maintenance works)

i) CPE's progress to date:

- Shared working.
- Resilience across the team.
- Recognition as a lead coastal issues organisation.
- Production of first annual report.
- Joint adaptation post with the Environment Agency (EA).
- Shared work on asset database with EA and development of measured term contracts.
- Starting to realise benefits of shared expertise.

j) Challenges:

- Geography/logistics (the distances to be covered).
- IT integration.
- Team capacity.
- Future funding.
- How best to interact with local councils, to maintain a relationship and to demonstrate that CPE is an integral part of the authority.

k) Future opportunities:

- To further strengthen resilience.
- Extension of Business Emergency resilience Tool (BERT) - a free online tool to assess the ability of an organisation to successfully adapt to interruptions such as severe weather, followed up by free personalised support.
- Supporting communities better.

Questions and Discussion:

- a) The Chairman said that the presentation had been requested for the purposes of education and to find out about working together. She found it helpful that the work of the Partnership was linked with other activities.
- b) Ms V Gay asked how much funding was available for projects. It was explained that NALEP was funded from Central Government and did not have a ring-fenced budget for this activity but could access funding from other sources. It was important to be smart and present a good business case and to promote coastal issues.
- c) In response to a question from Mrs S Butikofer regarding the impact of offshore windfarms and any interaction with the work of CPE, the Head of CPE said that the

Partnership was involved in ensuring that windfarms didn't impact negatively on the coast. There could also be opportunity to explore contributions from offshore companies.

- d) Mr S Hester asked in what areas apprenticeships were being offered. The Head of CPE explained that there was a corporate apprenticeship scheme at Waveney, work was being done at Great Yarmouth with Balfour Beatty who had 3 apprentices, but – as yet – there was no one from North Norfolk. Skills that could be offered would include IT and engineering. Apprenticeships built a pathway for young people to discover their skills and keep them in the District. Mr J Rest observed that it was important to consider non-coastal areas when recruiting apprentices.
- e) To a further question from Mr Hester regarding Morston Quay, the Head of CPE said that the Partnership had a good working relationship with the National Trust and was also working with the RSPB. The Coastal Manager invited Mr Hester to email him for further discussion and to ensure that relevant people were invited to the Coastal Forum. The Corporate Director (SB) added that some coastal areas were the responsibility of other authorities who worked in co-operation with CPE and other agencies. The Chair offered to work with Cllr Hester, as she is the local member for Morston.
- f) Mr E Seward observed that it was important that there was transparency and accountability in funding for the benefit of Elected Members and the public. He asked about CPE's relationship with the Environment Agency (EA) and was told that there was a good working relationship locally. There were no duties along the coast – only powers. Ongoing discussions on ways forward were held with EA on a weekly basis.
- g) At the request of Mrs A Fitch-Tillett it was explained that the Regional Flood and Coast Committee was the approval body for investments from EA on flooding and coastal issues. It also raised money through Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex County Councils. It was a critical body that the Partnership worked with to access money.
- h) In response to a question from Mr N Pearce, the Head of CPE said that the Partnership was developing working with education institutions and other establishments, helping them to focus their research and pooling information.

The Chairman advised members that due to another meeting commencing at 11am which some Members needed to attend, she proposed taking Agenda item 8 after Agenda item 11.

## **61. NNDC'S INVOLVEMENT IN ARTS AND CULTURE**

The Health & Communities Team Leader briefly outlined the report. She explained that it outlined the key art and culture initiatives facilitated or supported by the Council and that, going forward, there would be a new focus on health and wellbeing for art and culture as this was a key priority in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The process of applying for NNDC art and culture grants was changing to bring it more in line with that of the Big Society Fund, increasing equity for potential candidates and to ensure that the organisations in receipt of funding were delivering projects in North Norfolk that improved health and wellbeing. A regular monitoring and end of grant reporting process was also being implemented.

