

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 9 April 2025 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

Committee Cllr N Dixon (Chairman) Cllr S Penfold (Vice-Chairman)
Members Present:

Cllr M Batey Cllr C Cushing
Cllr V Holliday Cllr N Housden
Cllr P Neatherway (Sub)

Members also attending: Cllr A Fitch-Tillett

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive, the AD for Legal and Governance

278 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Bailey, J Boyle, A Fletcher, M Hankins, P Heinrich and L Vickers. Cllr P Neatherway substituted for Cllr L Vickers.

279 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

280 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th March were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

281 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

282 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

283 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

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

There were no matters to consider.

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

The Chairman advised members that there were no responses from Cabinet or

Council to report at this time.

286 REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

287 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND REVIEW AND UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND TRANSITION YEAR 2025-26

Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, introduced this item. He explained that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was a three-year Government funding programme 2022 – 2025 with an allocation to NNDC of £1.2 million for North Norfolk and that the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) was a two-year Government programme 2023 – 2025 of capital grant funding of £1.4 million awarded to NNDC.

Both programmes aimed to support local economic priorities. Collectively the grant and support schemes delivered locally had leveraged an additional £2,858,782 of public, private and community sector investment across the District. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was a three-year Government funding programme 2022 – 2025 with an allocation to NNDC of £1.2 million for North Norfolk.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) was a two-year Government programme 2023 – 2025 of capital grant funding of £1.4 million awarded to NNDC.

Both programmes aim to support local economic priorities. Collectively the grant and support schemes delivered locally have leveraged an additional £2,858,782 of public, private and community sector investment across the District.

Both programmes were on track to complete and be fully defrayed by 31 March 2025. The total value of programmes that were delivering support to communities and businesses in the District equated to £5,554,899.

In mid-December 2024 the Government announced an additional year of UKSPF transition funding for 2025-2026. NNDC was awarded £405,095 comprising £330,302 revenue and £74,793 capital. On 4 March the government announced that the REPF will be extended for a further year with up to £33 million available nationally to support economic growth. He added that the scheme outline and the expected award to NNDC were yet to be confirmed.

Cllr Toye presented a series of slides, outlining the key areas of delivery for the two funds.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Toye and invited members to speak:

The Chairman, Cllr N Dixon, commented that most of the funding came from central government via the Levelling Up programme and NNDC was effectively the administrator for the two schemes. He sought clarification that the report and supporting documents presented to members was the outcome of assessments, in accordance with the criteria of the schemes, undertaken by officers, with input from the portfolio holder. Cllr Toye replied that the Council had contributed money and leveraged additional funding too, considerably boosting the amount of funding available.

The Chairman thanked him for the clarification and said that the impression had been that the Council had provided most of the funding. Cllr Toye replied that the initial funding had come from central government and NNDC had been able to 'grow'

this considerably.

Cllr S Penfold said that it was important to acknowledge the value added by officer's expertise and input to delivery of the scheme. He referred to page 64 onwards 'Supported Businesses' and asked for more information on how those businesses which were based out of the district were supported. Cllr Toye replied that some of these businesses may be based elsewhere but operate within the district. For this particular section of the report, it was businesses that Visit North Norfolk (VNN) had provided information on and their boundary was similar but not the same as the Council's. He added that the Council provided funding to VNN.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth (ADSG) explained that the report covered two different schemes. One was grant funding and this was limited to projects and businesses based in the district. The second was funding aimed at broader business support and this extended to businesses operating beyond the boundary.

Cllr V Holliday asked for information on the selection criteria for the businesses that were supported. The Economic Programmes & Funding Manager (EPFM) said that all of the programmes were promoted extensively and any businesses could apply. Cllr Toye said that the overarching criteria were set by central government.

Cllr Holliday asked about due diligence for the larger schemes. Cllr Toye said that officers had worked with a team at Norfolk County Council (NCC) as they were experienced in this sector and they assessed the applications before they came through to NNDC. The Economic Growth Manager (EGM) added that the process also included engaging with the businesses, visiting them on site and discussing their aims and ambitions for the future. The Chief Executive expanded on this further and explained the role of the New Anglia Growth Hub and said that although it had previously been more focussed on the Norwich/Ipswich, it's support was now expanding into rural areas and this had been beneficial for both these schemes.

