

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 12 February 2020 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN at 9.30 am

Committee Members Present:	Mr T Adams (Vice-Chairman)	Mr H Blathwayt
	Mrs W Fredericks	Mr P Heinrich
	Mr N Housden	Mr G Mancini-Boyle
	Miss L Shires	Mrs E Spagnola
	Mr J Toye	Mr A Varley
Members also attending:	Mr N Lloyd (Observer)	Ms V Gay (Observer)
	Mr E Seward (Observer)	Mr J Rest (Observer)
	Mrs S Bütikofer (Observer)	
Officers in Attendance:	Democratic Services and Governance Officer (Scrutiny) (DS&GOS), Democratic Services Manager (DSM), Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer (HLS) and Chief Technical Accountant (CTA)	

Also in attendance:

68 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr N Dixon and Cllr N Pearce.

69 SUBSTITUTES

None.

70 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

71 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2020, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

72 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

74 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

75 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

None received.

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

The Democratic Services Manager updated the Committee on responses to the Committee's recent recommendations, and noted that the Chairman had presented the Committee's budget recommendations to Cabinet at the February meeting. Cllr E Seward stated that he would reply to the recommendations in full when the budget was presented to Council later in the month. He added that he would respond positively, and that Cabinet supported the 'direction of travel'.

77 DELIVERY PLAN 2019-2023

Cllr S Bütikofer – Leader of the Council introduced the report, and informed Members that the purpose of the Delivery Plan was to outline the implementation of the key priorities defined in the Corporate Plan.

Questions and Discussion

Cllr P Heinrich referred to point 4.2 of the report on page 18, and asked for further clarification. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that the Delivery Plan had been built on the Corporate Plan, which had its foundations in engagement with the public and the survey work that had been completed during the election. It was noted that additional stakeholder engagement had taken place since, that included working with outside bodies to ensure a joined-up approach had been taken. Cllr S Bütikofer stated that she would ensure that this point was revisited and made clear.

Cllr J Toye asked whether the objectives outlined in the DP had been subject to any prioritisation, or whether they would be going forward. Cllr S Bütikofer stated that the objectives were in the process of being prioritised by Cabinet. She accepted that the wide array of objectives could not all be completed on day one, and as a result, dates and milestones would be added to the document once agreed. Cllr J Toye referred to the customer focus theme, and asked whether customers would be properly informed of the Council's responsibilities, to limit questions and complaints on issues not relating to the Council. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that she hoped to reinstate the NNDC magazine, and would look to include information on the responsibilities of NNDC, but also provide the relevant contact information for services that NNDC did not provide to help point members of the public in the right direction. The HLS added that there were two elements to the customer focus work, the first of which was related to LGA surveys, that would enable the Council to benchmark its services against other authorities. The second would focus on more specific surveys that would consider failure demand, e.g. cases in which customers had not been able to satisfactorily resolve their issue by contacting the Council. This information would then be fed to Cabinet and the proposed Scrutiny Panels to make the necessary improvements.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle referred to issues around developing the local housing supply on page 22, and stated that carbon reduction targets would not be met if homes continued to be built with gas boilers. In addition, he noted the harmful chemicals present within solar panels, and suggested that ground source heat pumps would be

a viable alternative. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that she was aware of the issues with solar panels and other heating sources, and was accordingly working with the Planning Policy Team to develop the environmental requirements of the emerging Local Plan. She added that she was unsure whether the Council would be able to incentivise renewable energy projects, but noted that much of the district didn't have access to mains gas. Members were reminded that the Council's pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030 applied to the Council and its estate only. In his role as Environment Portfolio Holder, Cllr N Lloyd stated that the overarching goal was to reduce carbon emissions, and in order to do this, all forms of renewables would need to be considered. On the Local Plan, he added that there had been a significant response to the consultation from environmental groups, and as a result it, was expected that the Council would give extra weight to developers that utilised renewable energy. It was also hoped that there may be some policy grounds to enforce the use of renewable energy on new builds.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle sought clarification on whether the Council had an economic development leader, and stated that this would be a crucial role for the Council to become self-sustaining. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that the Council did have a dedicated portfolio holder and head of service for economic development, and added that many projects that sought to make the Council self-sustaining were in the pipeline.

