

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2018 in the Council Chamber, North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer at 9.30 am.

Members Present:

Committee: Cllr S Hester (Chairman)

Cllr S Bütikofer	Cllr N Lloyd
Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds	Cllr R Reynolds
Cllr J English	Cllr E Seward
Cllr V Gay	Cllr B Smith
Cllr M Knowles	Cllr N Smith (S)

Officers in Attendance: The Head of Finance & Assets, the Head of Economic and Community Development, the Chief Technical Accountant, the Property, Project and Programme Manager, the Policy and Performance Management Officer and the Democratic Services Officer.

Members in Attendance: Cllr J Rest, Cllr N Pearce, Cllr R Price (Portfolio Holder for Property and Asset Commercialisation), Cllr R Shepherd, Cllr B Hannah and Cllr N Dixon (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development).

In Attendance for item 10: Sarah Jones, Assistant Director, Early Help and Prevention, Norfolk County Council, Tim Eyres, Head of Integrated Commissioning, Norfolk County Council, Mr G Aitcheson, Mayor of Fakenham.

51. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr K Ward and Cllr A Fitch-Tillett.

52. SUBSTITUTES

Cllr N Smith for Cllr A Fitch-Tillett.

53. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 September 2018 were agreed as an accurate record after the following amendment had been identified:

Minute 40, Items of Urgent Business, Further questions from Overview & Scrutiny Members, item 5 should read: "Cllr V Gay said that she had been listening carefully to the previous comments and she now felt that there was an underlying secondary thread to do with *some* costs. She added that she felt the matter needed scrupulous examination".

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

56. PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

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

None received.

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

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendation to Cabinet, following consideration of the call-in of Agenda item 15, Cabinet 03 September: 'Egmore Business Zone Project Update'

'To recommend to Cabinet that the business case for the Egmore Development Zone is passed to an outside agency for stress testing of the risk assumptions and to give advice as to whether this investment is a prudent one for the Council.'

The matter was considered by Cabinet at the meeting on 01 October 2018. Cabinet did not accept the recommendation.

59. TRANSFORMING OUR CHILDREN'S CENTRES - CONSULTATION

A presentation was made by Sarah Jones, Assistant Director, Early Help and Prevention, Norfolk County Council and Tim Eyres, Head of Integrated Commissioning, Norfolk County Council. They explained that Children's Centres were the subject of an 8-week consultation which was now in its 5th week.

Presentation

a) Why change is considered necessary:

- i. Since Children's Centres were started 17 years ago early education had been introduced.
- ii. The Healthy Child Programme had been introduced.
- iii. Funding had changed as had the way that the County Council was funded. At the beginning, central government was funding Children's Centres. That funding was no longer available.
- iv. Norfolk County Council had allocated £5m for Children's Centres. This was a reduction from the current £8.4m but was still a significant amount.
- v. Statutory guidance was that local authorities should provide Children's Centres but there was no specific model for how this should be achieved.

b) History:

- i. The first Children's Centres in Norfolk were opened in 2000. The aim was to support families in areas of greatest deprivation.
- ii. The number of Centres had expanded and there were now 53 across the county. In the last 7 years contracts had been delivered by 12 different providers. This was a complex arrangement and impacted on the way the service was delivered.

c) Aims of the proposed service:

- i. To bring the service out of buildings and into the community for families who needed it most.
- ii. To help community groups and parents offer local activities and support groups.
- iii. To make it easier for families to access information they needed by providing better online and digital services, including a portal providing good quality information.
- iv. To change ways of working to ensure that service delivery was appropriate for today's families.

d) Further comments from Sarah Jones and Tim Eyres:

- i. Working with families in their own homes could be really powerful. Sometimes, however, e.g. in cases of domestic abuse, this was not appropriate.
- ii. There were 53 designated Children's Centres. Each one was different and could be housed in purpose-built premises or libraries, church buildings etc.
- iii. The Centres already delivered outreach.
- iv. There were a lot of gaps in North Norfolk. If wider use was made of community venues such as village halls and GP surgeries it would make the gaps smaller.
- v. Delivery needed to target areas of greatest deprivation which existed across the County. This included rural deprivation.
- vi. Proposed delivery was from seven Early Childhood and Family bases across Norfolk. Holt was suggested for North Norfolk. The consultation asked people to consider if this was the right location for it. It would not mean that users would have to travel to Holt to access it because there would be outreach venues.

e) What would the proposals mean for the existing buildings?

