

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 4 November 2019 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Mrs S Bütikofer (Chair)	Mr A Brown
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Ms V Gay
Mr R Kershaw	Mr N Lloyd
Mr E Seward	

Members also attending:

Officers in Attendance:

Corporate Director and Head of Paid Service (SB), Democratic Services Manager, Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance and Asset Management/Section 151 Officer, Democratic Services and Governance Officer (Scrutiny), Head of Economic and Community Development, Policy and Performance Management Officer and Head of Environmental Health

Also in attendance:

Press and Public

Apologies for Absence:

Mr G Hayman

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7th October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

5 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman reminded members that they could ask questions throughout the meeting as issues arose.

6 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MATTERS

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee had held an additional meeting to consider the draft framework of the Corporate Plan. Ten recommendations had been made to Cabinet and the Leader responded to them in turn:

- 1) To share with Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members as soon as possible, the resident's survey used to inform the Corporate Plan, together with relevant distribution and return metrics. The Committee agreed that Cabinet should be notified of their concerns that the survey had not been shared in time for the drafting of the recommendations below and thus wasn't available to support validation of the 6 themes.

The Leader said that the residents' survey had now been shared with all Members. The return metrics were not shared as they were used for political purposes. She acknowledged that it would have been beneficial to have shared the survey earlier but said that it had taken some time to locate a blank copy.

- 2) That two copies of the final version of the Corporate Plan be placed in all public libraries (including mobile libraries) across the district and a copy sent to every parish clerk, to provide accessibility for members of the public without internet access.

The Leader said that Cabinet accepted this recommendation and would give further consideration as to whether copies sent to the parish clerks should be electronic only.

- 3) That consideration be given to renaming the 'Affordable Housing' theme 'Local Homes for Local People', as this has broader application.

The Leader said that the housing theme would be renamed 'Local Homes for Local need'.

- 4) That consideration be given to including a reference to the 'sustainability' of existing businesses, both in the heading and underlying content of the 'Boosting Business Growth' theme of the Corporate Plan. The revised title of "Boosting Business Sustainability and Growth" was supported.

The Leader informed Members that Cabinet accepted this recommendation and the theme would be 'Boosting Business Sustainability and Growth'.

- 5) That consideration be given to identifying the specific barriers faced when doing business in North Norfolk within the Business theme of the Corporate Plan.

This would be addressed as part of the delivery plan phase.

- 6) To share a summary of the feedback from the environmental consultation undertaken at the Greenbuild event held in September.

This feedback had already been shared with all Members.

- 7) To give consideration to renaming the 'Customer Focus' theme to encompass everyone who used the Council's services. The options discussed included: People Focus, Resident Focus, Service User Focus, etc, but 'Customer Focus'

gained most support.

The Leader said that consideration had been given to renaming this theme but that a suitable replacement could not be agreed upon.

- 8) To consider adding an additional descriptor to the Environment theme title - such as "Protecting the Environment"; the Cabinet Member had advised 'Climate Change, Coast and Environment' could be an option.

Members were advised that this theme would be renamed 'Climate Change, Coast and Environment'.

- 9) To remove the high level challenge statements from future documents, as they had now served their purpose.

There had never been any intention to use the high level challenge statements beyond the policy sprint phase and they would not appear in any future documents.

The Leader thanked the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for providing all Members with the opportunity to fully engage with the development of the Corporate Plan. She invited the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to comment. Cllr N Dixon began by thanking the Leader for her response to the recommendations. He said that this was the first piece of pre-scrutiny undertaken with this Administration and the framework of the Corporate Plan had been exposed to all Members in a way that had never been done before. In terms of outcome it was a positive experience and he hoped that the recommendations reflected that. The opportunity for every member to submit questions in advance of the meeting had helped the process considerably and he was satisfied that the Corporate Plan had been as well scrutinised as it could be.