The Chairman invited Members to speak:

Mrs P Grove-Jones said that she was disappointed that the Portfolio Holder was not in attendance. The Democratic Services Manager explained that the Chairman had agreed that Portfolio Holders would be invited to attend for specific items if it was felt that they were required. As this item was an update report for information only it was felt that the Portfolio Holder did not need to attend on this occasion. Mrs Grove-Jones then asked about the use of the dual use sports centres for arts and cultural events during the

school holidays. The Health and Communities Team leader said that this fell into the remit of the Leisure & Locality Services Manager rather than arts and culture.

Ms V Gay said that she felt that the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan did not focus explicitly on arts and culture and consequently spend on this area had reduced considerably. She referred to the newsletter produced by the Arts Forum and asked for clarification on the arrangement between the Council and the Arts Forum.

Referring to the grants application process, Ms Gay asked whether formal criteria had previously been in place. She said that although health and wellbeing was important it should not necessarily be the driver. In conclusion she asked whether there were any policy documents underpinning the decision to move to a different process for dealing with applications for arts and culture grants. The Health & Communities Team Leader replied that previously there had not been any criteria in place and consequently there was no way to justify the amounts allocated. As outlined in the report, many organisations had been receiving funding towards core costs which was sometimes duplicated in funding from Norfolk County Council. The new approach would mean a simple application form which would include a question regarding health and wellbeing but it would not be the main focus.

Ms Gay then sought clarification on whether the link to health and wellbeing was seen as more important than the contribution that arts and culture made to tourism and the economy in the district. She repeated her earlier question regarding an underpinning policy document. The Health & Communities Team Leader replied that, as outlined in the report, the Arts Strategy had not been renewed when it lapsed.

Recommendation: the Chairman said that it would be helpful for the Committee to see more information on the new application process and any communication plan that was being put in place to make organisations aware of the funding available. Ms Gay agreed that this would be very helpful.

The Corporate Director (SB) advised Members that the Big Society Fund would be reviewed as part of the budgetary considerations as Norfolk County Council had recently indicated that they intended to review the allocation of second homes council tax income. Mr E Seward said that there was a question submitted to the next Full Council meeting of Norfolk County Council on this issue.

Mr S Hester commented that there seemed to be a good opportunity for cross-authority working on arts and culture funding. He said he was impressed by the range of arts projects receiving funding from the Council. The Corporate Director (SB) replied that there was already joint working in place for Orchestras Live.

Mrs S Butikofer asked who had taken the decision not to renew the Arts Strategy. It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder would be asked to provide a written response. She then queried the decision to fund the GoGo Hares project when museums funding was struggling. She said that she would like more information on why one was favoured over another. The Head of Economic and Community Development replied that the Museums Service supported a number of museums in the District and the Council had hoped to secure significant resources from them for the Deep History Coast project. Due to the unsuccessful outcome of the overall funding bid for this project, the Council had agreed to commit a significant sum of money to ensure the project could go ahead. He added that there was no longer a dedicated arts officer at the County Council but that he had met recently with the officer overseeing arts and culture at county level and there had been useful discussions regarding several projects where there was a cross-over between local authorities including GoGo Hares, Deep History Coast and Paston 600. He concluded by saying that there was no arts strategy at the District or County Council

but that there was one for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and it was important that NNDC remained involved in these wider schemes and initiatives.

Action: the Head of Economic and Community Development suggested that he prepared a document for members outlining the Council's resources regarding support for arts and culture and the current situation. The Committee agreed to this proposal.

The Corporate Director (SB) said that following the departure of the arts officer, changes had been implemented in the Economic Growth Team and the new Project Officer had been tasked with focussing on arts funding – particularly LEADER project funding of which there was a significant amount.

## **62. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER**

The Chairman explained that the Committee was required to give consideration to any matters referred to them by a Member and to agree whether they should be included in the work programme and which key points they would like to see addressed in any report coming forward. Three items had been submitted for consideration:

### **a) Norfolk Coastal Partnership**

The Chairman asked Mrs A Fitch-Tillett to outline why she had requested that there should be a presentation to the Committee on the Norfolk Coast Partnership. Mrs Fitch-Tillett said that many Members were not aware of the role of the partnership and often confused it with Coastal Partnership East, when in fact its main focus was on promoting and conserving the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Chairman said that if the Committee were in agreement the presentation could come ahead of the upcoming reports on planning related issues as it would be helpful for members to understand the links of the AONB to the Council's Local plan. It was agreed that this item would be scheduled for the December meeting.