- i. Consultation was ongoing with various organisations about how they might be used. The best outcome would be if a childcare provider took on an existing building and that Children's Centre services could continue to be offered from it. This would also be cost-effective for Norfolk County Council.
- ii. The aim was to spend more on staffing and less on buildings. It was staff, not buildings, which made a difference to families. However, it would be good if all 53 sites had services for children aged 0 – 5. This was also part of the public consultation.

Public drop-in events had been set up, including one for North Norfolk on 23 October at Merchant's Place, Cromer. Local Members were very welcome to attend. To date, the drop-ins had been well attended and families had been represented.

Questions and Discussion by Members

a) Cllr R Reynolds commended the presentation but expressed concern that Fakenham had a large catchment area which had poor public transport provision. He asked that there should be a hub in Fakenham. Other Fakenham Members, Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds and Cllr J Rest were in agreement. The following questions and points were raised by Cllr Rest:

- i. Was Fakenham regarded as an area of deprivation? Sarah and Tim said that it was and that they would expect the service to be delivered there. There could be a debate about designating Fakenham as a base. Identification of bases was influenced by issues such as who owned the site and did it have sufficient space for staff. Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds suggested that Fakenham Connect would be an ideal venue.
- ii. The presentation seemed to suggest that disadvantaged families only lived in areas

of deprivations. Sarah and Tim agreed that families in need of extra support didn't just live in areas of deprivation. Needs could often be hidden in rural communities. However it was essential to have capacity in high need as well as low need areas.

- iii. There should be targeted, rather than universal, services. Sarah and Tim explained that there would be more emphasis on targeted services, aiming at families who were struggling but not in need of social care because there was a gap in that area at the moment. Investment in centres should be proportionate to need.
- b) Cllr Rest asked how facilities would be provided if centres were closed. In response to a question from Sarah Jones about any other places in Fakenham where families tended to meet, he said that the Children's Centre was the main venue. Cllr R Reynolds agreed and pointed to the large rural catchment area for Fakenham. Sarah said that she would feed these considerations into the consultation. She asked Members from wards that didn't have Children's Centres to consider where families tended to meet. Mr R Reynolds said that this could be hard to quantify.
- c) Cllr E Seward said that, as a Member of Norfolk County Council, he had visited the Children's Centre in North Walsham to gain practical understanding of the work that was done there. Things had moved on since Surestart began but he had been told at North Walsham that the majority of provision was for children aged between 0 – 2 who had been referred by various agencies. The building at North Walsham was used all the time as the majority of work was done in outreach buildings. This had potential for making savings but where would all the play equipment be stored if the service was based in a church hall or library? The North Walsham Building was also used for meetings with vulnerable parents who needed to be seen outside the home. Where else could they go? Cllr Seward also said that if community groups were formed some parents wouldn't be able to afford to pay. Sarah Jones confirmed that officers had been out to look at the North Walsham building but Mr Seward expressed concern that Norfolk County Council Members hadn't been consulted about other facilities that might be available in their wards. Cllr S Bütikofer supported this concern.
- d) Regarding the proposed £5m budget, Cllr N Lloyd asked what the allocation had been previously and what percentage of cut had been made. He also asked how deprivation was quantified. North Walsham was the most populous town in North Norfolk and was likely to have another 1000 homes built under the Local Plan. He requested that this should also be fed in to the consultation. Tim Eyres replied that North Walsham was a high demand area for support but that need existed in all communities. Historically the budget had been £10m. Last year it had been £8.4m. From September 2019 it would be £5m.
- e) Cllr N Smith expressed concern about low basic educational skills exhibited by some young children. Sarah Jones said that this was a good comment and showed the importance of early childhood intervention. Support in the home with early learning helped children achieve milestones.
- f) Cllr S Bütikofer, who was also County Councillor for Holt, told the Committee that a lot of people in her ward were concerned about the impact on the town if it was the venue for the only Children's Centre in North Norfolk. Tim Eyres explained that Holt would be the base and that there would be outreach venues and therefore not a massive increase in people coming into the town.
- g) Cllr Bütikofer also expressed concern about privacy issues regarding weighing babies and occasions when people were talking to families in public places like libraries. Tim Eyres replied that it was recognised that not every village hall, library etc would be suitable but that there was a wide range of quality community spaces. Modern advice on weighing babies was that they should be clothed. The procedure had been happening in libraries for some time and was appreciated by families. Libraries were in support of being used as community spaces.
- h) Regarding digital provision, Cllr Bütikofer pointed out that there were areas in the District that were poorly served for broadband and mobile phone coverage and that this should be taken into account. Tim Eyres emphasised that support would be provided in a variety of ways, not just online.

