

# COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of North Norfolk District Council held on 21 June 2017 at the Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer at 6.00 pm.

## Members Present:

Mrs S Arnold	Mr S Hester	Mr E Seward
Mr D Baker	Mr M Knowles	Mr S Shaw
Mr P Butikofer	Mr J Lee	Mr R Shepherd
Mrs S Butikofer	Mrs B McGoun	Mr B Smith
Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds	Mrs M Millership	Mr D Smith
Mrs H Cox	Mr W J Northam	Mr R Stevens
Mr N Dixon	Mrs J Oliver	Mrs V Uprichard
Mrs J English	Mrs G Perry-Warnes	Mrs K Ward
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Mr R Price	Mr A Yiasimi
Mr T FitzPatrick	Mrs M Prior	Mr D Young
Ms V R Gay	Mr J Punchard	
Mrs A Green	Mr J Rest	
Mrs P Grove-Jones	Mr R Reynolds	
Mr B Hannah		

**Officers in Attendance:** The Corporate Directors, the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Finance & Assets, the Media & Campaigns Officer and the Democratic Services Manager

**Press:** Present

## 22. PRAYERS

The Chairman invited Pastor Ian Savory, Lighthouse Community Church, Sheringham, to lead prayers. He began by asking Members to observe a minutes silence to remember the victims of the recent devastating fire at Grenfell Tower, Kensington.

## 23. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman began by commending the firefighters for their outstanding work in tackling the recent fire at Grenfell Tower in London. He said that all of the emergency services and volunteers involved should be praised.

The Chairman then spoke about his recent engagements. He said that he had visited Beeston Hall school on 25 May and been impressed by their drive to provide more bursaries. Then, on 1<sup>st</sup> June, he had been very proud to attend the Royal Garden party at Buckingham Palace which had taken place on a lovely warm day.

Finally, on 9<sup>th</sup> June, the Chairman attended the Mayor of Thetford's civic reception which had been very enjoyable.

## 24. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None received

**25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Mr N Coppack, Mrs A Fitch-Tillett, Mr V FitzPatrick, Mrs A Moore, Mr P W Moore, Ms B Palmer, Mr N Pearce, Mr P Rice, Mr N Smith, Mrs L Walker and Mr G Williams.

**26. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**27. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None

**28. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS**

None received.

**29. APPOINTMENTS**

The Leader informed Council that he had provided Democratic Services with a list of appointments to Committees.

The Leader of the Opposition confirmed that she had no changes to make at this time.

**RESOLVED**

To approve the appointments as notified to Democratic Services.

**30. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 05 JUNE 2017**

**a) AGENDA ITEM 10: 2016/17 OUTTURN REPORT (PERIOD 12 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Mr W Northam, introduced this item. He said that the report provided a final budget monitoring position for the 2016/17 year and because of good housekeeping the Council was in a good outturn position with a final overall underspend on the revenue account of just over £671,000. This was after allowing transfers to Earmarked reserves for current and known commitments.

There were no major variances. The overall underspend reported showed a General Fund surplus of just over £173,000 with a further transfer from the Collection Fund in relation to Business Rates of £498,000. An underspend on employee costs was attributable to vacant posts and the senior management restructure that occurred midway through the year. There were savings from car parks in terms of the contract and additional income along with external income generated by Eastlaw which had been partly offset by a reduction in planning fees received.

The Council was keen to support the development of an apprenticeship scheme. Therefore the report recommended the transfer of £300,000 from the surplus of the year to the Organisational Development Reserve to support this initiative. The balance was recommended for transfer to the Asset Management Reserve to support the Council's asset commercialisation agenda. The General Reserve would remain above the recommended balance.

Members were invited to speak:

Mr E Seward said that this was a very important report as it stated what the Council had actually done rather than what it hoped to achieve. He said that he was very pleased to see the support for developing an apprenticeship scheme, however, he did have some concerns about the level of the reserves, particularly the General Fund. Mr Seward then drew Members attention to the earmarked reserves and pointed out that in 3 years' time they would be at £18.3m compared to the current level of £20m. He agreed that the Council should be prudent but questioned whether it was a good approach to hold such high reserves.

Mr Northam replied that the Council monitored the reserves closely and had a responsibility to ensure that the earmarked reserves were used for their allocated purpose.

Members were advised that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had supported the recommendations.

### **RESOLVED to approve**

- a) The provisional outturn position for the general fund revenue account for 2016/17;
- b) The transfers to and from reserves as detailed within the report (and appendix C) along with the corresponding updates to the 2017/18 budget;
- c) Transfer part of the surplus of £300,000 to the Organisational Development Reserve to support the development of the apprenticeship scheme with the balance of £371,399 being transferred to the Asset Management Reserve;
- d) The financing of the 2016/17 capital programme as detailed within the report and at Appendix D;
- e) The balance on the General Reserve of £2.332 million;
- f) The updated capital programme for 2017/18 to 2020/21 and the associated financing of the schemes as outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix E.

### **b) AGENDA ITEM 11: TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Mr W Northam, introduced this item. He explained that it set out the Treasury Management activities actually undertaken during 2016/17 compared with the Treasury Management Strategy for the year. The report had been prepared to ensure the Council complied with the CIPFA Treasury Management and Prudential Codes. Treasury activities for the year had been carried out in accordance with the CIPFA Code and the Council's Treasury Strategy.

Global political events in the last year had resulted in heightened market volatility but the Council's focus, when investing, had always been on security and liquidity rather than rates of interest. Mr Northam commended the prudent work of the Technical Accountant.

