

## COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 23 September 2020 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

<b>Members Present:</b>	Mr T Adams	Mr D Baker
	Mr D Birch	Mr H Blathwayt
	Mr A Brown	Dr P Bütikofer
	Mrs S Bütikofer	Mr C Cushing
	Mr N Dixon	Mr P Fisher
	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Mr T FitzPatrick
	Mr V FitzPatrick	Mrs W Fredericks
	Ms V Gay	Mrs P Grove-Jones
	Mr G Hayman	Mr C Heinink
	Mr P Heinrich	Mr N Housden
	Mr R Kershaw	Mr N Lloyd
	Mr G Mancini-Boyle	Mrs M Millership
	Mr N Pearce	Mr S Penfold
	Mr J Rest	Mr E Seward
	Miss L Shires	Mrs J Stenton
	Dr C Stockton	Mr J Toye
	Mr A Varley	Ms K Ward
	Ms L Withington	Mr A Yiasimi

**Also in attendance:** The Chief Executive, The Head of Finance, The Monitoring Officer & Head of Legal, the Head of Economic & Community Development, The Democratic Services Manager, The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny)

#### 18 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting. He informed them of the sad news of the recent death of former Councillor John Perry-Warnes, who had passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> September at the age of 87. He had served on the District Council for 26 years, holding the position of Chairman in 2012. He had been highly respected across the political groups and would be sadly missed. The Chairman asked Members to observe a minutes' silence in his memory.

Referring to his civic commitments, the Chairman said that due to the pandemic he had not been out and about as much as usual. He said that he had done a communication for VJ day and together with the Leader and Cllr Toye, he had laid a wreath at the Council's poppy sculpture to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain. updated Members on recent events that he had attended.

#### 19 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, began by paying her respects to John Perry-Warnes. She said he had been an extremely dedicated councillor and was highly respected within the local community. She said her thoughts were with his family during this difficult time.

The Leader then updated Members on recent events. She said that it had been a very busy summer along the coast, with a large number of tourists visiting the District. The Council had purchased a fogging machine to use in 'high touch' areas

to ensure that they were fully sanitised. The region had been very fortunate as to date, there had been a low number of Covid 19 cases but it was important to remain vigilant. She concluded by saying that so far, the Council had paid out £55m in Government grants. She thanked everyone for their hard work in ensuring that support to the business community was provided as quickly as possible

**20 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS**

None received.

**21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Cllrs G Perry-Warnes and E Spagnola.

**22 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020 were approved as a correct record.

**23 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None received.

**24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS**

None received.

**25 REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS**

The Democratic Services Manager introduced this item. She explained that following a recent change to the political make-up of the Council, it was necessary for Council to agree the revised political balance and the allocation of seats to the political groups.

It was proposed by Cllr S Butikofer, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

**RESOLVED**

1. That Council approves the revised political balance calculation as per section 2.4 of this report
2. That Council approves the allocation of seats to political groups as shown at Appendix A
3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels (in line with the political balance).

**26 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES & PANELS**

The Leader announced the following appointments:

Cllr E Withington to be appointed to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as Vice-Chairman.

Cllr H Blathwayt to be appointed to the Standards Committee as Chairman.

Cllr C Cushing, Leader of the Conservative Group announced that Cllr N Pearce would be appointed to Development Committee and Licensing & Appeals

Committee.

## 27 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, presented his report. He said that confirmation had been received that the Council had been successful in its combined bid for government funding under the Next Steps Accommodation programme. Referring to affordable homes, 262 were due to be delivered during 2020/21 – considerably more than the previous year.

Cllr S Butikofer, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Strategy presented her report as written.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for Coast, said that the Coastal team had been extremely busy. A lot of maintenance had been undertaken during the phase of good weather in the summer. Senior officers had been involved in supporting large schemes across the region – including Sizewell C in Suffolk. They had also been involved in national research projects.

Cllr V Gay, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Wellbeing, said that she had nothing to add to her written report. Cllr N Housden asked whether there had been any discussions regarding the possible early closure of the Sheringham Splash Leisure Centre as it was not referred to in her update and Overview and Scrutiny had requested that a review of the financial implications should be undertaken. Cllr Gay replied that a report had been to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the matter.