- i) Cllr Bütikofer said she was also concerned that the proposals involved passing costs from County to District. Tim Eyres believed the emphasis was more on partnership working, sharing costs and opportunities.
- j) Cllr B Hannah, recalling the Youth Service, said that change was inevitable but he sought assurance that there would be sufficient provision and training to provide support for all families who needed it. Tim Eyres said that the premise of spending on services rather than buildings would ensure that money was spent on frontline services. At this stage it couldn't be known for certain how many staff there would be but they wouldn't be able to do everything, so it would be necessary for local groups to be trained to take on some tasks. Sarah Jones added that training had also been raised as a need by other organisations who had been consulted and would be included in the response.
- k) Cllr N Pearce commented that problems could arise if, because of pressure of work, staff were unable to keep an appointment with a family at their home.
- l) Cllr J Rest reminded Members that Children's Centre services were for all families, not just those with specific needs.
- m) Mr G Aitcheson, Mayor of Fakenham, was invited to speak. He asked if the amount of money that might be saved on buildings had been quantified and if it would be spent on staffing. He suggested approaching town and parish councils about suitable buildings. Sarah Jones replied that budgets and needs had been assessed to ensure that investment was made in frontline staff rather than buildings, overheads and the 12 different management fees. An audit of assets was currently taking place. Tim Eyres explained that the team was keen to engage with town and parish councils and were following up to ensure that they had all received the relevant information.
- n) Cllr R Price, who was also a Member of Norfolk County Council, said that it was important to realise that the proposed changes were to improve delivery. The aim was to provide the best service for families.

The Chairman, thanking Sarah Jones and Tim Eyres, said that it was good that Members had discussed the proposals so robustly. He urged Members to respond to the consultation and to encourage their constituents to do the same.

At the suggestion of Cllr S Bütikofer it was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr R Reynolds and

RESOLVED

To recommend to Norfolk County Council to review if effective support can be delivered from one building per District; and if it would be more cost-effective to have more hubs.

60. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The report, which had been brought to the Committee for pre-scrutiny, presented an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23. The strategy has been updated to support the Corporate Plan for the period 2015 to 2019.

- a) The financial position for 2019/20 was currently showing a deficit of c£319k with ongoing funding gaps year on year reaching c£2.1m in 2022/23. The MTFS identified the key themes and priorities for the Council in seeking to reduce the forecast budget gap.
- b) There were a number of uncertainties regarding future funding and expenditure. These included:
 - i. The National Pay Review
 - ii. The impact of Brexit
 - iii. Low interest rates
 - iv. Settlement funding

- v. New Homes bonus
 - vi. Revenue Support Grant
 - vii. Business Rates Retention
 - viii. Local factors, e.g. income from car parks, which the Council could not control.
- c) The Strategy included a number of work schemes that had been ongoing for some time:
- i. Property Investment and Asset Commercialisation
 - ii. Digital Transformation
 - iii. Shared Services, collaboration and selling services
 - iv. Growing Business Rates and NHB
 - v. Council Tax – this continued to be a strong theme. Last year’s increase had not generated much income for NNDC.
 - vi. Continuous review of new appointments.
- d) Projections took into account the known pressures on the budget.
- e) A deficit of £319,000 was forecast instead of a much larger amount which had been forecast before some uncertainties had been clarified.
- f) £84,000 savings from Phase 2 of Digital Transformation had been introduced.
- g) The option of borrowing had been postponed for a year but there was still work to be done to achieve a balanced budget.
- h) Fair funding: grants worth £850,000 would be lost. The Chief Technical Accountant had done significant work on this using a model provided by Pixel. It was a fair assessment, although the figure was expected to change.
- i) The worst case scenario would be to consider using reserves but it was preferable to increase income.
- j) The deficit in 4 years’ time was forecast to be £2m.

The Head of Finance & Assets said that more work would be done on the MTFS in February. At the end of October there would be individual Group sessions for Members to discuss efficiency savings. Support would be provided by the relevant officers from the Finance Team and Democratic Services. Members were encouraged to attend.

The Finance Team had aimed to make the MTFS document more accessible this year and Members’ feedback would be welcomed. The Head of Finance & Assets would provide a full breakdown of reserves for the final report to Full Council.

