

Infrastructure and Development Select Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Friday 23 February 2024
10.00am, held at County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Cllr James Bensly Chair

Cllr David Bills
Cllr Claire Bowes
Cllr Chris Dawson
Cllr Rob Colwell
Cllr Philip Duigan

Cllr William Richmond
Cllr Chrissie Rumsby
Cllr Robert Savage
Cllr Vic Thomson
Cllr Martin Wilby

Also Present:

Cllr Eric Vardy
Cllr Lana Hempsall

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport.

Also Present:

David Alfrey	Interim Director of Highways, Transport and Waste, Community and Environmental Services (CES)
Dan Beenham	Residual Waste Services Manager, CES
Colin Bye	Senior Coastal Advisor, Coastal Partnership East
Grahame Bygrave	Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Fiona Johnson	Partnership Manager, Highways, CES
Nicola Ledain	Committee Officer, Democratic Services
Mark Ogden	Flood and Water Manager, CES
Sarah Rhoden	Director of Community Information and Learning, CES
Denise Saadvandi	Head of Service, Adult Learning, CES
Chris Smith	Senior Advisor Coastwise, Environment Agency

1. Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies received from Cllr Jim Moriarty, Cllr Catherine Rowett and Cllr Tony White (substituted by Cllr Philip Duigan)

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the below amendments;
- Cllr Martin Wilby to be added on the list of attendees.
 - A further update Country parks hasn't come back to committee

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr David Bills declared an 'other' interest as he was on the board on Norse Environmental Services as a Director.

4. Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chair thanked Cllr Thomson for chairing the last meeting of the Committee in his absence. He also took the opportunity to thank Cllr Maxine Webb for her time, effort and hard work whilst being part of the Committee.

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 There were no public questions received.

6. Local Member Issues / Questions

- 6.1 There were no member issues or questions.

7. Adult learning annual plan

- 7.1 The Committee received the report from the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services. The report set out how the service's proposed strategic and operational activities contributed to Norfolk's priorities.
- 7.2 Cllr Bills explained that he had the honour of sitting on the Adult Learning Steering Group and it had been a joy to see the way the group have worked and developed especially during covid, which enabled the facilities to be developed and spread throughout the community. There had been many positive comments from tutors and learners and Ofsted themselves. The effect on individuals of their learning was not just the ability but improved their mind, confidence and had more ability to partake in discussions and an overall general life improvement.
- 7.3 Through the benefits of the County Deal, the funding budget of the service would be devolved to Norfolk County Council from the Department of Education and therefore NCC would be able to better tailor the provision and focus on what Norfolk needed.
- 7.4 There was discretionary learning support funding available for learners with an income of less than £33,000 per year which meant those learners were able to access free resources such as laptops, support with WIFI, cost of childcare or travel. Officers reported that most learners access fully funded courses.
- 7.5 The committee congratulated the service and all those working within adult learning. It was noted the good work that libraries were doing as well by assisting delivering the service.
- 7.6 Officers explained that there was an Education, Health and Care Plan coordinator who worked alongside learners, and once enrolled those with disabilities or learning difficulties were asked to self-refer. If learners were hesitant to self-refer, tutors were highly trained and could identify those with difficulties and would potentially suggest that the EGHCP coordinator worked with them and could suggest a way forward. Learners could have learning support from a 1:1 tutor adapted resources could be provided. The service also had a learning services team who provided advice on the correct pathway to take.

- 7.7 The service tried to operate from as many venues as possible and 35% of the provision was online, which meant that residents could join a course from whenever they lived in Norfolk, with little need to partake in person.
- 7.8 Members congratulated the service and the 290 staff members. The developments in West Norfolk and the multi-user hub were welcomed and it was acknowledged that there were gaps in West Norfolk. Members were keen to learn about the future of Hunstanton library and the opportunities that might bring. Members stressed the importance of the mobile library service, and it was hoped that this would remain. Officers clarified that mobile libraries did not offer adult learning courses. There had been some changes with the mobile library in the last year and the impact of those changes were to be reviewed. There had also been mitigations put in place for those changes. The mobile libraries covered around 1000 stops every four weeks across Norfolk.
- 7.9 Having considered the report, the Committee:
1. **NOTED** the Adult Learning Annual Plan for 2024-25, in advance of a Cabinet decision on 4th March 2024.
 2. **NOTED** the Adult Learning service's exceptional performance and contribution to Norfolk priorities.