Cllr G Hayman, Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation & Assets, said that a survey was due to be undertaken on future repair and maintenance cost estimates. Cllr J Rest referred to Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) and sought confirmation that they would be installed in Fakenham and Wells later this month – as indicated in the report. Cllr Hayman replied that as far as he was aware the work was still on schedule. Cllr Rest commented that the project was not currently recorded in the Council's Risk Register and as Chairman of the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee he was going to propose that it was included. Cllr N Lloyd said that there had been some issues with the EVCP scheme. They were multi-faceted projects involving a series of contractors which had led to a delay. The units had been installed and it was the technical connection of these that was now awaited.

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic and Career Growth, introduced his report. He said that £2.761m had been awarded in grant payments. All of the awards schemes were completed now and he thanked the officers for their hard work. Cllr D Baker referred to the Heritage Action Zone funding for North Walsham and asked for an update on the projects progress. Cllr Kershaw replied that the North Walsham HAZ Working Party had met the previous day and the scheme was progressing well. A Project Manager had been appointed and the stakeholder groups had been established. Work on the lokes was due to start shortly.

Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environment, said that he hoped Members had seen that the Pier had been lit up green in support of National Recycling week recently.

Cllr E Seward presented his report as written. Cllr D Baker referred to the 'exit packages' cost of £389k and asked for a breakdown. He also asked whether this

cost would go through the revenue account and add to the Council's overall deficit. Cllr Seward said that he would provide a written reply. The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, added that the information that Cllr Baker was requesting contained personal details that were confidential. She confirmed that the payment in question was in accordance with the Council's governance procedures and was what the former employee was contractually entitled to. She said that any councillor could request to see the relevant documentation under the 'need to know' requirement as set out in the Constitution. Cllr Baker repeated his question as to whether the payment contributed to the overall deficit. Cllr Seward confirmed that it was reflected in the accounts for 2019/20 and it was a revenue cost.

## **28 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 03 AUGUST 2020 AND 07 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **Cabinet 03 August 2020**

Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced this item. He said that he would move both items together.

#### Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt and  
**RESOLVED:**

To recommend to Council that The Treasury Management Annual Report and Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 are approved.

#### Debt Recovery 2019/2020

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt and

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1) To approve the annual report giving details of the Council's write-offs in accordance with the Council's Debt Write-Off Policy and performance in relation to revenues collection.
- 2) To agree the Debt Write Off Policy (shown in Appendix 2)
- 3) To agree the use of High Court Enforcement Agents if considered necessary (shown in Appendix 3)

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, confirmed that the had supported the recommendations.

### **Cabinet 07 September 2020**

#### 2019/20 Outturn Report (Period 12 Budget Monitoring Report)

Cllr E Seward introduced the report. He said despite the very real challenges to the Council's finances during the run up to the start of the pandemic, he was pleased to report that the year had ended with a slight surplus.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr P Heinrich and

#### **RESOLVED**

To approve:

- a) The provisional outturn position for the General Fund revenue account for

2019/20;

- b) The transfers to and from reserves as detailed within the report (and appendix C) along with the corresponding updates to the 2020/21 budget;
- c) to allocate the surplus of £97,114 to the General Reserve;
- d) The financing of the 2019/20 capital programme as detailed within the report and at Appendix D;
- e) The balance on the General Reserve of £2.404 million (after allocation of the underspend per recommendation c);
- f) The updated capital programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and scheme financing as outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix E;
- g) The outturn position in respect of the Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 as detailed in Appendix F and;
- h) Agree the award of the new cleaning contract to Eco Clean Services Ltd.

#### North Walsham Town Centre Public Realm Improvements

Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic & Career Development, introduced this item. He said that it was very exciting project for North Walsham. It was a joint scheme that involved working closely with the community. He added that the overall project would be monitored by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and also added to the Council's Risk Register.

It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

#### **RESOLVED**

To note the successful bid by this Council and that the sum of £1,170, 000 (from a grant received from the Getting Building Fund) be allocated in the budget towards the town centre place-making elements of North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone.