Members’ Questions and Discussion

- a) Cllr V Gay said it was an extremely good report, although she had missed some of the reserves analysis. She told the Committee that she had been a Member of the Council Tax Support Working Party. She expressed concern that consideration was being given to increasing the contribution of those on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme to 5%. The Head of Finance & Assets explained that 33% of the population of North Norfolk was over 65. This would impact on working families if the scheme was changed. Members of the Council Tax Support Working Party had believed the Scheme should be frozen so as not to further disadvantage families and impact on staff. The 5% reduction was included in the report because it had been discussed but it was not a course of action which the Head of Finance & Assets would recommend.
- b) Cllr N Lloyd commended the report. He asked where the savings regarding Digital Transformation had been made and said that he hadn’t received a written response to a previous question.
- c) Cllr Lloyd asked a question why the report forecast that the Waste Contract would cost an extra £700,000 per year. The Head of Finance & Assets explained that the figure was based on the contract extension and adjustment back up to the market level. At this stage it was not possible to know the outcome of the joint procurement.

- d) Cllr E Seward thanked the Head of Finance & Assets for written responses to advance questions. He asked if he was correct to assume that there would be no return from Second Homes Council Tax from April 2019 and that NNDC would not be making any grant applications to Norfolk County Council. The Head of Finance & Assets replied that we hadn't lost the opportunity yet but it was unlikely that we'd get Second Homes Council Tax back.
- e) Cllr Seward asked if the forecast of an increase in fees and charges meant that car park charges would be increased. The Head of Finance & Assets said there were no plans to make an increase, although there was potential to discuss season tickets. Some charges were set by statute and some by central government. However, beach huts had the potential to generate additional income.
- f) Responding to a question from Cllr S Hester, the Head of Finance & Assets said that the Waste Management Procurement involved an open contract for which the current contractor could tender. The market was very interested and it was expected that 5 – 8 providers would tender.
- g) Cllr J Rest expressed disappointment that the authority had employed Gleeds but hadn't done anything with their recommendations. The Head of Finance & Assets explained that the focus had been on the Grove Lane, Holt, proposal because it was a positive outcome and would generate a good revenue return. The Highfield Road, Fakenham, site had been considered by Cabinet and the decision taken to surface it as a car park. The proposal to build a hotel at Cadogan Road, Cromer, had caused significant local opposition and the Council had not been able to support it, although valuable lessons had been learned about engagement with the public. Beach Road, Wells, had presented challenges in reaching an agreement with the community despite the Council's aspirations. Cllr V Gay asked if the schemes had originated from Gleeds or officers. The Head of Finance & Assets said that it had been a combination of both. Beach Road and Grove Lane had long been subjects for discussion, but Cadogan Road originated directly from Gleeds.

RESOLVED

To commend the report to Cabinet.

61. BEACH HUT AND CHALET REVIEW

An updated report was provided for Members.

The report was introduced by the Chairman of the Beach Huts and Chalets Task & Finish Group, Cllr M Knowles. It was the culmination of 6 months intensive but enjoyable work which, he hoped, filled the Committee's remit. The review had been very comprehensive and offered practical and achievable solutions for the future. Cllr Knowles commended the Property, Project and Programme Manager for her tireless and knowledgeable support.

The Head of Economic and Community Development said it had been a pleasure to work with Members. The review had first arisen from Full Council and had looked at locations as well as fees and charges. Online booking had already been introduced along with easier methods for returning keys. The other recommendations would be taken forward.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for all their work.

Questions and Discussion by Members

- a) Cllr J Rest commended the report as very informative and well-written.
- b) Cllr R Reynolds said that it was an excellent report. It demonstrated the importance of marketing and that it should be taken forward in other projects.

- c) Cllr B Smith thanked the Property, Project and Programme Manager for her hard work and knowledgeability. Members had learned a lot and thoroughly enjoyed the work.
- d) Cllr S Bütikofer said that it was an excellent report but that she had concerns about possible provision of beach huts at East Runton and Weybourne. Provision at East Runton would require engagement with the parish council and provision at Weybourne would exacerbate the problem of no public toilets.
- e) Cllr R Price, Portfolio Holder for Property and Asset Commercialisation, said that the report had opened his eyes to the fact that only 60% occupation was achieved in the summer months. The recommendations should improve this. He would like to investigate the cost of providing a toilet at Weybourne, possibly using a tank, which might be funded from beach hut revenue. He welcomed the report and thanked everyone for their hard work. Cllr M Knowles explained that Weybourne had been included as a potential bigger project, and as part of the Deep History Trail. Cllr Bütikofer agreed that the project could work at Weybourne as part of the Deep History Trail.
- f) The Head of Economic and Community Development explained that the updated version of the report included paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 which demonstrated that the Council didn't just provide chalets for economic reasons but to provide amenities to local people and visitors. Innovative ways should be found to fund asset improvements, e.g. beach huts and toilets, liaising with communities.
- g) Cllr M Knowles said that, although it was a 5 year strategy, it would be pertinent for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review it annually.
- h) Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds reminded the Committee that she had originally asked about not charging for electricity at some of the chalets. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that not many chalets had electricity provided. The review sought to take a more market-related view of charging, depending on the standard of the chalet and its location. Electricity would be a significant improvement to a lot of chalets and would improve the offer.
- i) Cllr Claussen-Reynolds commended the use of beach baskets – strandkorb - which were widely used in seaside towns in Schleswig-Holstein.
- j) Cllr V Gay supported the idea of beach hut provision at Cart Gap. It would be good for coastal walkers. She also welcomed the ideas of beach huts being a year-round pleasure and provision of riverside chalets. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that Cart Gap presented an opportunity because there was a good cafe, car parking and use by walkers. In general, chalets were available for let at low rents in the winter months, but were shuttered. It would be necessary to devise a way for the hirer to take down the shutters.
- k) Cllr N Pearce said it was amazing how many ideas had arisen from the work of the Beach Huts and Chalets Task & Finish Group. He hoped they would all be realised.

