

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th January 2019 in the Council Chamber, North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer at 9.30 am.

Members Present:

Committee: Cllr S Hester (Chairman)

Cllr V Gay	Cllr B Smith
Cllr M Knowles	Cllr P Grove-Jones
Cllr N Pearce	Cllr P Bütikofer
Cllr J English	Cllr N Smith
Cllr R Reynolds	Cllr D Young (S)

Officers in Attendance: The Corporate Director (SB), the Head of Legal Services, the Head of Finance and Asset Management, the Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Scrutiny), the Democratic Services Manager, the Communications and PR Manager (EF), the Communications and PR Manager (LC).

Members in Attendance: Cllr J Rest, Cllr R Shepherd, Cllr R Price, Cllr H Cox (portfolio holder for Leisure, Culture and Licensing), Cllr J Lee, Cllr D Baker, Cllr E Seward (portfolio holder for Finance, Revenues & Benefits) and Cllr S Bütikofer (Leader).

97. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds and Cllr B Hannah.

98. SUBSTITUTES

Cllr D Young for Cllr B Hannah.

99. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

100. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12th December 2018 were signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

The first member of the public invited to speak during item 12 – Councillor Call for Action; name be corrected to Mr Crocker.

101. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

103. PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

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

None received.

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

None received.

106. COMMUNICATIONS TEAM UPDATE ON CORPORATE BRANDING PROJECT

The PR and Communications Team had provided a written update to the Committee that was included in the agenda. They then outlined the purpose of the re-branding project and explained its implementation.

Questions and Discussion

The Communications and PR Manager (EF) stated that so far the rebranding project had been successful in improving the wider image of NNDC. He added that whilst the project had created a significant amount of work for the Communications Team, they were proud of the outcome and felt that NNDC now had a more professional image as a result of the project.

Cllr P Grove-Jones asked when the last rebranding had taken place. The Communications and PR Manager (LC) replied that a rebranding project like this had not taken place before. The Corporate Director (SB) added that the brand that underpins the imagery of the Council had been introduced in 1995, and the changes in the use of this imagery that had taken place since its introduction necessitated the need for the rebranding project to take place. Members were informed that the NNDC logo had generally remained the same, but had been simplified for better use across a wider range of formats. Cllr P Grove-Jones stated that £12,000 had been spent on the project so far, and asked if there were any more costs expected. The Communications and PR Manager (LC) replied that £12,000 was the overall cost of the project, and any further work and associated costs would be covered by the Communications Team budget.

Cllr J English asked whether there were any images available for the Committee to see the new branding. The Communications and PR Manager (LC) replied that she did not have any images at hand, but would ensure that these were sent out to Members after the meeting.

Cllr D Baker asked what the cost benefit of the project would be to the Council, taking into account that the budget was upcoming. The Communications and PR Manager (LC) reiterated that any ongoing costs would be met by the Communications Team, and that the main benefit of the project would be improving the identity of NNDC and helping to identify ownership of the Council's valued assets such as Cromer Pier and its leisure facilities. The Corporate Director (SB) offered further clarification that there would be no further substantial costs as all further rebranding would take place as and when required, as opposed to an exhaustive process over a short time period. He added that over twenty-three years the NNDC logo had been used in up to eighteen different ways, and it was

therefore necessary to implement a uniform logo and branding, especially online, in order to maintain a consistent image. Following a question from Cllr D Baker it was confirmed that signage would not be replaced immediately.

Cllr D Young stated that he was pleased to see the BBC ident over the Christmas period that was filmed on Cromer Pier, then asked if the logo on desktops would change eventually, and if there was any timescale for completing the project. The Communications and PR Manager (LC) confirmed that they would change over time, and that the Council's social media accounts had already been changed. She added that it was difficult to pin point an exact completion date as most items were being updated when required rather than immediately. Cllr D Young asked if this meant that the project could take years to complete, to which the Communications and PR Manager (LC) replied that she hoped this would not be the case.