#### Tourism Sector Support package

The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, introduced this item. She said that Members would be aware that one of the Corporate Plan themes was to support business growth. Following the pandemic, it was also crucial to support initiatives that would help develop, promote and sustain the local visitor economy. The funding of £330,000 had been provided as a result of a collaborative bid across the region. The grant papers had been prepared and the Council was ready to start promoting the Fund to local businesses.

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

#### **RESOLVED**

That the £330,000 received from Norfolk Strategic Fund is allocated to a new 'Economic Recovery' reserve and that £150,000 of this is set aside for the tourism Sector Support Package, along £25,000 from the Reopening High Streets Safely' fund, for the establishment of a £175,000 grant scheme to support the local visitor economy;

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, confirmed that the Committee had supported the recommendations.

Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee confirmed that there were no further recommendations to Council.

### **30 SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE**

This item was introduced by the Chief Executive. He said that since being appointed as Chief Executive in June 2020, he had reviewed and assessed the capacity of the Council's management structure to support improved service delivery, the delivery of headline objectives of the Corporate Plan, responding to Covid and engagement the Authority would have in discussions regarding devolution, moving forwards. He said the Council needed more focus on service leadership and management to improve customer service, and drive efficiencies. He therefore proposed a management model of a chief executive, 3 directors and six assistant directors. It was anticipated that this would increase the strategic and service delivery capacity of the organisation by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of senior managers within the Council. He said that the structure would be delivered with a £57,000 increase in the budget. He concluded by saying that nominations were requested for Members to sit on the appointments panel.

Cllr N Dixon said that he wished to propose an amendment to the recommendations. He said there were several concerns but they key one, which was committing the Authority to avoidable costs arising from the possible outcomes of the forthcoming local government review, could be addressed by the following amendment:

'That all the new, and or regraded, posts arising from the restructure be made temporary, by use of the acting or interim fixed term contractual facility, until the outcome of the planned Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution are known. This is to ensure this Council is not encumbered with unintended and avoidable costs of a foreseeable staff restructure in the next year or so.'

The amendment was seconded by Cllr T FitzPatrick.

The Chairman opened the debate on the amendment:

1. The Leader, Cllr S Butikofer, said she could understand the concerns that were being raised. However, it should be acknowledged that proposals regarding local government reorganisation/devolution had already been delayed several times and it was now likely that the Government White Paper would not come forward until 2021. She said that the Prime Minister had recently spoken to local authority leaders and acknowledged the importance of local government and said that it was indispensable and at the forefront of delivery for the country. Devolution needed to be looked at closely to ensure it reflected the needs of all the districts' residents. She went onto say that the Administration was extremely supportive of the proposals set out in the report. She believed that the Chief Executive should be able to structure the organisation in a way that would ensure that it would deliver the objectives of the council as effectively as possible.
2. Cllr K Ward said that she was not supportive of the casualisation of employment. She queried whether it had been checked with an employment lawyer as it may not be legally possible to implement and infringe on employees' rights.
3. Cllr J Rest reiterated Cllr Ward's points and said that he believed that any post that lasted longer than two years became permanent anyway. The Chief Executive said that the proposed structure was ring-fenced to existing employees of the authority and the Council would therefore have

responsibilities to them regardless if there was to be a reorganisation of local government.