Cllr Holliday thanked the officers for their explanation and said that it might be helpful to include some of that information in the report. She then referred to the 'outcome analysis' section of the report and asked if it was quantifiable as such measures would be helpful. Cllr Holliday said production numbers, items sold, income generated etc would all be useful indicators. Cllr Toye said that this would be a large piece of work to tailor this to each business. The EGM said that over the next 12 months more work could be done to capture this information and then be included in a final report.

The ADfSG said that Council had access to a 'social value tool' and this could be useful in providing some information on the wider benefits of the funded projects.

Cllr C Cushing welcomed the amount of money and the distribution across the district. He agreed that it would be helpful to see information relating to the financial benefits of the investment in local businesses and the videos demonstrating the positive impact of the funding had been really insightful. The EDM said that it was hard to quantify the value but said that engagement with local businesses was key as they often came back to NNDC for further input and advice.

The Chief Executive agreed that it was important to demonstrate value in everything the Council did but he felt that the report showed that this was the case and the Government had not raised any concerns at all. Overall, success of the district's economy was regularly monitored and demonstrated year on year growth.

Cllr N Housden said it was important to find some mechanism to give an overview of what had been achieved from £5.5m of funding.

Cllr Penfold asked whether a report had gone back to central government and whether feedback had been received. The EPFM explained that because the schemes finished at the end of March, a final report was not prepared and submitted just yet.

The EGM clarified that the Government purely requested metrics, nothing else.

Cllr Penfold said that if there was any overlap in the information sent to central government and that requested by the Committee, it could be useful to share that and avoid any duplication or additional work.

Cllr Housden asked whether any further reports and updates would be coming to the Committee. Cllr Toye replied that there would be a report on the outcome of the interim year and any feedback from central government could be included in that.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and said that any future report could be in the format of a summary report and focus on key issues raised by the Committee.

The Chief Executive said that the issue for the Council was how it sought to position itself in respect of the formation of a new Mayoral Combined Authority, which was likely to commission a lot of business support across Norfolk and Suffolk. The articulation of the particular challenges of North Norfolk based businesses would be crucial.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their comments.

It was agreed that it may be beneficial to wait for the final report that was submitted to government and see if included the information that the committee were interested in.

The EGM clarified that the government had requested end of year figures by the end of May 2025. He said that the Committee had received far more information than that. Cllr Toye added that it was a complex process to capture outcomes – particularly as not all the applicants were businesses and community projects such as playgrounds were harder to assess.

The Chairman summarised the points raised by the Committee and asked the Portfolio Holder for his thoughts on the best way to bring this information back at a future date.

Cllr Toye suggested that a few businesses could be selected from across the sectors and when the next report came to the Committee, in a year's time, an update could be provided on the benefits that those businesses had seen from the funding provided and the impact on the local economy. He added that data was being collected for the future and this could also be shared. The EGM agreed with this approach.

Cllr Holliday suggested that a minimum threshold was established as a basis for review. Cllr Toye agreed but said that some of the social projects would be at the lower end of the funding scale.

Cllr Holliday suggested that a thematic approach was taken in the future in

anticipation of the new Mayoral Combined Authority. Cllr Toye replied that this could be the basis of a separate report. This report was reporting on outcomes of funding already provided. In response to a further question from Cllr Holliday regarding the amount of funding invested in specific sectors, Cllr Toye replied that it was hard to collate as many businesses received funding from a variety of sources and it would be hard to extrapolate this data.

It was proposed by Cllr N Housden, seconded by Cllr S Penfold and

RESOLVED

1. To note the report, thank officers for their work on producing an excellent report and request that the PH for Sustainable Growth reports back with an update position on a selection of businesses across a variety of sectors in 12 months' time, including an on the benefits achieved from the funding.
2. That a copy of the report received from central government is shared with the committee.

288 NORFOLK & WAVENEY INTEGRATED CARE BOARD CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE OUT OF HOURS GP SERVICE, NORWICH WALK-IN CENTRE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS SERVICE

The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to introduce this item.