Cllr N Housden referred to the climate issues discussed, and noted that the Council was relatively limited in its powers to influence the types of renewables used, and suggested that the Council should remain focused on tackling local climate issues. He then asked how information would be communicated to the proposed Scrutiny Panels, and suggested that it would be helpful for Members to see an information trail, to help them understand the full picture of issues under review. Cllr S Bütikofer agreed that this would be a useful tool, and suggested that she would look into whether this would be feasible.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle stated that he was impressed by the Town and Parish Council Forum, and asked for further information on the proposed Youth Forum. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that the Town and Parish Forum had met and was progressing well, but noted that the Youth Council was still at an exploratory stage, with different operational models being considered. The DSM added that she was developing the Youth Council and had contacted high schools across the district, with the potential to appoint up to three representatives per school. It was hoped that the Youth Council would be operational by May 2020. In response to a follow-up question from Cllr G Mancini-Boyle, it was suggested that rotating appointees could be difficult to manage, and that schools would likely run their own nomination process. The Vice-Chairman stated that consideration was needed to determine how the feedback from these groups would be collected and fed back to Cabinet and the proposed Scrutiny Panels.

In response to a question from Cllr N Housden on financial sustainability, the HLS stated that suggestions made during the risk training brainstorming session would be picked up by officers working on the issue. She added that the Council had to ensure its financial sustainability, and that in order to do this, the Council had to look beyond its normal remit, whilst also balancing risk. It was suggested that there could be some quick wins for the Council around advertising and sponsorship, which would be relatively straightforward, and would come to the Committee as a policy in due course.

Cllr H Blathwayt referred to the CP, and asked how much work NNDC would do with neighbouring authorities on the key themes, and added that it often seemed as

though there was a barrier between North Norfolk and other local authorities. Cllr S Bütikofer replied that she was actively involved in the Norfolk Leaders meetings, and the Norfolk Working Better Together project, which she used to promote the importance of North Norfolk. It was hoped that through these groups, ideas such as dedicated lines of communication could be implemented. Cllr H Blathwayt acknowledged the existing work, and noted that special consideration should be given to issues such as the pressure on A&E departments to cope with the rising demand on services.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the proposed Scrutiny Panels, and noted that these were intended to align with the key themes of the CP, in order to monitor its implementation. The DSM stated that the recommendation before the Committee, aimed to establish three panels that would cover two key themes each. It was suggested that this approach would be a good opportunity for all Members to get involved in the delivery of the CP. The DSM informed Members that the Panels would be politically balanced with five Members each including a Chairman from the Scrutiny Committee, and two additional Cabinet Members. It was suggested that the performance framework would be ready by April, with the first report expected in July, which would feed directly into the Panels. Members were reminded that the recommendation only sought to establish the Panels, and that details would be agreed at a later point. The DSM noted that she had discussed the panels with the Chairman of the Committee, and it had been suggested that the panels would run for one year initially, with an annual review to determine efficacy.

Cllr N Housden asked whether the Scrutiny Panels would be able to provide input into the Council's engagement process and Cllr S Bütikofer replied that whilst the Panels sought to encourage cooperation between Cabinet and Scrutiny, they were not expected to lead Cabinet projects. The DSM added that the Panels would intend to review and monitor the implementation of projects contained within the CP. In response to a follow-up question from Cllr N Housden, it was confirmed that three panels had been proposed to align with available resources, and they would each cover two key themes of the CP.

The Vice-Chairman asked to take the recommendations en bloc, which were proposed by Cllr W Fredericks and seconded by Cllr J Toye.

RESOLVED

- 1. To agree the content of the draft Delivery Plan 2019-2023.**
- 2. To agree with authorisation given to the Corporate Directors and Heads of Paid Service, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree any minor revisions and changes to the final draft of the Delivery Plan document and thereafter the format and design of the document for publication.**
- 3. To establish Scrutiny Panels to act as a mechanism to review and monitor decisions made relating to the strategic policy, performance and resources required to deliver the priorities of the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan and Delivery Pan.**

78 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020-2021

Cllr E Seward – Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report and informed Members that it was a CIPFA requirement to produce a report on the Council's capital programme, its assets, and its debt management. He added that the capital expenditure on the CP's six key themes would total approximately £26.3m, to be spent in the next financial year, but realistically, this would be spent over several years. It was noted that several existing projects were included in this figure, such as Splash and the procurement of the new waste contract vehicles at £8m and £4.5m respectively, the Cromer coastal scheme at £1.8m, and Mundesley coastal defences, which were expected to cost approximately £3m.

Questions and Discussion

The Vice-Chairman referred to item 4 on assets, and asked if there was a strategy in place that offered guidance on asset management. The HLS replied that the Council did have an asset management plan, which acted as a framework that could be shared with Members, and could be reviewed in the future. Cllr J Toyne asked if it would be more appropriate for GRAC or O&S to review the plan, to which Cllr E Seward replied that it had been done by O&S previously, in relation to the Egmore proposal. He added that when reviewing investments, he would always ask whether it would be more beneficial to keep the money invested, unless there was a justified reason to accept a lower return, such as to purchase sheltered housing. The HLS noted that if the plan were to be reviewed, this would primarily be a Cabinet function, but O&S and GRAC could feed in to the process.