8. Coastal erosion and flooding

- 8.1 The Committee received the report from the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services, which formed an update to the 22 November 2023 Scrutiny report on Coastal Matters, where it was agreed that the issue of coastal erosion and flooding should be considered in further detail by this Select Committee.
- 8.2 The Chair informed the Committee that a letter had been sent from the Leader and the local Members of Parliament to the Secretary of State and he thanked the Leader of Norfolk County Council for arranging that. He also expressed thanks to the cross-party working group that had been happening which would hopefully find a solution.
- 8.3 The Chair highlighted 2.5 on page 68 of the agenda which could provide the solution to the problems which local communities were facing. He offered to share correspondence between Save Hembsy Coastline Campaign Group and CPE which he had been party to which was exploring and challenging the guidance which made Hembsy ineligible for the Government funding to help the coastline communities subject to erosion and the loss of their homes.
- 8.4 Members requested that the £80 million which had been the figure quoted for Hembsy coastline was now out of date and should be reviewed. It was essential that the amount quoted and considered was correct and up to date. Officers explained that the alliance strategy was being reviewed as well as the programme for the rest of the year, so it was expected for them to change soon.
- 8.5 The Interim Executive of Community and Environmental Services reassured the Committee that the team who manned the Floodline number 24/7 had been able to deal with the thousands of calls that they had received recently due to the recent storms.

- 8.6 In response to concerns about the length of time that it took for flood reports to be compiled, officers reported that whilst it did take approximately a year, this did not stop the project work or maintenance repair work. The work would remain ongoing even though the investigation took longer. Officers explained that 160 properties are affected by flooding each year which affected the timescales involved.
- 8.7 Whilst some Committee Members questioned if the council were appearing to send the right message to Government by not declaring a climate emergency but asking for funding to help homes subject to coastal erosion, the Cabinet Member added that the council should continue to lobby Government for extra funding to help understand the problems that this country was facing. There had been one to ones held with MP's and other key stakeholders.
- 8.8 Members also acknowledged the good work that the Internal Drainage Boards carried out to try and mitigate the flooding but were concerned that the recently suggested extra funding for the IDB's came from the Environment Agency which was not a realistic solution.
- 8.9 Officers explained that the drainage assets in Norfolk were huge with approximately 500,000 drainage assets to maintain. Taking that and the large geographical area, NCC has several contractors who they would rely upon to deal with highways issues. There were times of the year when the contractors resources were stretched and Storm Babet generated an extra 300 defects for the contractors to deal with but they were coping well under very difficult circumstances.
- 8.10 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste explained that an initiative had started which gave £5k quicker to those people who had suffered from the effects of flooding. This was an officer's initiative which had improved the timeliness of getting money to people.
- 8.11 It was clarified that the Leader of NCC met with Steve Barclay, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and MP's Sir Brandon Lewis, Duncan Baker, Jerome Mayhew, Liz Truss, James Wilde and George Freeman. The Chair acknowledged that the MP's had been very supportive, particularly Brandon Lewis, MP for the Hemsby area.
- 8.12 By introducing a Minister for Flooding and Erosion would reduce the complexities of too many agencies involved. It would provide a clear line to Government and reduce the involvement.
- 8.13 The Committee heard that the Shoreline Management Plan Explorer was launched at the end of January aimed at boosting engagement with the Shoreline Management Plans to make them more accessible. The Environment Agency had a national communications strategy regarding them so the Committee would see them advertised over the next six months. National Coast Erosion M would also be happening this and would be part of the explorer and also be open to the communities. It was also confirmed that the Marine Management Organisation had started an East Marine Review which was at a very early stage.
- 8.14 Members felt it was important to maintain the pressure on National Highways. There had been numerous occasions over the last few months where roads couldn't cope with the amount of water. In addition, the council should be lobbying to give greater enforcement powers which forced landowners and farmers to keep water ways clear.

8.15 The Committee heard that the Coastwise project was part of an Environment Agency and being delivered by North Norfolk District Council. It was aimed to help communities that were at risk of coastal erosion to have an adaption plan. It was not always possible for all parts of the coast to have sea defences and this project would help provide ways to adapt. This has been funded to explore what adaption and transition plans could look like especially in the North Norfolk area and to develop ways to make these plans. There was a high risk of erosion in the next 20 years in this area. The Coastwise project was continuing until 2027 and would be carrying out a lot of engagement with those communities and Officers encouraged Members to help and support where they could. The evidence gained from the NNDC coast would be used for other areas of the communities and to develop adaption learning nationally due to the complex geology of the Norfolk coast.

8.16 Having reviewed the report, the Committee:

1. **NOTED** the risk of coastal erosion and flooding to the County of Norfolk.
2. **SUPPORTED** the commitment that all tiers of government in Norfolk, including the County Council Cabinet, should continue to lobby central government for more funding for coastal erosion and flood prevention schemes.
3. Continued to **SUPPORT** the appointment of a Minister for the Coast, so that coastal communities have a champion sitting within government to focus on coastal erosion and flooding issues.