4. Cllr G Mancini-Boyle commented on the additional costs of the proposed restructure, particularly as the pandemic had impacted on local residents lives. He said that it did not seem appropriate to be increasing the amount spent on senior officer salaries when so many constituents were facing financial hardship.
5. Cllr C Cushing, Leader of the Opposition, said that he would like to thank the Chief Executive for sharing his proposals with the Conservative group at an early stage. However, his group would not be supporting the proposals. He said putting in an extra layer of management would not make the organisation more efficient. As of March 2020, there were 279 employees at the Council and the proposed senior management structure seemed very top heavy in comparison. Regarding the increase in costs, which would result in a total of £881,000 for senior posts, he said that this was an extraordinary figure for such a small authority. Particularly as this was in addition to the redundancy payment which had been discussed earlier. He then referred to the Director roles, which commanded high salaries, and queried why they were not being advertised externally. For roles paying that highly then it would make sense to look outside of the organisation. As far as devolution was concerned, Cllr Cushing said he believed it was going to go ahead as planned and the proposed amendment was legal. He concluded by saying that he found it very surprising that during a time of such financial hardship for local families, the Council was looking to increase senior officers' salaries by such a significant amount. It wasn't defensible financially, operationally and morally and said that he hoped Members would back the amendment.
6. Cllr L Shires sought clarification that North Norfolk District Council would be the most cost effective in the County. The Chief Executive confirmed this was the case.
7. Cllr T FitzPatrick said that we were in uncharted territory regarding devolution. He acknowledged that it was likely that the three recommendations would be supported but he asked that consideration was given to the amendment which would alleviate the burden of any future, unnecessary costs that were currently unknown. It would protect the Council going forwards.

The Chairman invited members to vote on the amendment:

'That all the new, and or regraded, posts arising from the restructure be made temporary, by use of the acting or interim fixed term contractual facility, until the outcome of the planned Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution are known. This is to ensure this Council is not encumbered with unintended and avoidable costs of a foreseeable staff restructure in the next year or so'.

It was not supported with 5 Members voting in favour, 28 against and 1 abstention.

The Chairman then invited Members to debate the substantive motion.

Cllr S Butikofer said that she would like to reiterate some of the points raised earlier, including that the model was the most cost-efficient in Norfolk. She said that she believed the previous model to be too top heavy. In conclusion, she said that the proposals would drive forwards and deliver the Corporate Plan.

Cllr T FitzPatrick clarified that under the previous model, the post of Chief Executive was deleted and two Heads of Paid Service (Corporate Directors) were retained in

its place, it was therefore not top heavy.

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

## **RESOLVED**

**To agree an increase in the budget for the senior management structure of up to £57,000 per annum from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020, initially to be paid for from the Invest to Save Reserve and then incorporated into the 2021/22 base budget**

The Chairman then invited nominations for the appointments panel.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett nominated Cllr J Rest.

Cllr C Cushing said that the Conservative Group would not be nominating anyone to the Panel as they did not support the recommendations. The Chief Executive said that this was not a political process it was about the future management of the authority and it would be exceptional for an opposition group not to participate in the appointment of senior officers to the organization. Cllr Cushing reiterated that he did not intend to nominate anyone.

Cllr L Shires nominated Cllr S Butikofer.

Cllr J Rest commented that the Panel comprised 5 members. He queried whether the Conservative allocation could be given to the Independent Group to ensure there was a full panel. The Democratic Services Manager clarified that if the Conservative Group did not wish to make a nomination then there would be a vacancy on the Panel – as was the case for any committee. However, the Conservative Group could choose to allocate their seat on the panel to another group.

Cllr W Fredericks nominated Cllr R Kershaw.

Cllr Cushing said that following the discussion, he would reflect on whether to nominate to the Panel and would notify the Chief Executive.

Cllr S Butikofer nominated Cllr E Seward.

The Chief Executive requested that Cllr Cushing notified him if he intended to appoint to the Panel by the end of the week, to ensure that the timescales for interviews could be adhered to.

## **31 REVIEW OF POLLING STATIONS**

The Chief Executive introduced this item. He said that in 2019 there had been three district-wide elections and this had allowed the Elections Team and Polling staff to gain a clear understanding as to the suitability and value for money derived in the provision of polling places across the District. Consequently, the Council would not be using premises which could have ongoing health and safety concerns or which were not suitable for staff to work long hours in, whilst realising efficiencies in terms of cost and the number of staff required.

Cllr H Blathwayt queried whether this was just a vote on the consultation. The Chief Executive confirmed this.



It was proposed by Cllr A Brown, seconded by Cllr W Frederick and

## **RESOLVED**

To approve new Polling Station locations (as described in section 2.1) on a permanent arrangement and the closure of five Polling Stations, with new arrangements in neighbouring Polling Districts (as stated in section 3)

## **32 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS**

None received.

## **33 OPPOSITION BUSINESS**

None received.