In response to a question from Cllr D Young, it was confirmed that the Communications Team managed the Council's corporate social media accounts. Cllr D Young then asked for clarification on the purpose of the newly introduced Inphase system. The Communications and PR Manager (LC) replied that it was new performance management software that the Council would use to monitor its performance in key areas.

Cllr J Lee stated that he approved of the rebranding, as it gave the Council a more professional image that could help to both identify services that NNDC was responsible for, and encourage more professional staff such as planners to join the organisation.

Cllr J Rest referred to the Council's public car parks that are managed by KL&WNBC, and asked if the NNDC logo was across all locations. The Corporate Director (SB) informed Members that the logo was only present in some car parks and agreed that more could be done to promote the Council in other locations. He then suggested that this could be something that the Council could look to improve when procuring a new contract for the management of the district's parking facilities. The Chairman agreed that branding was important to the organisation, and that it must be updated for the Council to stay relevant.

107. REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES

In the absence of the Elections Officer, the Corporate Director (SB) introduced the report and informed Members that this was a periodic review required by law. He stated that for the majority of polling places across the district, there were no changes proposed, but the purpose of presenting the Report to the Committee, was to resolve the few locations where issues had arisen.

Questions and Discussion

The Corporate Director (SB) informed Members that when looking at the attached spreadsheet the proposals printed in red had received objections, whereas those in blue/green had been positively received.

The first polling station to be introduced was Ludham, where a proposal had been made to change the location of the polling station from the Methodist Church, which was centrally located in the village, to the village hall, which had better parking facilities but was not centrally located. It was stated that due to the location of the proposed new site, the Parish Council were not supportive of the change.

The next proposal was for Wells-next-the-sea, in which the new Maltings building had been suggested as a more suitable venue as it was fully accessible. Members were informed that the Town Council has raised objections to the proposal due to the limited parking

available near the Maltings. They suggested that the polling station should remain at the Methodist Church that had extensive nearby parking available at Stearmans Yard car park.

East and West Beckham were introduced together as it was proposed that the polling station for both parishes would change from the Wheatsheaf public house, which had become increasingly expensive, to Bodham village hall. The Corporate Director (SB) informed Members that there had only been a single objection to the proposal.

The final proposal that had received objections was for Matlaske, where it was proposed that the polling station be moved to Little Barningham village hall, as there were numerous issues with the existing site that included trip hazards, poor lighting, drainage troughs in the entrance and poor access. Whilst strong objections had been received from the Parish Council regarding the proposal, Members were strongly advised of the need to carry-out the change with images shown to highlight the significant inadequacies of the current venue.

Cllr V Gay raised a question regarding the possible use of temporary polling stations at Victory Gym in North Walsham. She stated that she did support the proposal, but wanted clarification on what constituted a temporary polling station. The Corporate Director (SB) replied that this would be a mobile building such as a porta cabin. He stated however, that these were in relatively short supply and suggested that he would aim to discuss with Victory Gym whether a studio in the building could be used, as long as the loss of earnings were covered by the Council. In addition, it was stated that a cost would be incurred with the existing venue regardless of any changes.

Cllr R Reynolds stated that he supported the location of Fakenham's polling stations, but raised concerns about Fakenham North's stations being spread across three separate locations, which he suggested had been poorly signposted during previous elections. The Corporate Director (SB) stated that it had been difficult to secure a suitable site in this location, and whilst the exam hall would have been appropriate, the election would clash with the school's exam timetable. As a result, the rugby club was chosen as the most suitable location and whilst it was accepted that access wasn't ideal for all, efforts would be made to improve signage for the location.

Cllr D Young stated that he agreed with three of the suggestions that had been made, but did not agree with the proposals for Wells on the basis that he was concerned the plans might condone illegal parking. As a local Member for Wells, the Chairman informed Members that the current polling station was next door to Stearmans Yard car park, and these parking arrangements had worked well in the past. He added that whilst the Maltings was a lovely new building, it did suffer from poor parking and he could not therefore support proposals to move the polling station to this location.

