

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of North Norfolk District Council held on 24 April 2019 at the Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer at 6.00 pm.

Members Present:

Mrs S Arnold	Mr M Knowles	Mr J Rest
Mr D Baker	Mr J Lee	Mr R Reynolds
Dr P Butikofer	Mr N Lloyd	Mr E Seward
Mrs S Butikofer	Mrs B McGoun	Mr R Shepherd
Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds	Mrs M Millership	Mr B Smith
Mr N Coppack	Mrs A Moore	Mr N Smith
Mrs H Cox	Mrs P W Moore	Mr R Stevens
Mr N Dixon	Mrs J Oliver	Ms K Ward
Ms J English	Mr N Pearce	Mr A Yiasimi
Mrs A Fitch-Tillett	Mr S Penfold	Mr D Young
Mr T FitzPatrick	Mrs G Perry-Warnes	
Ms V R Gay	Mr R Price	
Mrs A Green		
Mrs P Grove-Jones		

Officers in Attendance: The Corporate Directors, the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Finance & Assets, the Communications and PR Manager and the Democratic Services Manager

Press: Present

122. PRAYERS

The Chairman invited Cllr Hilary Cox, Methodist Lay Preacher, to lead prayers

123. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman began by paying tribute to all Members – those retiring and those standing for re-election for their dedication and commitment to the Council. He wished everyone luck for the future.

He then talked about forthcoming events and activities that he had been invited to, including the Break charity golf day on 26th April and reminded members about his upcoming parachute jump for his nominated charity, EACH which was scheduled to take place on 4th May.

The Chairman concluded by saying that he would be holding a thanksgiving service for his year in office at St Andrews Church, Holt on 12th May. He hoped to see as many members there as possible.

124. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

125. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs V FitzPatrick, B Hannah, S Hester, B Palmer, M Prior, D Smith, V Uprichard and L Walker

126. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

127. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

128. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

Dr F Turner asked the following question:

'North Walsham is the largest town in North Norfolk. It is growing rapidly and has been the focus of ongoing concern with its need for regeneration in both economic and cultural terms. Can NNDC now commit to very significant financial resources for the infrastructure of North Walsham? The right time to build quality of life outcomes for its residents is now'.

Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance and local member for North Walsham North said that the Council was facing a very challenging financial situation. North Walsham was earmarked as a growth town and 2000 more new homes were planned. The Town Council and residents were clear that the town needed improved infrastructure to support this growth and to remove some of the through traffic. He said that at the end of March 2019, the Council had submitted a bid to the Government's High Street Fund for the town in conjunction with a Community Interest Company (CIC). In addition, the town had submitted a successful bid to the Council's Market Towns Initiative (MTI) scheme and had received £100,000 of funding in the first round.

He went onto say that the planning application for the improvement of St Nicholas' Precinct had been approved and it that the proposal for an all-weather artificial football pitch was proceeding.

Cllr Seward reminded Members that in 2017, there was a Norfolk County Council Highways Network Initiative which undertook a feasibility study in growth towns. North Walsham was chosen as one of those towns and work had commenced in December 2017. A new bus interchange was being developed and would be ready by May 2019. Also, a new mast which would improve mobile telecommunications was almost ready. He concluded by saying that there was substantial progress being made in the town and this would continue.

The Chairman then invited Elaine Addison to speak.

Ms Addison said that she was speaking on behalf of the local Labour Party. She said that they supported the motion (Agenda Item 12) and that climate change was now the biggest threat to humanity, impacting on the most vulnerable citizens. Climate change would impact on food production and fuel prices would rise. Eventually it would impact on everyone and everything. She said that it was right that the Council should set an example and declare a climate emergency.

Cllr Karen Ward, proposer of the Motion, thanked Ms Addison for her comments and said that she would respond in full when the item was debated.

129. PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman invited each Portfolio Holder to provide an update on their portfolio:

1. Cllr K Ward, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Planning Policy and Housing began by saying that it had been a very busy time. The Council continued to perform well on appeals and the Local Plan consultation was due to start on 7th May, with sessions being held at venues across the District. She thanked Cllrs Arnold, Gay and Young for their help in proof-reading the consultation document. She then informed Members that a recruitment consultant had been appointed to deliver a shortlist of suitable candidates for the two vacant senior officer posts within the major developments team. Expectation was for shortlisting in mid-May with interviews in the first week of June.