RESOLVED

- 1. To recommend to Cabinet to delegate to the Head of Economic & Community Development, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Asset Management and the portfolio holder for Leisure, Culture, Health and Customer Services, to implement the changes detailed in this report.**
- 2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the Beach Hut and Chalet Strategy annually.**

62. MANAGING PERFORMANCE Q1 2018 – 19

In the absence of the Leader, the report was introduced by Cllr R Price. He informed the Committee that an excellent start had been made in the first quarter with all actions on

track and highlighted the performance of the Economic Development Team and a huge increase in digital transactions.

Questions and Discussion by Members

- a) Work with Norfolk Waste Partnership to promote behaviour change for domestic waste where appropriate for North Norfolk: the Head of Environmental Health would be asked to provide a written response to a question from Cllr S Bütikofer regarding the NWP Comms Officer vacancy.
- b) Speed of processing change in circumstances for housing benefit and council tax support claims: Cllr Bütikofer asked that provision be made so that there were no delays in future years.
- c) Business plan for provision of solar panels on the Council Offices: Cllr N Lloyd urged that this should be expedited in order to reduce bills. The Head of Finance & Assets said he had talked to a provider and would be bringing a report to the Committee.
- d) Community Sports Hub: Cllr Lloyd expressed concern that outreach facilities were not mentioned. The Head of Economic and Community Development explained that the Leisure and Locality Services Manager was working with satellite clubs. The challenge was to make the improvements within the budget for the whole project. A report would be brought to Full Council for Members' consideration.
- e) Percentage of responses to fly-tipping and other pollution complaints: Cllr Lloyd observed that specific examples would be helpful for Members.
- f) Household recycling: Cllr Lloyd was concerned that there wasn't a target. The Chairman asked for it to be fed back to officers that the Committee would prefer to see figures. The Policy and Performance Management Officer asked Members to consider what figures they would like to see.
- g) Long term empty homes: Cllr Lloyd expressed concern that the situation had worsened.
- h) In response to a question from Cllr M Knowles, the Head of Economic and Community Development explained that the number of visitors to the District came from a provider who analysed data from various sources and used a robust calculation system with the same formula every year to ensure consistency. It was encouraging that more visitors were coming to Norfolk than to Cornwall.
- i) Number of businesses engaged via events: Cllr S Bütikofer expressed concern about lowering targets because they weren't being met and questioned why further large launch marketing events were not anticipated for 2018/19. The Head of Economic and Community Development said it was because the Council's business engagement consultants had changed their methodology and that the item about networking events had been provided for information only.

RESOLVED

To note this report, welcomes the progress being made and endorses the actions being taken by management where there are areas of concern.

63. MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE WORKING GROUP

The Group was due to meet on 05 November 2018 at 10.00 pm to consider the sifting process.

RESOLVED

To note the update

64. THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer would circulate the report and invite any questions from Members.

RESOLVED

To note the Cabinet Work Programme

65. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Democratic Services Officer provided an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. The Head of Finance & Assets would be bringing a report on Toilet Opening Hours to the Committee in November. This had arisen from a resolution made by the Committee in September 2018: **“Minute 44, Public Convenience Strategy: RESOLVED that urgent priority is given to the toilets in West Runton and Cart Gap being kept open during the forthcoming winter period”**.

In addition Members had, at the current meeting (Minute 61) resolved to review the Beach Hut and Chalet Strategy on an annual basis.

RESOLVED

- 1. To add Toilet Opening Hours to the Work Programme for November, subject to further information being sought from Officers.**
- 2. To review the Beach Hut and Chalet Strategy annually.**

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm

Chairman