Cllr P Grove-Jones said that she was pleased to see the proposals for Stalham, though she had some concerns about parking outside the high street venue, as there were double yellow lines with a parking restriction in place. She then asked who chose the polling station locations. The Corporate Director (SB) replied that after each election, the Presiding Officers review their polling stations and feedback is used to influence the future choice of polling stations by the Elections Team. Cllr P Grove-Jones stated that complaints had been received in previous years about the lack of microwave facilities available in Stalham. The Corporate Director (SB) replied that he was aware of the wide variety of facilities across the district, and accepted that in some cases cooking provisions were limited. Finally, Cllr P Grove-Jones referred to the proposals for Ludham, and stated that she would be happy to see the proposals rejected, as the village hall was a considerable distance from the centre of the village.

Cllr B Smith endorsed the proposals for Mundesley and suggested that it would be safer, and therefore welcomed the move and thanked Officers for their work.

Cllr P Bütikofer referred to the objections against moving the Matlaske polling station. He asked if there were any other cases where polling stations were outside of the parish boundaries. The Corporate Director (SB) replied that yes there were sometimes cases where polling stations were outside of the parish boundary, usually in rural areas where there were limited locations available. He added that Government guidance stated that a suitable location within the parish boundaries must be chosen where possible, though it was accepted that this may not always be achievable. The Corporate Director (SB) then stated that whilst some locations weren't ideal, Officers had tried to make voting as easy as possible and the proposed changes had not been made for financial reasons.

Cllr M Knowles noted that only one objection had been received regarding the proposed changes to the polling stations for East and West Beckham, and he therefore supported the proposals.

Cllr V Gay stated that the Corporate Director (SB) had done a good job as Returning Officer at previous elections, and asked whether an overnight count was planned for the district election. It was confirmed that at this stage an overnight count was expected to go ahead, with any recounts taking place at the NNDC Cromer office the following day. In response to a question from Cllr P Grove-Jones, it was confirmed that the count would be held at North Walsham High School, as a faster count was expected at this venue.

The Chairman summarised the comments and it was proposed and seconded that there was general support for all but the Ludham and Wells-next-the-sea proposals.

RESOLVED

To recommend to Full Council that the proposed changes to the polling places of Matlaske and West and East Beckham are carried-out in line with the Report, and that the polling places of Ludham and Wells-next-the-sea remain the same as a result of the objections received.

108. DRAFT - 2019/20 BUDGET REVIEW

The Head of Finance and Asset Management gave a brief introduction to the report. It was noted that in the executive summary on page 28 that the second line of the table was incorrect and an updated version would be sent to Members.

Questions and Discussion

The Head of Finance and Asset Management informed the Committee in reference to the 2019/20 budget projection, that the £320k deficit was now predicted to become a £220k surplus due to a new homes bonus that had been granted by Central Government. This was because the original baseline position of housing growth had remained at 0.4% and not risen to 0.6% as expected, therefore after surpassing the target, the Council was awarded a £400k bonus. He then stated that a rural services grant added an additional £96k into the budget. It was suggested that both cases highlighted how small assumptions about future funding could have significant effects on the budget.

Referring to future budget forecasts, the Head of Finance and Asset Management stated that Central Government assumed that local Councils would do whatever they can to increase income, including raising Council Tax rates. Therefore, all predictions were based

on a £4.95 rise in Council Tax. He added that the Government may take a critical view of Councils that were unwilling to raise their Council Tax.

On investment income, the Head of Finance and Asset Management informed Members that income was at 3.5% or approximately £1.5m, and that additional money that had been invested on a short term basis had lowered that interest rate. He added that advice had been taken on the Council's investments, and whilst Brexit had caused concerns he had been assured that Europe was only one area that could impact investments.

