

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 02 November 2020 remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Mrs S Bütikofer (Chair)	Ms V Gay
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Mr R Kershaw
Mr G Hayman	Miss L Shires
Mr N Lloyd	Mr J Toye
Mr E Seward	

Members also attending:

Cllr C Cushing
Cllr N Dixon
Cllr J Rest

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Democratic Services Manager, Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer, Head of Environmental Health, Chief Technical Accountant

47 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

49 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman said that there were two urgent items.

1. Statement from the Leader on the proposed national lockdown and the District Council's response:

The Leader began by saying that herself and the Chief Executive had attended a briefing from the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, which outlined the key messages from the Government.

She then outlined what the national lockdown proposals would mean for North Norfolk and the District Council:

As one of the local authority areas with the lowest rates of infection in the country, it was recognised that the decision by the Government to move forward with a national lockdown would be met with disappointment by many local people and businesses

after working so hard to keep rates of infection in the District low throughout the summer.

However, as many people in North Norfolk are in older age groups, and therefore the most vulnerable age group to the COVID infection, a further lockdown together with the low underlying rates in North Norfolk would give many people in North Norfolk comfort through further minimising the level of risk they might otherwise face in contracting the virus.

It was recognised that this announcement would create uncertainty for local people and particularly local businesses and the Council was therefore having a meeting of its internal GOLD civil contingency group to discuss arrangements that afternoon, and to develop the Council's formal response to the lockdown announcement. Initial thoughts were that the Council would continue to be able to provide the Council's core services without significant interruption as the majority of staff were already working from home.

The Community Support arrangements would be reinstated with wider promotion again of 01263 516000 and nndccovid19@north-norfolk.gov.uk, so that residents unable to access shopping online or through family and friends or collect prescriptions could be supported to Stay at Home in accordance with the Government guidance. In addition, the Council would also strengthen its Business Advice and Support service so that businesses which were required to close were supported quickly to access Government funding and other support through any discretionary support programme the Council was able to establish.

The opening of Council facilities would be reviewed. It was likely that playgrounds and car parks would be kept open so that local people could access the outdoors during the lockdown for their mental health wellbeing. Consideration would be given whether, due to lower use, some public conveniences could be closed where we have a number of facilities in one town so as to save money on cleaning, utilities etc – if such a decision was made, the nearest alternative facilities for people to use would be advertised.

The Leader concluded by saying that the Council would continue to work with partners across Norfolk in responding to the COVID situation in Norfolk – whilst our rates of infection remain some of the lowest in the country, colleagues in other Norfolk Districts had seen some localised spikes in infections, particularly associated with meat processing plants – Banham Poultry, Bernard Matthews and Cranswick Country Foods and through mutual aid arrangements some NNDC staff had volunteered to support Great Yarmouth and Breckland Councils to manage the local outbreaks in their areas. Council leaders had written expressing their thanks to us all recognising that across Norfolk we are all in this together.

2. Victory Housing Trust & Flagship Group Limited Merger

The Chairman said that this item was urgent due to the delay that would be caused by waiting until the December meeting of Cabinet.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet give consent to Victory as outlined in the main body of the report and that the Head of Legal be authorised to communicate that decision to Victory and

make any consequential legal arrangements

Reason for the decision:

To provide consent ahead of the merger between Victory and Flagship Housing Associations, as required by the Transfer agreement.

50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

51 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman reminded Members that they could ask questions during the meeting as issues arose.

Cllr Cushing said he believed that there was widespread discontent across the Council. He referred to the recent resignation of a Member from one of the political groups and commented on the rising costs of the management restructure and an investigation into alleged financial misconduct. He asked if any additional protections had since been put in place to protect the Council from future financial malpractice. The Leader replied that she could not comment on anything related to the police investigation at this time and doing so could prejudice the outcome.

Cllr Cushing asked when the police investigation would conclude. The Chief Executive said that Cllr Cushing had been briefed on this matter and would be updated on any progress. He said it was not helpful to comment at this time. He added that once there was an outcome from the investigation, a report would be brought before the appropriate committee.

52 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET WORKING PARTIES

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Cllr J Toye, to introduce this item. Cllr Toye said that the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party had met on the 12th October and made two recommendations (as outlined in the agenda). Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for Coast, said that she was fully supportive of the revised coastal policies.

It was proposed by Cllr J Toye, seconded by Cllr A Fitch-Tillett and

RESOLVED

To approve the following recommendations from the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party meeting of 12th October 2020:

LOCAL PLAN DRAFT POLICIES SD11: COASTAL EROSION, SD12: COASTAL ADAPTATION AND ENV3: HERITAGE & UNDEVELOPED COAST

That the revised Policies SD11, SD12 and ENV3 be endorsed and responsibility for drafting such an approach, including that of finalising the associated policies, be delegated to the Planning Policy Manager and Coastal Manager.