## **34 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION**

The following motion had been proposed by Cllr N Dixon, seconded by Cllr C Cushing:

‘This Council recognises and applauds the outstanding efforts of community volunteers in North Norfolk to support the vulnerable and less well-off within their communities and it seeks to retain and build up that new found capacity to help communities become more resilient and self-sustaining. This Council calls on its leadership, officers and partners to develop opportunities to engage and support the existing range of community volunteer groups, and to promote such schemes in areas not currently covered, to help meet the wider needs of the mental health, home care, wellbeing, independence and contingencies agendas which are so important to the quality of life in North Norfolk.

To work with Community Action Norfolk (CAN) and other Councils to develop community volunteer groups across the District. This would map areas currently covered and identify areas where there are none and how best they might be covered. CAN developments officers are well placed to promote and facilitate the formation of new groups and enhance the capabilities of those already operating. This would require some modest funding to resource CAN and pump prime new groups which CAN normally administers; it is proposed that a nominal sum of £10k be set aside to fund the work and this can be adjusted up or down depending on arrangements agreed with CAN.’

Cllr Dixon began by saying that the pandemic had highlighted the need for voluntary groups in local communities and had shown how Councils had relied on them to deliver low level, vital support to vulnerable people. The Council had set up local coordination centres which formed part of the network and delivery structure for providing support during lockdown. Local people were needed to sustain this effort over the longer term. He acknowledged that the Council supported some similar schemes already but support was patchy and the motion was about doing much more. He said many thousands of people volunteered for the National Volunteer Scheme earlier in the year. Many of them had not been required and local schemes would provide an opportunity to engage and retain them. Local Councils were well placed to lead the way by working with partners to provide community-level support in the most cost effective way. He concluded by saying that the Motion put residents at the centre of the Council’s focus, supporting two of the Corporate Plan themes –

## Quality of Life and Financial Sustainability.

The Chairman opened up the debate.

1. Cllr W Fredericks said that she headed up 'Mundesley Cares' which had 78 volunteers. Not all of them had been used during the first lockdown period but they had all expressed an interest in being contacted if needed again in the future. She said that it had been established without any funding, although the Norfolk Community Foundation had provided some money for food boxes. She concluded by thanking everyone involved for their support and said communication coming out of the NNDC local coordination centres had been excellent.
2. Cllr C Cushing said that it was a non-political motion that supported the Administration's corporate plan. The proposals would meet low-level health and social care needs such as social prescribing, mental health support, transport and loneliness. He said that he had spoken to CAN in March when they were looking at a project in Fakenham supporting 18-24 year olds combat loneliness. He concluded that it was a low cost proposal to help start the process of establishing a district-wide support network, adding that the West of the District was currently behind the East with such schemes.
3. Cllr S Penfold said that he was very sympathetic to the motion and not averse to assisting Community Action Norfolk, however, he felt that any such funding requests should go through the full process via the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund, adding that the proposals put forward in the motion appeared to meet the criteria of the Fund. He said that he wished to propose an amendment:
4. 'North Norfolk District Council supports the important work of Community Action Norfolk, whilst recognising there is a myriad of volunteer community groups and organisations working hard across the District. NNDC has a grant fund to support such organisations in this work (The North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund - NNSCF), where all applications are assessed with due diligence and against established criteria. We therefore encourage Community Action Norfolk to apply to the NNSCF for funding of up to £15,000 for this important work.'
5. Cllr L Shires reiterated Cllr Penfold's comments. She said that she also wanted to acknowledge the amazing work of the district's volunteers which had been outstanding during the pandemic. Communities had pulled together in remarkable circumstances. She asked about CAN's mental health strategy as she wasn't sure if they currently had one.
6. Cllr V Gay said that everyone would like to record the Council's appreciation of the work of Community Action Norfolk and she hoped that any application that they made to the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund would be viewed sympathetically. She said that would like to second Cllr Penfold's amendment.
7. Cllr C Heinink agreed with previous comments regarding the key role played by voluntary groups. He said that would also like to mention the important role that town and parish councils had played in supporting their communities.
8. Cllr E Withington said that she agreed that CAN had undertaken a lot of good work recently. She said that she supported the amendment and added that NNDC already had a lot of the information that would be needed to take such a project forwards and this needed to be built on to improve the connectivity of volunteer groups, with CAN picking up on any gaps.
9. Cllr N Dixon said that he would not stand in the way of the amendment. He said that it was interesting that some of those speaking in favour of the