The Head of Finance and Asset Management outlined the Council's reserves position and informed Members that the general reserve was set at £1.85m, and other reserves amounted to £18m. On key cost pressures, he stated that there had been a slight reduction in the waste contract cost at £700k, down from the expected £1m. Members were informed that no savings had been assumed as a result of the joint procurement exercise yet, though this could potentially lower costs in the future. New figures had been included in the budget for the new leisure services contract, but any savings would be used to fund the new Splash site.

On tax increases, the Head of Finance and Asset Management informed Members that the Council had the authority to increase Council Tax by up to £5 as it was in the lower percentile. To raise it further would require a referendum that would be very unlikely to succeed. In addition, the Report suggested that the Police precept was expected to double.

The Committee was informed that the Fair Funding Review of Local Government was ongoing, and that the Council would be submitting a response to this, as well as contributing to a county-wide response. The Head of Finance and Asset Management notified Members that a settlement had been reached on the business rates pilot, with 75% agreed as the set rate of retention. He added that this was good news for Norfolk as a whole, though many assumptions remained at this stage, so it was advisable to wait to see the actual income from the scheme at the end of the year. In summary, the Head of Finance and Asset Management stated that next year's budget was now balanced with a small surplus, but there were still challenging times ahead.

Cllr E Seward, portfolio holder for finance, revenues and benefits then gave a statement on the budget that suggested that the Council must accept the position it is in. He stated that County Council were expected to raise Council tax by 2.99%, which alongside the expected £24 rise from the Police and Crime Commissioner was a significant rise. Members were reminded that less than 10 pence per pound of Council Tax was for NNDC, and that with Parish and Town Council collection rates not being capped, there were cases where they received more than the District Council. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that there were several instances where this was the case. Cllr E Seward then said that looking forward, budget deficits of between £1.7m-£1.8m were predicted and though some reduction in these figures could be expected, he did not see these turning in to surpluses. As a result, despite some extra income from the new homes bonus and rural services grant, these were not ongoing grants and a number of major challenges would need to be faced going forward.

With regards to the Big Society Fund and Community Fund grants there remained £225k available in reserves, but the Council would need to make a decision on whether to continue these funds in the future.

Cllr E Seward stated that the news on the business rates pilot was very encouraging, and asked if there was any indication of the value of the pilot. The Head of Finance and Asset Management stated that the figure was very hard to predict, but that it was possible that

several hundred thousand pounds could be expected, but this was difficult to account for until the final figure was known.

Cllr J Lee asked for clarification on the amount that had been reserved for the BSF. The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that as stated on page 47 of the Report, that £242k had been allocated. He added that budget forecasts had predicted that this money would continue to come out of the budget year on year, and that allocation of this was shown, but it remained the Council's decision whether or not to continue the fund.

Cllr D Young referred to page 31 section (f) of the Report on investment income, and stated that he was happy with the level of risk, but asked if the Council was in danger of decreasing its liquidity. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that he did not think this was a problem, and there was potential for inter-authority loans to be available if required. He suggested that the Council was ahead of the curve in terms of pinch points, and that a £1.3m return on investment was very good considering the current base rates. Cllr D Young stated that he had seen several years of BSF funding, and hoped it would continue. He then referred to the possibility of borrowing to fund the new Splash project and asked if internal borrowing would be cheaper, and how the Council would account for this. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that there had been some flexibility built into the funding options for the Splash project, and whilst it was preferable to minimise borrowing, inter-authority loans would be cheaper.

Cllr V Gay thanked the Finance Team for their well composed Report, then referred to the previous allocation for the Community Transport Group, and asked if this would continue. The Head of Finance and Asset Management stated that an additional £54k had been granted to the group as a one-off funding opportunity, and it was not assumed that this would continue, though it could be sought from the 2019/20 budget surplus or reserves. Cllr V Gay then asked if there was any flexibility on parking for market towns, for instance free parking during certain times. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that ultimately parking policy was the responsibility of the Council, so it could be changed. Cllr V Gay suggested that at certain times in some locations there was little revenue gained from the Council's parking sites, therefore limited free parking could be considered with minimal revenue implications.