THE GLAVEN VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS & MANAGEMENT PLANS 2020

1. That the draft Conservation Area Appraisals for Baconsthorpe, Glandford, Hempstead, Holt and Letheringsett be approved for public consultation.
2. That following consultation, the amended appraisals be brought back to Working Party for consideration and subsequent adoption by Cabinet.

53 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MATTERS

Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, said that there was one recommendation for Cabinet regarding the resumption of the Environment Forum sessions. He said that there was a strong feeling that this was an important strand of contact for the public with the Council and it was felt that it should continue.

He added that there was an outstanding request for a pre-scrutiny workshop on the Council's medium term financial strategy and a review of income streams. He said that it had been difficult to schedule this session and he requested Cabinet's support in expediting this issue.

He went on to say that there was a similar situation regarding the Digital by Design briefing and again, requested that this was moved forwards.

The Leader agreed and said she supported his request.

54 BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 PERIOD 6

Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced this item. He explained that at the time the report compared the actual expenditure and income position at the end of September 2020 to the updated budget for 2020/21. There had been two previous COVID 19 financial updates in May and August and at that time the projected deficit was forecast to have reduced to £0.4m.

The report also provided an update on the impact of the pandemic on the Council's financial position and the likely impact on the outturn budget. He said that following a further tranche of funding from the Government, a balanced budget was currently forecast. However, it wasn't yet clear what impact the second lockdown period would have on the Council's finances.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett referred to the second recommendation and said that the Council's adaptation fund was there for the purpose of careful financial management within the Coastal Partnership East organisation. She urged Members to support the proposal.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr A Fitch-Tillett and

RESOLVED:

- 1) To recommend to Full Council the release of £247,083 capital receipts to increase the coastal adaption fund; reinvesting proceeds previously received from the sale of land.**

Reason for the decision:

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

55 TREASURY HALF YEAR UPDATE 2020/21

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Seward, introduced the report. He explained that the report set out the treasury management activities actually undertaken during the first half of the 2020/21 financial year compared with the Treasury Management Strategy for the year.

Cllr Lloyd commented that it was unfortunate that there had been such low interest rates this year but it not surprising given the circumstances.

It was proposed by Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr N Lloyd

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council be asked to RESOLVE that The Treasury Management Half Yearly Report 2020/21 is approved.
2. That the Council be asked to APPROVE changes to the Counterparty Limits

56 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS 2021/22

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Seward, introduced the report. He explained that the legislation provided local authorities with the power to make changes to the level of council tax discount in relation to classes of property. He said the only proposed changes related to empty properties. It was proposed to impose a 300% charge on properties that had been empty for 10 years or more.

It was proposed by Cllr E Seward, seconded by Cllr G Hayman and

RESOLVED to recommend to Council:

Recommendations: Members recommend that Full Council shall resolve that under section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and other enabling powers one of the following applies:

Recommendation 1

- (a) The discounts for the year 2021/22 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 2.1.
- (b) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 24 months) is continued at 100% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
- (c) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 60 months) is continued at 200% of the Council Tax charge for that

- dwelling
- (d) The premium for long term empty properties (those that have been empty for a consecutive period longer than 120 months) is set at 300% of the Council Tax charge for that dwelling
 - (e) To continue to award a local discount of 100% for eligible cases of care leavers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).
 - (f) That an exception to the levy charges may be made by the Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio holder for Finance, on advice of the Revenues Manager in the circumstances laid out in section 3.6 of this report.

Recommendation 2

- (a) those dwellings that are specifically identified under regulation 6 of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings)(England) Regulations 2003 will retain the 50% discount and;
- (b) those dwellings described or geographically defined at Appendix A which in the reasonable opinion of the Head of Finance and Asset Management are judged not to be structurally capable of occupation all year round and were built before the restrictions of seasonal usage were introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, will be entitled to a 35% discount.

In accordance with the relevant legislation these determinations shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating in North Norfolk before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determinations.

Reasons for
Recommendations:

To set appropriate council tax discounts which will apply in 2021/22 in accordance with the legal requirements and to raise additional council tax revenue.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Leader proposed that meeting went into private session to consider the final item of business.

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

RESOLVED

To pass the following resolution:

“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.”

57 PRIVATE BUSINESS

LEASE OF COMMERCIAL PREMISES

RESOLVED

To approve the lease terms as detailed in the exempt Appendix to the report.

Reason for the decision:

It was above the key decision threshold.

The meeting ended at 10.32 am.

Chairman