Referring to the residents' survey, Cllr Dixon said that the committee felt that it was a crucial piece of evidence to enable effective scrutiny and this had led to the request for a copy of the survey and the supporting data. The fact that it was not available for the meeting meant that recommendation 1 was not a statement of validation. He acknowledged the Leader's concerns about sharing the return metrics but said that there may be a further request to look at them later as they would add weight to the validation process. Cllr Dixon added that this reinforced the need to develop an Executive / Scrutiny protocol. He concluded by saying that all of the responses set out by the Leader to the Committee's recommendations reflected the consideration given to them.

The Leader thanked Cllr Dixon. She said that the return metrics were politically driven so it was unlikely that they would be shared. However, there had been a substantial amount of research undertaken since the results were collated which supported the findings.

7 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20 - PERIOD 6

Cllr Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced this item. He referred Members to page 7 of the report where a number of recommendations were outlined. The position for two of these had changed since the report was published and he asked the Head of Finance to outline the changes to Members.

The Head of Finance referred Members to section 4.10 of the report and the Norfolk

Business Rates Pool. He said that when the report was written consideration was being given to removing South Norfolk District Council from the Pool as they had the largest rateable value of NHS Property and this could be detrimental to the Pool if the NHS Trust's application for mandatory rate relief was successful. Since then, however, it had been agreed that South Norfolk should remain in the Pool.

The Head of Finance then referred to section 6.2 of the report which outlined details of the further release of funds for various capital projects. He said that it was necessary to clarify points relating to the purchase of waste vehicles. It was intended that the purchase could be funded through borrowing and this would be agreed when the decision was required to be taken. It was therefore suggested that a 'budget envelope' of up to £4.5m was agreed to allow for flexibility. Annual revenue borrowing costs would be £600k and it was anticipated that there would be a reduction in the waste contract costs.

Cllr J Rest sought clarification that the vehicles would be ready when they were needed. The Head of Environmental Health replied that he was aware of the lead in time and there was provision for contractors to provide temporary vehicles whilst delivery of the new vehicles was awaited. Brexit was causing uncertainty about when new vehicles could be provided and this was challenging.

The Head of Finance then drew Members' attention to the following:

Recommendation 2 – the Council was required to have external advice on asset valuations and the recommendation referred to a new contract for this work that was costing £68,000.

Section 6.1 – North Walsham Heritage Action Zone – the report referred to approval by Full Council in October. This should instead refer to Cabinet in October, with final approval at Full Council in November.

It was proposed by Cllr Seward and seconded by Cllr V Gay that Recommendation 3 should be amended to:

'To agree and recommend to Full Council the increases to the capital programme budgets for the schemes identified within paragraph 6.2 of the report. The funding for the first five schemes is to be financed from capital receipts, the £4.5m for the waste vehicles is currently anticipated to come from borrowing, the estimated average annual impact of the borrowing is estimated to be in the region of £600k per annum and will be taken account of as part of the waste contract award and the 2020/21 budget process.'

It was then proposed by Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr Gay and

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the contents of the report and the current budget monitoring position;
- 2) agree to the release of £68,000 from the Asset Management Reserve to fund the Asset Valuation Programme;
- 3) To agree and recommend to Full Council the increases to the capital programme budgets for the schemes identified within paragraph 6.2 of the report. The funding for the first five schemes is to be financed from capital receipts, the £4.5m for the waste vehicles is currently anticipated to come from borrowing, the estimated average annual impact of the borrowing is estimated to be in the region of £600k per annum and will be taken account of

as part of the waste contract award and the 2020/21 budget process.

Reasons for the decision:

To update Members on the current budget monitoring position for the Council.

8 MARKET TOWN INITIATIVE - ROUND THREE FUNDING REPORT

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic and Career Development, introduced this item. He thanked the Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Scrutiny) for his hard work in supporting the project and confirmed that £30k was requested with £22,089.67 of funding available. Just £85.17 remained in the fund. Cllr Kershaw said that he hoped the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would continue to monitor the progress and outcomes of all of the applications that had received funding.