amendment and advocating due diligence and a proper process, but he had a concern that parallels were being drawn between the many voluntary and community groups which applied to the Fund and a partnership organisation such as CAN, and by going through this process it was possible that some of the money could be taken up by introducing an additional layer of administration. He concluded by saying that an alternative option would be to incorporate the proposals into the Delivery Plan, enabling it to get up and running quickly rather than encumbering it with further bureaucracy.

10. Cllr T FitzPatrick commented that it was good to see everyone acknowledging all of the good work that was being done. He said that it was important that it enabled additional groups to receive support and get them up and running so that any gaps across the District could be plugged.
11. Cllr S Butikofer said that she agreed with Cllr FitzPatrick's comments. She said it was important that any funding should go to support the residents of North Norfolk.
12. Cllr Cushing said that he would support the amendment. He suggested that it should be priority to plot out where all the existing groups were in the District to assist CAN with their work.

The Chairman advised Members that they would be voting on the amendment as amended.

It was proposed by Cllr N Dixon, seconded by Cllr C Cushing and

## **RESOLVED**

This Council recognises and applauds the outstanding efforts of community volunteers in North Norfolk to support the vulnerable and less well-off within their communities and it seeks to retain and build up that new found capacity to help communities become more resilient and self-sustaining. This Council calls on its leadership, officers and partners to develop opportunities to engage and support the existing range of community volunteer groups, and to promote such schemes in areas not currently covered, to help meet the wider needs of the mental health, home care, wellbeing, independence and contingencies agendas which are so important to the quality of life in North Norfolk.

To work with Community Action Norfolk (CAN) and other Councils to develop community volunteer groups across the District. This would map areas currently covered and identify areas where there are none and how best they might be covered. CAN developments officers are well placed to promote and facilitate the formation of new groups and enhance the capabilities of those already operating. This would require some modest funding to resource CAN and pump prime new groups which CAN normally administers.

North Norfolk District Council supports the important work of Community Action Norfolk, whilst recognising there is a myriad of volunteer community groups and organisations working hard across the District. NNDC has a grant fund to support such organisations in this work (The North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund - NNSCF), where all applications are assessed with due diligence and against established criteria. We therefore encourage Community Action Norfolk to apply to the NNSCF for funding of up to £15,000 for this important work.

## **PLANNING WHITE PAPER**

The Notice of Motion (as outlined in the agenda) was proposed by Cllr A Brown and seconded by Cllr E Withington.

Cllr Brown began by saying that on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020, the Government had launched a Planning White Paper which proposed significant changes to the current system. He summarised the proposals, explaining that a 'pattern book' would replace local decision making which was likely to result in the building of bland, standard homes across the country. The current local plan process would remain but this was undermined by the introduction of an algorithm which would be used to calculate housing numbers for each area and which would significantly increase the number of homes required to be built in the District each year – by 59%. The current number of 400 would increase to 730 dwellings per annum to be built in North Norfolk. He went on to say the Council's Corporate Plan was challenged because the proposals gave developers a licence to build whatever they wanted to. The Planning White Paper does nothing to guarantee the delivery of good quality, sustainable, affordable homes in the District. Of particular concern was the introduction of the new infrastructure levy which was intended to replace the current s106 scheme as a self-financing means of running the reforms and the revised planning system. He concluded by saying within the proposals there was no provision for social housing, for releasing sub-standard green belt land, or a duty to co-operate on regional planning issues, no role for neighbourhood plans fitting in with local design codes. He said he predicted a resurgence of 'nimbyism' once MPs realised the impact on rural areas of the introduction of new national targets.

Cllr E Withington reserved her right to speak as seconder of the Motion.

