

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 23 April 2025 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:

Cllr T Adams	Cllr P Bailey
Cllr M Batey	Cllr K Bayes
Cllr D Birch	Cllr H Blathwayt
Cllr J Boyle	Cllr A Brown
Cllr S Bütikofer	Cllr C Cushing
Cllr P Fisher	Cllr T FitzPatrick
Cllr A Fletcher	Cllr W Fredericks
Cllr M Gray	Cllr M Hankins
Cllr C Heinink	Cllr V Holliday
Cllr N Housden	Cllr K Leith
Cllr G Mancini-Boyle	Cllr P Neatherway
Cllr L Paterson	Cllr S Penfold
Cllr P Porter	Cllr C Ringer
Cllr L Shires	Cllr E Spagnola
Cllr M Taylor	Cllr J Toye
Cllr K Toye	Cllr A Varley

Officers in attendance: The Chief Executive, the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Democratic Services and Governance Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs N Dixon, A Fitch-Tillett, P Heinrich, R Macdonald, J Punchard, L Vickers and L Withington.

2 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr L Shires referred to Agenda item 6: Permanent Pavement Licensing Policy & Setting of Fees and said she had a non-pecuniary interest to declare as she was a trustee of a charity that had a pavement licence.

Cllrs S Penfold and J Toye also declared that they were also a trustees of a charity with a pavement licence.

3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4 ADDITION OF BUDGET TO CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF VEHICLES AND CONTAINERS FOR A WEEKLY FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

The Chairman invited Cllr C Ringer, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Waste, to introduce this item.

Cllr Ringe began by explaining that the report set out the basis for capital expenditure to be added to the Capital Programme for 2025/26 for the purchase of vehicles and caddies required for the introduction of food waste collection services

within the area of North Norfolk District Council. This service was to be delivered by Serco on behalf of the Council. He added that the previous and current government had under-estimated the full cost of delivering these reforms and despite lobbying the amount of funding had not been increased. The majority of the expenditure related to the purchase of suitable vehicles and internal kitchen and kerbside caddies. A shortfall of up to £500k was anticipated between the funding allocated and the actual cost of procurement. The report, therefore, proposed that this shortfall was covered by the use of Environmental Health reserves. He reassured members that the reserve would be replenished via other sources of funding. He concluded that compliance with the new legislation was not optional and early procurement of vehicles was essential as other local authorities would also be placing orders. He confirmed that there was a project manager in post to oversee delivery and that there would be a briefing for all members as the project progressed and operational questions would probably be best addressed at a later date. He said that he would ask officers to circulate an LGA briefing on this topic to all members.

The Chairman invited members to speak:

Cllr C Cushing said he was concerned that it was not clear about the number of vehicles that were being purchased. He asked if the amount of waste generated per household had been calculated and if neighbouring councils who were already collecting food waste had been contacted for their insights. Cllr Ringer replied that there was no choice but to rollout the service and that some work had been undertaken in 2024 which suggested a projected figure for food waste and this was done in conjunction with Breckland District Council. He said that he would circulate this information if that was of benefit.

Cllr L Paterson asked if it was possible to opt out of the scheme as he did not want to be issued with caddies that he would not use. He then sought clarification about payment for the vehicles that were being procured and whether they could be paid for on delivery. Cllr Paterson asked where the waste would go and whether it would be deposited locally initially and then moved to a location further away. In conclusion, he queried running costs and whether consideration had been given to payment of a gate fee for food waste. Cllr Ringer replied that the market would dictate whether there was a gate fee and if the Council would receive an income from it and this would fluctuate according to demand. It was anticipated that there would be a tipping point locally but the location was yet to be determined, adding that the new burdens funding did not contribute towards depots. In response to the issuing of caddies, he said that it was a universal service that the Council had to provide and it was anticipated that every household would be issued with one, in the same way that recycling bins were provided to every property. Cllr Ringer said that it was likely that there would have to be an initial outlay or deposit but that the full balance would not be paid until the vehicles were delivered.

- 1.1. Cllr T FitzPatrick said that he agreed with Cllr Ringer that the Government should fund this project and he was concerned that the Council had to use its reserves to plug the shortfall. He was also concerned about the carbon impact of vehicles potentially driving around empty due to many households preferring to compost their food waste. Cllr FitzPatrick referred to section 2.3 of the report which stated 'additionally in March 2025 DEFRA has allocated a further £358,867.50 for the project management, procurement, communications and caddy delivery', and he said that he would like to see the funding allocated to communication to cover a campaign which would encourage people to waste less food and said that one option would be to purchase fewer vehicles, in line with the funding allocated by Government.

Cllr Ringer replied that he agreed with Cllr FitzPatrick's comments but there was a statutory requirement to do weekly food waste collections. He said that he agreed with promoting a reduction in food waste and expected this to be part of the communication campaign. He added that in 2027, there would be a new requirement to collect plastic films and this would further reduce the contents of the residual waste bin. Cllr FitzPatrick repeated his comment that it might be better to purchase the number of vehicles that could be paid for by government funding as it was likely they would be driving around the district, with very little waste on board and so many vehicles may not be required in the long term.

Cllr Ringer said that he would look into this. By comparison, Breckland District Council were seeking to procure 13 vehicles and work would undertaken to make the collection routes as efficient as possible.