The Corpusty and Saxthorpe Neighbourhood Plan was approved under the Leader's delegated authority. It was to be welcomed as the first "made" neighbourhood plan in North Norfolk.

Cllr Ward then spoke about her housing portfolio, highlighting the following areas;

- A new shared post of Housing Strategy & Delivery Manager had been created, supported by a Community Housing Enabler post.
- Affordable Housing Stock – concerns had been raised about Victory Housing Association's disposal policy which had resulted in a net increase of only 9 dwellings between 2014 and 2018. Flagship had recently acquired VHA and had assured the Council that the policy would change.
- Homelessness – the bid for additional funds had been a success and there would be a new focus on the private rental sector with a more targeted approach on those households most at risk.

Cllr J Lee commented that it would have been beneficial to receive written reports before the meeting to avoid lengthy verbal updates. The Monitoring Officer replied that the decision to go ahead with the meeting was taken quite late due to a lack of substantial business. It was therefore agreed that verbal updates would be sufficient on this occasion.

2. Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for Coast and Health & Wellbeing, then provided a lengthy update on the situation regarding the Sandscaping Scheme and sand martins at Bacton. (attached Minutes Appendix A).
Cllr J Oliver asked for an update on work undertaken to assist veterans over the last 4 months. Cllr Fitch-Tillett said that she would provide a written response.
3. Cllr N Dixon, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development updated members on business support. He said that The Economic Growth Team had engaged 407 business via business events and has had 'meaningful' engagement with a further 284 businesses. Typically, this might include support for businesses in respect of planned projects (e.g. sites/premises/extensions), assisting with recruitment needs (including apprenticeships, skills need etc.), supporting new start-ups and site visits with larger employers. Regarding tourism, he said that the Council had sponsored Visit North Norfolk's (VNN) latest marketing campaign, 'North Norfolk, Naturally'. The campaign had received over half a million film views since it launched in June. The first year of the campaign ends in April and the second year begins in May. VNN has now filmed six new thirty second videos which will feature over the coming months. The Deep History Coast continued to progress well and a marketing campaign commencing this spring, would include innovative local and national publicity, a social media campaign, the development of a new website and the creation of two inspiring experiential films to appeal to all audiences - illustrating all that the Deep History Coast had in store. He then spoke about the business enterprise zone at Egmere, informing members that

following the receipt of the Feasibility Report (provided by the BE Group) discussions have been held about how the site can be developed and promoted, including:-

- a. Dialogue with prospective developers/ investors
- b. Discussions with NALEP with respect to the funding position
- c. Exploration of the potential for a wider range of uses to occupy the site

He concluded his update by telling Members about the next 'Coffee means business' event scheduled for 21st May at Sculthorpe Moor nature reserve.

Cllr J Rest asked about Egmere. He said that Members had been told that there was a high degree of urgency to proceed with Tidal transit tenancy as they were the only tenant. However, he believed that the company had already made arrangements to move to alternative premises. He wondered whether this was the case at the time of the Full Council meeting on 26th September 2018 and whether any member or officer had been aware of the situation. Cllr Dixon replied that two meetings had been held on 4 February 2019 with each of the key partners. Three Cabinet members and the Head of Paid Service (SB) had been in attendance. During one of these meetings it had emerged that Tidal Transit had moved to new premises in Egmere on a two year lease and they had no unmet accommodation needs. The lease arrangements had been agreed before September and there was no urgency to build Unit 1. Regarding timescales, he said that the decision to build could be delayed until July 2019. Cllr Dixon concluded by saying that Members who had pushed for no delay in the project should provide a response outlining their reasons.

4. Cllr S Bütikofer, Leader of the Council, provided an update on her portfolio areas. She referred to the recent issues regarding the netting on the cliffs at Bacton, spoke about the forthcoming District and Parish elections and informed members that the Deep History Coast project was progressing well with a series of ambassador events planned, the refurbishment of the Tourist Information Centre in Cromer and the launch of an app. She then informed members that Eastlaw continued to deliver in line with their predicted income for this year and was exploring new avenues of work with other local authorities. Democratic Services were busy preparing for the new Council in May 2019 and looked forward to welcoming both new and returning members. She concluded with an update on the Benefits service, informing members that following the retirement of the Benefits Manager earlier in the year, two people had been jointly appointed to the role. North Norfolk had almost 8000 claimants and the service was going through a period of change in respect of Universal Credit and the Council was experiencing a high volume of change of circumstances. The service received its Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Final Audit report (NN1908) on 7th February 2019, which resulted in an overall assessment of a substantial assurance.