1. Cllr L Shires said she had researched the proposals in depth and felt that a significant proportion of them were questionable. The main concern was that this Paper did not have enough focus on rural communities and some of the benefits that currently came with applications for small developments would be lost. It was hard to see how the proposals would impact people but it appeared that it would impact negatively on rural communities disproportionately.
2. Cllr G Hayman said that he supported the Motion. He said that some of his constituents had contacted him and he wanted to reassure them that their concerns about the impact on the environment and the amenity value of developments would be reflected in the Council's response to the White Paper.
3. Cllr A Fitch-Tillett said that the proposals were impractical and not suitable for a district with a long coastline and an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).
4. Cllr D Baker said he was pleased to see Members agreeing on the key aspects of the motion and he was broadly sympathetic. He agreed that it was right to air views as it was a consultation. He said that reforms to the planning system were long overdue and this should be recognised. There were two issues – the consultation paper and the housing allocations. The good aspects were that these were still plan-led proposals and the local plan structure would remain. It was a question of how much the proposals would impact on the local area. The loss of some of the current transparency arrangements such as notifying people of planning applications in their area did cause him concern and he felt that they were not right for a rural location. He said that it was important to clarify the role of planning departments and he had been reassured that they would still have a role in determining applications and notifying people of applications in their neighbourhood. Regarding the infrastructure levy, he said that it was well known that s106 agreements were not always fulfilled. If the levy was introduced, then it was important that any money generated was retained in North Norfolk. He

acknowledged that he was broadly sympathetic with these proposals. He then turned to the proposals regarding the housing allocations formula. The Government had committed to building 300,000 homes a year and he agreed with the early comments regarding the importance of affordable homes. He said the proposals were pushing demand into high demand areas where prices were high. He agreed that the District did not have the space or the infrastructure to increase housebuilding to the high level that was proposed. He reminded Members that this was a consultation and views and comments would be taken forward.

5. Cllr E Seward said that it would be best for Cllr Baker to request that the Government scraped the proposals now. He went onto say the current system was not perfect but it was democratic as it allowed local residents to have their say on planning applications in their area. Developers did not like Planning Committees deciding on applications because they did not always get their way. The LGA had shown that approval had been given for over one million homes but they had not been developed. It was not the planning system that was broken but the housing market. This country did not build houses that people could afford to buy. He referred to the western extension proposals in North Walsham and questioned what say local people and the town council would have over what should be built there. Under these new proposals it would be extremely limited. Referring to the new infrastructure levy, Cllr Seward commented that any money generated would be spent elsewhere. He supported the current system of s106 agreements because the money raised stayed in the community.
6. Cllr N Housden agreed with Cllr Seward's points. He said that the current mortgage lending situation combined with these proposals would impact on first time buyers in particular and until there was a situation where the mortgage stayed with the house, the system would remain flawed. He agreed that s106 agreements did work but they did need to be tightened up. Referring to Cllr Baker's earlier comments, he said that he had been pleased to see that he had raised the issue of second homes in Parliament and he sought assurance that Cllr Baker would not accept the bland response that had had received from the Minister and that he would do as much as he could to address the issue of second homes in Norfolk. Cllr Baker replied that he was meeting with the Minister to discuss the White Paper proposals and he also hoped to discuss the second homes issue.
7. Cllr E Withington said that the debate had been very interesting. She said that she wanted to focus on the impact of the proposals on North Norfolk and local communities. The new algorithm would mean 3000 were built over the next 5 years – double the current requirement. It was likely that this would present challenges with infrastructure. It was questionable whether the Council could meet the new target and whether there was the market appetite for such an increase in new homes. She went onto say that it would reduce the provision of rural homes for several reasons. Many would fall into the protected category, stifling the development of rural affordable homes. Affordable was an ill-fitting term with 70% of the full price remaining unaffordable for many. Therefore, this would not address the need for building affordable homes for rent or dealing with the issue of second homes. She concluded by saying the proposals were neither credible or reasonable and would be detrimental to both urban and rural communities.

It was proposed by Cllr A Brown, seconded by Cllr E Withington and

**RESOLVED**

By 29 votes in favour and six abstentions to support the motion.

**35 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**36 PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.

---

Chairman