Cllr N Housden referred to paragraph 3.3 and the current fleet of vehicles which was purchased in 2019. He said that he believed some of these vehicles to be in a poor state and queried whether consideration had been given to replacing existing vehicles. He also said he was concerned about a communications campaign that would ensure residents were fully educated on reducing food waste. Cllr Ringer replied that the Government had provided £97,485 of funding to cover the cost of a communication campaign. Regarding the existing fleet, he said that this was a separate issue and they were expected to last for the life of the contract.

Cllr Housden then referred to the estimated cost of the new vehicles and given the volatility in global markets, asked whether a contingency figure was included. Cllr Ringer confirmed that this was the case and 5% was included to cover this. He added that buying at a larger scale reduced costs but said that it was important to move quickly to get ahead of demand as this was a national scheme.

Cllr S Penfold said that he agreed with Cllr FitzPatrick's comments regarding an education campaign. He welcomed that the vehicles could run on hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) and said it was important to make residents aware of this. Cllr Ringer said that it was regrettable that government funding was not sufficient to give local authorities scope to look at exploring advanced technologies and fuels.

Cllr A Brown commented that the end game was to curtail greenhouse gases and reduce the amount of food going into landfill. It would give a boost to the Council's recycling rates and for this reason, the proposals should be welcomed, although it was regrettable that the funding was not sufficient to cover the full costs of implementation.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle said that he believed there was only 6 /7 years left on the current contract, which could lead to a substantial bill in the relatively near future. He reiterated Cllr FitzPatrick's comments about purchasing fewer vehicles initially and see what the uptake was. It was possible that the Council would be purchasing more vehicles than required. Cllr Ringer said that it was not an option. The government required the rollout of weekly food waste collections and the Council needed to purchase enough vehicles to undertake this. Time pressures due to demand in the market meant that orders needed to be placed now to ensure that the vehicles could start operating next year.

Cllr P Neatherway sought assurance that taking the balance in funding for new vehicles from the Environmental Health reserve would not impact on any projects that the reserve was originally intended to support. Cllr Ringer replied that this was the biggest change to environmental services provision in the district for 25 years and the reserve was intended for circumstances such as this. He said it was regrettable that the reserves had to be used to cover a shortfall but there was no choice.

Cllr Paterson queried the time pressures and said that the scheme did not need to be implemented until April 2026. Cllr Ringer said that the lead in time for procurement of vehicles was 12 months. Every council in the country had to procure vehicles and there would be a rush to market and that was why an extraordinary meeting had been called.

Cllr Housden asked if it was possible to pare the number back to 10 vehicles instead of 12.

The Chief Executive said that the decision was to approve a capital budget and there would then be a subsequent decision by Cabinet to procure the vehicles. A report could not be prepared for Cabinet until the capital budget had been approved, establishing a cost envelope.

Cllr W Fredericks summed up the proposals in simple terms, explaining that money needed to be allocated so that the Council could move quickly to procure the vehicles needed for food waste collection.

It was proposed by Cllr C Ringer, seconded by Cllr A Brown and

RESOLVED

To approve a budget of £1.956m be added to the capital programme for 2025/26 which will be funded by the new burdens funding provided by Government of £1.456m and the use of the Environmental Health reserve (to fund the balance) to allow the procurement of vehicles and equipment to commence.

9 members abstained.

5 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND CAPITAL BUDGET 2025-26

The Chairman invited Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, to introduce this item. He explained that this grant funding had come through too late to be included in the capital budget for the year, as the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had only confirmed the final amount of allocated funding on 27 March 2025. Cllr Toye said that the award to NNDC was for £437,259 of capital funding for the period 2025-26 and stemmed from a one year of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). He went onto say that it would be defrayed in accordance with the Government's programme rules and was considered a rural top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for which a programme was agreed by Cabinet in February 2025.

Cllr T Adams seconded the proposal and said that the Council had a good record of delivery for these programmes.

Cllr T FitzPatrick supported the proposals and asked if there was any more funding that might be coming forwards. He urged Cabinet to continue to lobby the Government whenever possible as rural areas were increasingly being 'starved' of funding.

Cllr Toye said that the Council would continue to access funding opportunities wherever possible and this included linking up with key partners.

Cllr C Cushing asked if there was any information on the projects that this funding would be spent on. Cllr Toye replied that the details hadn't been finalised but it was hoped that there could be a focus on the towns in the district because they supported the hinterland and this was an opportunity to work with the County Council as it was also seeking to support towns too. He said that he would keep members updated on progress.

It was proposed by Cllr J Toye, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

Unanimously **RESOLVED**

To approve that £437,259 be added to the capital programme for the Rural England Prosperity Fund and that will be funded by a specific grant allocation from Central Government that has to be fully spent during the financial year 2025-26.

6 PERMANENT PAVEMENT LICENSING POLICY & SETTING OF FEES

The Chairman invited Cllr P Fisher, Chairman of the Licensing Committee, to

introduce this item. He said that the Licensing Committee had met on 26th March to discuss the revised policy and resolved unanimously to recommend it to Council for approval.

It was proposed by Cllr P Fisher, seconded by Cllr V Holliday and

RESOLVED

To approve and adopt the Permanent Pavement Licensing Policy

7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

8 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 6.37 pm.

Chairman