Cllr T Adams proposed approval of the strategy, and Cllr L Shires seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED

To commend the Capital Strategy and Prudential Indicators for 2020-21 to Council for approval.

79 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2020-2021

The CTA introduced the report and informed Members that the Investment Strategy was a new requirement implemented by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. She added that the report covered all investments and related risks, but also covered the proportionality and resilience of these investments, in order to ensure a diverse, risk averse investment portfolio.

Questions and Discussion

The Vice-Chairman referred to table 5 of the report and noted that the Council's investments appeared to fall in the coming years and asked for clarification. The CTA replied that whilst investments were somewhat difficult to forecast, a decrease was expected as loans were repaid. She added that the treasury investment would also decrease in-line with expected CP spending.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked whether the Council had any investments in overseas banks, to which the CTA replied that the Council had moved away from these investments due to the increased associated risk for limited returns. She added that long-term investments remained the Council's main focus, and that she sought to stay clear of bank deposits.

Cllr N Housden asked for further details of the guarantees on third party loans. The CTA replied that these were an option the Council had not yet pursued, but could allow it to lend to organisations such as Community Interest Companies for purposes that would not usually be permissible under normal lending conditions.

Cllr J Rest acknowledged that the Council no longer held foreign investments, but asked if there were any in UK overseas territories such as Gibraltar. The CTA replied that to her knowledge, the Council held no overseas investments, although pooled funds could potentially be invested overseas. Cllr J Rest asked a follow-up question on whether there were any restrictions on where the fund managers could invest, to which the CTA replied that the Council was not able to impose restrictions as it bought into existing funds, though it did select only ethical funds. Cllr N Housden asked if there had been any investigations into whether the investments were genuinely ethical, to which the CTA replied that checks had been made to ensure the authority was in agreement with its investments.

Approval of the report was proposed by Cllr J Toye and seconded by Cllr P Heinrich.

RESOLVED

To commend the Investment Strategy 2020/21 to Council for approval.

80 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2020-2021

The CTA introduced the report and informed Members that it was broadly a continuation of the existing strategy that brought in approximately £1.3m of annual income to the Council. As previously noted, preference was given to long-term investments with some minor short-term borrowing to support this approach.

Questions and Discussion

Cllr J Toye sought to place on record a congratulations for achieving the high return on the Council's investments, with the authority reported to be the investment manager's top client.

Approval of the Treasury Management Strategy was proposed by Cllr T Adams and seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt.

RESOLVED

To commend the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21 to Council for approval.

81 SHERINGHAM LEISURE CENTRE PROJECT UPDATE

Cllr V Gay – Portfolio Holder for Culture and Wellbeing introduced the report and informed Members that whilst the project was on-track financially, an unused drain had caused a collapse that was expected to cause a nine day delay to the schedule. She added that the Council would seek to cover the costs incurred by the drainage issue from the contractor.

Questions and Discussion

It was reported that high winds had caused damage to a roof panel of the existing

Splash building, which as a result had closed the pool, but other areas of the facility remained open. Cllr V Gay stated that work had begun immediately to resolve the issue, but it was not yet known how quickly it would be resolved. She added that the failure of the existing Splash facility was the first item on the project risk log, and as a result, the issue was being taken very seriously.

Cllr N Housden asked what the potential cost of the drainage issue could be if not covered by the contractor, to which Cllr V Gay replied that she did not yet know the exact figure, but could find this out if not covered.

Cllr L Shires noted that the lack of communications support continued to be a concern, and asked if the new post being advertised would resolve this issue. Cllr V Gay replied that she understood there had been very good candidates for the position, and that she did expect that it would be a key priority for whoever took the post.

Cllr N Housden reported that the time-lapse video included on the promotional website linked to unrelated content once finished, and asked whether it could instead link back to the NNDC website. Cllr V Gay noted the issue, and again hoped this would be resolved once the Communications Manager post was filled.

RESOLVED

To note the update.

82 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The DS&GOS informed Members that as a result of the limited resources available for enforcement, the Enforcement Board Update would move to the March meeting of Cabinet.

RESOLVED

To note the Cabinet Work Programme.

83 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The DS&GOS informed Members that subsequent to the resolution on ambulance response times at the last meeting, the relevant representatives from EEAST and the NCCG had confirmed that they would attend a meeting of the Committee in April to brief on the issue.

It was noted that the Itteringham House review was expected to be on the agenda of the March meeting, and would now include data from a full year of lettings.

RESOLVED

To note the Work Programme.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am.

Chairman