### **b) Asset Management Strategy**

The Chairman explained that she had referred this item to the Committee for consideration. Her main concerns were the absence of a specific policy for asset commercialisation. The recent Cabinet paper on the purchase of the Itteringham shop made reference to the Council's Asset Commercialisation Strategy but there did not appear to be a document with that title. In addition, the 2017/18 Annual Action Plan made reference to the need to 'develop and implement the Asset Management Strategy', yet nothing had been brought forward to date. This effectively meant that the decision to purchase Itteringham shop was not informed by a publicly available Strategy document and that there appeared to be a policy context gap to inform property investment by NNDC. She suggested that the Committee therefore requested that this Strategy document was included in the report. Finally, as the Itteringham shop was a purchase of an Asset of Community Value (ACV), it was expected that the Strategy would include specific reference to the criteria used to inform ACV purchase decisions over and above the general points outlined in section 2.4 of the Asset Management Plan (AMP).

Mr J Rest said that he felt it would be helpful to have an update on the property development company included in the report.

The Corporate Director (SB) explained that the AMP was regularly reviewed and updated and this was currently in process. In addition, a wider asset strategy was

being developed and this would supersede the Council's current Disposal Policy which was several years old. The Council's Strategic Development Partner, Gleeds, would inform this. Mrs S Butikofer said that it would be helpful if any report coming to the Committee on the AMP could include a summary of Gleeds' current involvement. The Corporate Director agreed, adding that he would also provide an update on the outcome of the meetings of the joint District and Town Council working group In Wells. The Committee agreed to the above approach and requested that the Portfolio Holder be invited to attend the meeting. December was agreed as the most suitable meeting for this item.

- c) Information Technology provision and support at NNDC – business continuity and future resilience.

The Chairman said that she had referred this item to the Committee for consideration. She said that following two large scale 'outages' in recent months, she would like to request a full incident review which would include a root cause analysis and an explanation of what the Council had learnt. It would also be helpful to have information on server resilience, contingency plans and when they come into effect and a review of out of hours cover – giving particular consideration to support for Members who undertake much of their case work during evenings and weekends.

Mrs A Fitch-Tillett said that she would like the report to include the challenges faced by the Council regarding IT and partnership working as this seemed to be a particular problem. The Corporate Director (SB) said that this was usually due to security software and firewalls but acknowledged it was a challenge for the Council and its partners.

Mrs S Butikofer said that she was aware of some parishes still experiencing problems with downloading plans from the NNDC website and this needed to be looked at.

The Committee agreed to the above approach regarding the report and it was suggested that this item was incorporated within the next update on digital transformation.

### **63. THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Democratic Services Manager updated the Committee on changes to the Cabinet work programme.

### **64. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE**

The Democratic Services Manager outlined changes to the Committee's work programme. She explained that the Police Commander for North Norfolk and Broadland, Superintendent Chris Harvey, had suggested attending the November meeting to update Members on initial matters arising out of the review of the traveller incursion in Cromer during August and to outline the plan for 2020 Policing. In addition, an invitation had also been extended to the Operational Manager at Cromer Hospital to attend this meeting as the Hospital had recently announce major expansion of the current premises and it was felt that members should be kept updated on this. As yet no response had been received.

The Democratic Services Manager then explained that in addition to the three financial reports already scheduled to come to the November meeting and an item of pre-scrutiny on the leisure facilities at Sheringham, there had been a further request from Cabinet for the Committee to undertake pre-scrutiny on the North Norfolk Sports Hub. If all items

were included in the agenda it was likely that the meeting would run into the afternoon. Members agreed that pre-scrutiny was an important part of their work and that financial reports should also be given sufficient time for full consideration. They agreed to a longer meeting to ensure all of the items could be given sufficient time.

The Chairman thanked members for their input and said that she would meet with the Democratic Services Manager to agree the format of the agenda for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.51pm

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Chairman