The Chairman asked whether the £15k spent on aerial photography had been correctly tendered. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that this photography had been undertaken for the Planning Department and he was unsure of the procurement process but would request further details. The Chairman then referred to the General Fund Capital Programme, and noted that £490k had been allocated for the Shannocks Hotel in Sheringham, and asked if any further detail was available. The Head of Finance and Asset Management stated that £64k of costs had been incurred on the project and the Council were therefore considering whether to pursue a CPO on the property. He added that whilst the owner was continuing to take the project forward, concerns had been raised about its progress.

Cllr D Young referred to page 33 paragraph 4.4 on business rates retention, and asked why, if there was no additional income yet from the scheme, did the bar chart on page 32 show considerable movement. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that the movement was an allocation for business rates growth, as actual business rates had been higher than expected, therefore the £600k was growth and not the result of the pilot scheme. Cllr D Young then stated that he had expected savings would go down, but noted that this didn't appear to be the case. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that savings had been built in for future years, however the £1.7m-£1.8m deficits had not yet been built in. In which case, he stated that reserves would provide some buffer, though this was not a preferred option. Cllr D Young asked whether the Council's car park income

would be considered as part of the fair funding review. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that the initial position of the fair funding review was that car park revenues would be ignored. However, questions were now being raised about whether car parking revenues should be included. He added that car parking income is very beneficial to NNDC and others, and its inclusion in the fair funding review would be strongly lobbied against as it was not in the interest of many Councils.

Cllr D Young referred to the CLT summary on page 42, and asked why the funding spiked during 2019/20 then went back down in the following years. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that the spike was due to the upcoming election, and added that the funds would be returned by Central Government the following year.

Cllr V Gay questioned whether there were any known significant effects as a result of the fair funding review. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that no extra funding had yet been outlined and whilst there would be winners and losers from the review, the outcomes were not yet known. He added that many positive items had been lobbied on and that the main aim of the review was to increase transparency, but this could ignore individual levies such as those for coastal protection. Cllr V Gay asked for clarification on whether the review would reverse basic injustices. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that the review would look at issues like rurality and the size of the district, and that it was the overall aim to consider all drivers. He added that the review was set to begin in summer, but it was unclear whether this was still the case.

In response to a question from Cllr D Baker regarding the broadband reserve, the Head of Finance and Asset Management clarified that NNDC had agreed to provide a £1m contribution to the Better Broadband Scheme, as well as establishing a £2m local property fund.

Cllr P Grove-Jones asked if there was an overall cap on the amount that could be raised via business rates, and asked for confirmation on whether there was business rates relief available for new businesses. The Head of Finance and Asset Management replied that there was no cap on the growth of businesses, but business rates charges were set by Central Government and were not within the Council's authority. He then informed Members that a number of reliefs were available to businesses, and Section 31 Grants meant that these reliefs were essentially funded by Central Government. It was confirmed that the Government would not look to take back these reliefs.

RESOLVED

To note the content of the Report.

109. SHERINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL PARKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman introduced the item and reminded the Committee that following a Councillor Call for Action in December 2018 regarding traffic issues around Sheringham Primary School, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the problems which included anti-social behaviour, poor parking practices, excessive speed and general bad driving. The Committee were informed that they would need to agree the Task and Finish Group's terms of reference, and agree the process for appointing Members to the Group.

Questions and Discussion

Cllr S Bütikofer provided an update and stated that she had visited the School with a

Highways engineer and a representative from Norfolk Constabulary. She informed Members that she had seen parking on pavements and curb-sides as had been described during the CCfA, as well as problems with traffic movement. She added that she did not witness any verbal altercations and that the yellow zig-zag lines that outlined a no parking area outside the school were not enforceable by law. It was suggested that the police had previously been informed of concerns and had issued tickets in the past. Cllr S Bütikofer then suggested that the loss of PCSOs may have had an impact on the situation, and that the best way to influence the parent's behaviour was through informing the school children of the dangers being caused by dangerous driving and parking. She then informed Members that the police would be writing letters to parents in order to remind them of safe parking practices and would continue parking enforcement whilst placing an emphasis on stopping cars from blocking driveways. It was stated that the Highways engineer had proposed trying a cycle to school scheme that had been trialled elsewhere in Norfolk. Finally, Cllr S Bütikofer informed Members that she had contacted the Vice-Chair of Sheringham Town Council to discuss the issue and that now work had begun, she would allow the Task and Finish Group to take over.