Members were advised that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had supported the recommendations.

### **RESOLVED that**

The Treasury Management Annual Report and Prudential Indicators for 2016/17 be approved.

### **c) AGENDA ITEM 12: DEBT RECOVERY 2016/17**

The item was introduced by the portfolio holder, Mr W Northam. He informed Council that it was an annual report detailing the Council's collection performance and debt management arrangements for 2016/2017.

Mr Northam said that the Council took all reasonable steps to collect monies due. The revenues and benefits team had collected 98.7% of Council Tax and 99.36% of NNDR according to year-end figures for 2016/17. The Council Tax figure was the highest percentage collected for the past 10 years and the second highest ever collected by North Norfolk District Council. The NNDR figure was the highest percentage collected for the past nine years and the second highest ever collected by North Norfolk District Council. The figures meant that the Council had beaten its collection targets of 98.5% and 99.2% respectively.

The main reason for debts being written off was because of a debtor going into liquidation or absconding. Mr Northam concluded by commending the staff on their continued hard work.

Members were advised that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had supported the recommendations.

## **RESOLVED**

To approve the annual report giving details of the Council's write-offs in accordance with the Council's Debt Write-Off Policy and performance in relation to revenues collection.

### **d) AGENDA ITEM 16: DEEP HISTORY COAST PROJECT**

The report was introduced by Mr N Dixon – Portfolio Holder for Business and Economic Development and Tourism. He explained that the project envisaged the coast as a 'living landscape museum' and a bid had been submitted to the Coastal Communities Fund (administered by the DCLG) for £2,010,000 to develop and implement it over the next two years. Unfortunately, the funding application was unsuccessful, although there could be an option to make a further application at a later date. Mr Dixon said that all of the partners involved in the project's development had expressed disappointment about the outcome of the funding bid and had shown their continuing support for the project and consideration had been given as to how it could be taken forward on a reduced scale. It was therefore proposed that there was full engagement with the local community through a consultation to gauge the level of support and that £500k was allocated to implement some key elements of the project.

Mrs S Butikofer said that she was supportive of the scheme and was pleased to see that it was being taken forward. She added that showing continued commitment could ensure the future success of the project.

Mr T FitzPatrick said that the Council's ability to fund large scale projects such as this was possible because of money held in reserves.

Members were advised that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had supported the recommendations.

## **31. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 JUNE 2017**

There were no further recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 June 2017.

## **31. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GOVERNANCE, RISK & AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr M Knowles, introduced this item in the absence of the Chairman. He explained that the Council's governance framework comprised the systems and processes, and culture and values by which the authority was directed and controlled and the activities through which it accounts to and engages with the community. The Annual

Governance Statement was a public statement of how the Council achieved this. He explained that after reviewing the Statement, The Committee agreed to update paragraphs 4.2.9 and 4.2.10 as outlined in the minutes of the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

## **RESOLVED**

To receive the Annual Governance Statement along with the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance

### **32. TO RECEIVE THE APPROVED MINUTES OF THE UNDERMENTIONED COMMITTEES**

The minutes of the meetings below were noted as a correct record;

- 1) Cabinet – 08 June 2017
- 2) Development Committee – 13 April 2017
- 3) Development Committee – 11 May 2017
- 4) Governance, Risk & Audit Committee – 28 March 2017
- 5) Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 12 April 2017

### **33. REPORTS, UPDATES AND BRIEFINGS FROM CABINET**

The Chairman asked whether any member wished to put a question to the Leader or a member of Cabinet. Mrs G Perry-Warnes said that she wished to ask the following question of the Leader:

‘An article in the Sunday Times entitled ‘ Refugee children hunted in Calais’ makes reference to a claim by the Home Office that the number of child migrants entering Britain under the Dubs scheme has been cut because local councils did not have the capacity to accommodate them. Councils have claimed that they were never consulted. Please can the Leader confirm whether NNDC was consulted – and if so, what the response was? Also, if the Council was asked in the future whether we would take child refugees what would our response be?’

The Leader replied that he had personally taken great interest in the refugee problem. At the end of March, together with the Leader of the Opposition, he had met with the representative of the East of England Migration Partnership to discuss refugee programmes at national level. He said that the Council could only participate in such schemes with the support of Norfolk County Council as they were the first tier authority. He added that Members were aware of some of the problems regarding ‘looked after children’ at County level. Mr FitzPatrick concluded by saying that NNDC had joined with other local authorities to support the repatriation of refugees to larger settlements as rural areas lacked the support required for traumatised children.

Mrs Perry-Warnes replied that refugee children were currently living in such appalling conditions that she did not feel that a rural location was a problem as long as it was a safe place. Mr FitzPatrick said that a structured migration partnership was overseeing this and it was important that it was managed through the proper channels. He added that the East of England was committed to taking in its fair share of refugees.

Mr FitzPatrick then spoke about recent events that he had attended. He said that he was delighted to be at the opening of the new heritage exhibition in St Nicholas’ church, North Walsham which had received a grant from the Big Society Fund.

He had also been very pleased to be asked to present certificates to the students involved in the North Norfolk Sporting Centre of Excellence presentation evening. He said that together with the Portfolio Holder, Ms M Prior, he hoped the Council would congratulate all the

youngsters involved and thank Greshams School, the coaches, the parents and NNDC staff for their support.

**34. QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS**

None

**35. NOTICE OF MOTION**

None

**36. PRIVATE BUSINESS**

None

The meeting concluded at 6.47 pm.

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Chairman