A number of business improvements had been identified including automation of the processing system, shared working with the Revenues Service to prevent hand offs, online application forms, and a new 24/7 online self-service tool. There were two major projects coming up in 2020 which will require project teams to form now. These are the Council Tax Support scheme for April 2020, and the procurement of the processing system for October 2020.

5. Cllr N Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Property, updated Members on his portfolio areas. He said that the processing of direct debits for garden bin payments had gone well, with 13000 customers signing up so far. Preparation for the 2019 Greenbuild event was underway. Regarding the property portfolio, he said that works on Cromer Pier and Lusher's Passage in Sheringham continued to progress. The roof works at the Council offices were going well as was the installation of PV panels. The Grove Lane site in Holt was now completed. Cllr T FitzPatrick asked whether the

Council was intending to respond to the Met Office survey on Climate Change. Cllr Lloyd said that a written response would be provided.

6. Cllr E Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Revenues informed Members that council tax collection was going well and was currently above target.
7. Cllr H Cox, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Licensing advised Members that the procurement process for taxi test stations was underway. It was anticipated that there would be additional improvements to the licensing service following the implementation of new software. Regarding the Leisure portfolio, she said that the Council's six sports and leisure facilities continued to perform well, with 546,000 visitors in 2018/19. Sports clubs and hubs currently had 2500 users. She said that work on the skate park in Sheringham was now complete, and park runs continued to be successful with 331 events having taken place since they started. She was pleased to say that the Council had retained all six blue flags on its beaches and all of its green flags. Cllr Cox concluded by saying that it was proposed that there should be a review of the Council's 30 pay and display car parks and that it was hoped that this would be undertaken by an Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group.

The Chairman advised Members that there was some time remaining for questions. Cllr J Oliver asked for an update on progress regarding the proposed Wetherspoon's in North Walsham. She also referred to the IT support offered to the Chamber of Trade in Sheringham and asked whether this would be rolled out to other Chambers of Trade. Cllr Lloyd replied that regarding Wetherspoon's, all outstanding queries had been answered. There had been further queries and the Legal team had been instructed to answer these. The Council had done everything it could to progress the scheme.

130. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr J Rest asked the Leader whether she could confirm that the earlier issue raised in relation to Egmore would be pursued by the Monitoring Officer. The Leader confirmed that this was the case.

131. OPPOSITION BUSINESS

The following item of Opposition Business had been received:

'When Council agreed the Budget for 2019/20, the following was resolved:

To transfer £1,000,000 from the Property Investment Fund reserve, £500,000 from the Communities reserve and £500,000 from the Benefits reserve to establish a property investment company for the purpose of helping to address local housing need and to create a property portfolio to provide a revenue stream for the Council to help address the financial deficit in future years

We, the Opposition on the District Council, are concerned that to date there has been almost no information or detail supporting this proposal. We consider that:

- (a) given the large sum of money involved, and
- (b) the advantageous tax position of local authorities
- (c) the lack of clarity or detail around the proposed objects and operations of the company;
- (d) the absence of any detail around governance arrangements
- (e) the absence of any information around membership of the company, and
- (f) the absence of a business case to support the proposal,

That Members should have the opportunity to debate the pros and cons of establishing such a property investment company, including an assessment of the need for such a company, the likely profit to be generated and the proposed governance arrangements.

Recommendation:

Council recommends to Cabinet that:

- (1) Members are given the information they require to assess the proposal to establish a property investment company, and to assess whether that proposal represents value for money, particularly bearing in mind the Council's best value duty, and
- (2) If Members, having received the requisite information, agree to the proposal, then subsequent scrutiny of the operation of the property investment company should be through an appropriate body such as the Asset Management Working Party or a Cabinet Working Party specifically established for this purpose.

Cllr J Lee introduced the motion by asking why the Council was intending to establish a property investment fund.

The Leader replied that the Council needed to make money going forward. She said that she was happy to accept the proposed recommendations, however, it would be wrong for Cabinet to assess its own work so she said that the Asset Management Working Party would be more appropriate as it was a sub-committee of Overview & Scrutiny.

The Chairman invited Members to speak:

Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds referred to the business case required for establishing a community fridge scheme and asked whether a business case would be required for the property investment company. The Leader confirmed that it would.

Cllr D Baker made reference to the advantageous tax position of local authorities (section b of the Motion) and asked why this was the case.