The Chief Executive began by explaining that the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board was undertaking a public consultation on possible changes to the Out of Hours GP Service (which at present has bases in Fakenham and North Walsham); the Norwich Walk-In Centre and Vulnerable Adults Service. The consultation would run until 27th April and members were invited to comment and officers would prepare a response for submission.

The Chairman invited members to speak:

Cllr C Cushing spoke as Local member for Fakenham. He said that the data showed a significant drop in the number of patients using the out of hours GP service at Fakenham but there was no explanation as to why this was happening. He said that demand was there and queried whether it was not being promoted sufficiently and people were not aware of it. He said he would be very reluctant to see it removed.

Cllr V Holliday said that she had worked for the out of hours service at Fakenham for 15 years and she questioned the data and wondered where people were going for treatment. She wondered whether there was a GP available at Fakenham to see patients at weekends and queried the data. She added that it was likely to drive people to A&E to see a doctor. It was important to enhance the service rather than withdraw it.

Cllr S Penfold said that he supported the previous speakers and the questions around data and this was also relevant to the North Walsham service. He added that the town was earmarked in the Local Plan for substantial housing development and this should be taken into account.

The Chairman added that there was already considerable pressure on the ambulance service in rural areas and the out of hours service was more relevant in this context.

Cllr N Housden agreed with Cllr Cushing's comments and said that the out of hours service should be invested in rather than removed.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett said that the data could be skewed due to the Covid pandemic, with many people avoiding using medical services to ease pressure.

Cllr M Batey agreed with all of the comments so far. Local services were needed as A&E could not cope with the current numbers using it.

Cllr Holliday said that a theme was emerging of centralising services and the demographic of the district showed that demand for local services was increasing not reducing. She added that GPs were highly skilled and the pathway to treatment would be quicker if a patient was assessed by a GP.

Cllr Penfold agreed that the report was quite broad in its approach and did not make it clear that out of hours appointments related to emergencies rather than routine appointments. He agreed with Cllr Fitch-Tillett's observation about the impact of the pandemic on the data.

The Chief Executive said that he had noted the comments and would prepare a response to the consultation on behalf of the Council. He said that no one had commented on the Pharmacy First proposals and suggested that local pharmacies were already overstretched. Cllr Holliday agreed and said that it would mean that pharmacists would spend more time assessing patients rather than dispensing drugs and this would then have an impact on the services that they were able to provide.

Cllr Penfold said that the committee were not supportive of any of the proposed options and asked whether this could be reflected in the response.

The Chief Executive said that members could comment as they wished, as elected representatives of their communities. He said there was no doubt that healthcare provision had been heavily impacted in recent years but it was reasonable to raise concerns on behalf of residents.

Cllr Holliday encouraged members to respond to the consultation as individuals too.

It was proposed by Cllr C Cushing, seconded by Cllr S Penfold and

RESOLVED

That the Chief Executive prepares a response on behalf of the Council, including all the points raised by the Committee.

289 NHOSC 20 MARCH 2025

Cllr Holliday commented on the proposed changes to the Norwich Walk in Centre. She said that residents could use the walk-in centre if they couldn't access A&E. It was proposed that any money saved from closing the walk-in centre would be spent on urban based GP practices. Local residents would lose access to the walk-in centre and not gain from the increased spending on GP practices. She felt that this was not an acceptable option. It was agreed that these concerns would be added to the response to the Norfolk & Waveney ICB consultation. Members felt that the preferred option, if the centre was closed, was that the savings were spent across Norfolk and Waveney and not focussed on urban areas. Cllr Penfold said that he did

not support proposals to close the walk-in centre. It was a valuable resource and should be maintained.

290 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the Cabinet Work Programme.

291 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer updated members on the Action Tracker.

Cllr Holliday asked for clarification on when an update on the additional work on the Economic Strategy would come back to the committee for consideration.

Cllr Cushing said that some of the actions had been outstanding for over a year and he requested an update on when these would be dealt with. He added that it would be helpful to have a column on the matrix listing who was responsible for the action.

The Chairman requested that the tracker was included in future agendas.

Cllr Housden asked whether Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) could be included in the programme. The Chairman agreed and said that it could be added as a future item.

292 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 11.43 am.

Chairman