The Leader said that the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) had had a very positive effect on North Walsham and had led to the success of the High Street Heritage Action Zone bid for the town.

Cllr Seward said that the MTI fund had allocated a substantial amount towards the refurbishment of the precinct in North Walsham. The work was due to be completed shortly and he said that he hoped that the Council would publicise the positive outcomes.

It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw, seconded by Cllr E Seward and

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet approve the MTI Working Group's recommendations to award £22,004.50 of funding to applications outlined in the report.
2. That Cabinet request the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to continue to monitor the progress and outcomes of all applications that receive funding.
3. That any remaining or returned MTI funds be retained in the general reserve.
4. Delegated authority be given to The Head of Economic and Community Development to agree suitable conditions in respect of the approved applications, issue grant decision letters, and make any necessary funding adjustments in accordance with the delegated authority policy.

9 CORPORATE PLAN 2019 - 2023

The Leader introduced this item. She said that it was a strategic document that would inform the 'direction of travel' for the Council for the next four years. She thanked the staff for all their hard work in supporting the process.

Cllr J Rest thanked the Leader for giving the Independent Group the opportunity to engage with the process and feed in their comments. He referred to recommendation two of the report and sought clarification of the term 'minor revisions' The Leader replied that any such changes would be in relation to phrasing or grammar not headings of financial information.

Cllr N Dixon said that it had been an engaging and enlightening process and that there was no excuse for not knowing what was 'coming down the track'. He referred to the Corporate Plan from 2007 which was just presented to Members in its final format. The current Corporate Plan was a positive reflection of progress.

The Leader thanked both Members for their comments and said that the Administration was keen to work with everyone.

It was proposed by Cllr S Butikofer, seconded by Cllr R Kershaw and

RESOLVED to:

1. Agree the content of the draft Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 as a statement of the Council's intent and ambition for the term of this Council administration.
2. Authorises the Corporate Director and Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree any minor revisions and changes to the final draft of the Corporate Plan document and thereafter the format / design of the document for publication, following adoption by Full Council.
3. That Cabinet publishes its draft Delivery Plan by February 2020.

To recommend to Council:

That Full Council adopts the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023

Reason for the decision:

The Corporate Plan details the Council's ambitions and intent for the next four years. It will provide the framework and context for the Council's service provision, project interventions and resource allocation (financial and staffing) for the period through to 2023. The Plan will be subject to annual review to ensure that it continues to reflect the Council's priorities and objectives throughout the next four years in response to emerging trends, policy developments and legislation.

10 SHANNOCKS HOTEL SITE SHERINGHAM - COMPULSORY PURCHASE

The Leader began by asking Members support for continuing the discussion in open session. This was agreed.

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic and Career Growth, then introduced the item. He said that the Shannoeks Hotel had long blighted Sheringham and there was a need to move forward now with a compulsory purchase order (CPO). He acknowledged that this was a drastic measure to take but there had been no response from the owner.

Cllr A Brown asked the Head of Legal when the legal process would start and whether there were adequate resources in place to support it, The Head of Legal confirmed that there were sufficient resources in place and that if an Inquiry was held then the position would be reviewed and provision made. Regarding the process, she said that notices would be served within the next 6 weeks.

It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw, seconded by Cllr A Brown and

RESOLVED

1. That the Council makes a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of the Shannoeks.
2. The Head of Finance and Asset Management is delegated to simultaneously resurrect purchase negotiations with the owner.

Reasons for the decision:

To achieve the redevelopment of the Shannoeks which has stood empty for many years, attracting significant negative comment from the public, thereby bringing about a regeneration of this area of Sheringham, for the economic and social well-being of the area.

11 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Leader informed Members that the Cabinet meeting on Monday 2nd December was being rescheduled for Friday 6th December to allow sufficient time for the completion of the evaluation of final tenders for the waste contract. It had been agreed that the three councils involved in the joint procurement would hold their Cabinet meeting on 6th December to make the award decision.

12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

13 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 10.33 am.

Chairman