It was proposed by Cllr J Lee, seconded by Cllr J Oliver and

RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet that:

- (1) Members are given the information they require to assess the proposal to establish a property investment company, and to assess whether that proposal represents value for money, particularly bearing in mind the Council's best value duty, and
- (2) If Members, having received the requisite information, agree to the proposal, then subsequent scrutiny of the operation of the property investment company should be through an appropriate body such as the Asset Management Working Party or a Cabinet Working Party specifically established for this purpose.

132. NOTICE OF MOTION

Cllr K Ward introduced the following motion:

This Council acknowledges;

- The devastating impacts that climate change and global temperature increases will have on the lives and livelihoods of people around the world, including on the health, safety and wellbeing of North Norfolk residents;
- The urgent need for action to be taken fast enough for there to be a chance of further climate change being limited to avoid the worst impacts of drought, floods and extreme heat;
- The opportunity for individuals and organisations at all levels to take action on reducing carbon emissions, from both production and consumption;

- The need to enable low carbon living across society through changes to laws, taxation, infrastructure, policies and plans;
- Our responsibility to help secure an environmentally sustainable future for our residents and in relation to the global effects of climate change.

Therefore, this Council resolves to;

1. Declare a Climate Emergency;
2. Engage and work in partnership with our partners in the public, private and community sectors, including central government to facilitate bold action to ensure North Norfolk is able to play its role in helping the UK to deliver against the commitments made nationally and internationally at the 2015 Paris Summit;
3. Prepare an Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy in line with this pledge, and, with our partners across the community, to develop an action plan and 'route map' to a sustainable, low carbon future for our community;
4. Launch engagement with the public to:
 - Improve "carbon literacy" of all citizens;
 - Encourage and support leadership on this issue in all sectors of society;
 - Obtain meaningful public input into the North Norfolk Environmental Sustainability & Climate
 - Change Strategy and action planning;
 - Facilitate wide community engagement and behavioural change

She referred to the public speakers at the last meeting of Council and said that members of Cabinet had met with them subsequently to discuss their concerns further. They now had a better understanding of the issues being raised and felt that Council should have the opportunity to have a full debate on the matter. She then referred to the alternative motion that had been circulated by Cllr Oliver at the start of the meeting. Cllr N Lloyd, seconder of the motion reserved his right to speak.

The Chairman asked the Monitoring Officer to advise Members on the alternative motion. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the circulated document was an alternative motion not an amendment to the original motion. The Constitution required that all motions were submitted to Democratic Services 7 clear days before the meeting. It was therefore disallowed.

Cllr J Oliver replied that at a recent meeting of Council at Norfolk County Council, various motions had been put forward and the motion she had placed before Members had been supported unanimously. She said that it made sense to work together and be constructive.

- 1) Cllr D Young said that the alternative motion did not declare a climate emergency. It did however, refer to working with partners – as did the original motion.
- 2) Cllr D Baker said that nothing was gained by having different ideas and approaches. It was time to come together and collaborate.
- 3) Cllr T FitzPatrick commented that the people of North Norfolk expected councillors to work together in a coherent way. He suggested that the original motion was withdrawn, redrafted and brought to the next meeting of Council.
- 4) The Leader said that she could not believe that anyone would support the withdrawal of the motion. Delaying was not acceptable – as reflected by the strength of feeling nationally on this issue.
- 5) Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds said that she was surprised that this issue was considered urgent, when only a couple of months ago it was not supported at a Council meeting.
- 6) Cllr S Penfold commented that it made sense to support bring this forward now. The Administration had listened to the views of the public speakers and now fully understood the urgency of the issue.

The Chairman asked Cllr N Lloyd, seconder of the motion to speak. Cllr Lloyd said that he really hoped Members would be able to pull together on this issue. There were only 12 years left to take action before the damage from climate change became irreversible. He urged Members to support the motion.

Cllr K Ward said that although the alternative motion was disallowed, the Administration fully intended to move forward with this issue on a collaborative basis.

It was proposed by Cllr K Ward, seconded by Cllr N Lloyd and

RESOLVED

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133. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None

134. PRIVATE BUSINESS

None

Before closing the meeting, the Chairman invited Cllr H Cox to say a few words. Cllr Cox thanked everyone she had worked with at the Council – staff and members for their support, patience, friendship and love. She wished everyone the best.

The meeting concluded at 7.43 pm

Chairman