The Chairman outlined that the proposal had been to establish a politically balanced Task and Finish Group, with representatives from external organisations and the public invited to attend to give evidence. He informed Members that the Scrutiny Officer would provide support for the Group and asked if there were any comments on the terms of reference. Cllr D Young replied that he felt there were limits on what the District Council could achieve, and therefore proposed that the wording in the terms of reference be changed to reflect what can be done to improve the situation, as opposed to what the Council can do to mitigate the problems.

Cllr N Smith stated that school parking issues were a county-wide problem, and suggested that it would take more than just the District Council to address the problem, therefore other organisations must be brought together. Cllr R Shepherd replied that the review had to start somewhere, and that the Council did have a stake due to its land available adjacent to the school. Cllr S Bütikofer informed Members that the NNDC land adjacent to the school was a protected green space and that Cllr D Smith had looked to repurpose this area before but it had not been possible.

The Democratic Services Manager informed Members that the Chair of the Task and Finish Group must be a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman then stated that it should be the responsibility of the Task and Finish Group to determine whether to co-opt other Members onto the Group. It was then suggested that group leaders should appoint Members to the Task and Finish Group as soon as possible to begin the review process and that the first meeting should be a site visit to the school. Cllr M Knowles agreed that time was of the essence and asked whether a six-month duration was necessary. The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the duration of the Task and Finish Group could be shorter with more frequent meetings. The Chairman agreed and suggested that two meetings could be held per month to get the review underway as quickly as possible. Cllr J Rest suggested that 24 hours should be adequate to get Member nominations from group leaders.

Cllr V Gay stated for the record that during the CCfA her comments had been misinterpreted, and she wanted to make clear that she was not aware of any aggressive behaviour taking place in her ward in relation to school parking issues.

The proposals were proposed and seconded then voted on en bloc.

RESOLVED

1. **Approved the Terms of Reference for the Task & Finish Group.**
2. **Approved the delegation of appointments to the Task & Finish Group to group leaders.**
3. **Agreed to allow the Task & Finish Group to determine whether to co-opt members of the public or external organisations onto the group.**

110. MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE WORKING GROUP

The Chair of the MTI Working Group informed Members that funding conditions offer letters had been sent out to successful applicants and that once the signed copies were received funding would be processed. Cllr S Bütikofer stated that it was no longer appropriate for her to continue as a Member and Chair of the Working Group as she was no longer a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She proposed that Cllr M Knowles, as Vice-Chair of the working Group, should take the position on an interim basis until a new Chair is elected by the Group. She added that Membership of the Working Group had been delegated to group leaders, and that she would appoint a replacement accordingly. Cllr Knowles accepted the position of interim chair of the Working Group and confirmed that the Group would have to officially elect a new Chair at the next meeting.

111. THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services and Governance Officer gave a summary of the upcoming items on the Cabinet Work Programme and informed Members that it was up to date.

112. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Democratic Services and Governance Officer (Scrutiny) updated the Committee on upcoming items on the Work Programme. He informed Members that to compliment the upcoming broadband update in February, a briefing was being held on 28th January to inform Members of the possibilities of adding high speed internet cabling in the Vattenfall cable trenches that would eventually run across the district.

It was also confirmed that Visit North Norfolk had been contacted in order to provide an update to the Committee at a future meeting, and that a mental health professional would be sought to answer questions during the upcoming mental health update.

The meeting ended at 11.50am

Chairman