9. Waste Services Review

9.1 The Committee received the report from the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which took back at the achievements of the Waste Service and looked ahead to some of the challenges in a landscape of emerging new policies that would increase demands on Councils to deliver better environmental performance and a wider range of waste services. The report also highlighted how the County Council continued to support residents in reducing the amount of waste they create, improve the opportunities for recycling and composting and drive down the amount of waste being sent to landfill. This report also provided an overview and update on the services delivered by the County Council in its role as the Waste Disposal Authority for Norfolk. This role includes the provision of recycling centres, the disposal of residual waste, and making payments to the District, City and Borough Councils to help support the costs of the recycling services that they deliver.

9.2 With reference to 2.2 of the report, it was confirmed that that the proposal to pursue the introduction of a booking system at the recycling centre would be progressed. Officers would work carefully to ensure that a tried and tested system was introduced. It was hoped that the system would improve traffic management. More information and timescales would be given when further work had taken place. The Cabinet Member insisted that it would be a phased introduction over a period of time and reassured the Committee that it would be properly promoted and advertised with the due notice. In areas of the Country where this had been introduced, it had improved the customer experience. 44% of recycling centres across the Country had a booking system. With the recent Government changes regarding the disposing of DIY waste and the limits of visits, a booking system would make those limits possible to monitor.

- 9.3 The Chair highlighted the good work of the 'Saving Horsey Seals' group as reported in the report. He also informed the Committee that they were engaged in talks with supermarkets about selling activities for the beach which were not harmful to the wildlife.
- 9.4 With regards to point 2.3.3 of the report and the details regarding the incinerator, members of the Committee referred to a decision made on Tuesday afternoon by the planning inspectorate regarding an incinerator in Wisbech. It was suggested that full council agreed that NCC would never send any waste there. Officers explained that clarity was being sought regarding the decision made as the details had disappeared from the planning inspectorate website. When there was an update, Officers would inform the Committee.
- 9.5 Members expressed concern regarding the casual littering that occurred over the County and exclaimed that more should be done to educate as towns and villages were being ruined by the minority. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that this was already being considered by the Norfolk Waste Partnership Group and was already on a future agenda of the group. Officers also informed the Committee that NCC worked on waste initiatives and community projects with schools and would share more information to the Committee.
- 9.6 Members welcomed the new recycling centre in the south of the county. They also complemented the hazardous waste days which enabled residents to dispose of hazardous waste safely and responsibly.
- 9.7 Officers confirmed that waste was transferred to a waste facility near Ipswich, Suffolk.
- 9.8 Having reviewed the report, the Committee:
1. **NOTED** on the review including the County Council's current waste policies and emerging challenges in emerging national waste policy.
 2. **NOTED** the arrangements outside Norfolk for the 'incineration of waste or fuel derived from waste' set out in sections 2.3.3 and 6.6.2 of this report, in accordance with the County Council's second Waste Policy.

10. Supporting Active and Sustainable Travel to School, including School Streets

- 10.1 The Committee received the report from the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which
- 10.2 Cllr Savage, who represented the area where two of the School Street trials had been carried out, one being successful, acknowledged that schemes such as School Streets always took a while to have full uptake and they took a lot of engagement and consultation with residents, parents, and schools. It was noted that it was disappointing that it had not worked as well as it had in the first year of operating. There was also concern expressed regarding the proposal of ANPR safety cameras being installed. There needed to be a physical barrier to act as a reminder to abide by the rules of the scheme. It was suggested that the consultation needed to continue, and the school was crucial in supporting the future of the scheme and to assist its sustainability. It was suggested that that it could be part of the prospectus for future parents. The Cabinet Member clarified that ANPR cameras were not an approach that were favoured.

- 10.3 The feedback from those schemes which had not been successful varied. There was a lot of data to be examined before any conclusions could be made.
- 10.4 Members claimed that signage and polite words would not deter parents and carers from stopping at the school gates. Enforcement was the only way to deter people. It was suggested that, by working with local police teams, warnings could be issued followed by tickets if individuals persisted. It was confirmed by officers that zig zags on roads outside schools were legally enforceable as they were subject to a Traffic Regulation Order. They were clearly marked out and parents would always be prevented from stopping there.
- 10.5 Members explained that when the school bus service in Carbrooke had been withdrawn, it had meant that those attending the nearby school had to walk 3 miles through trods and unsafe public footpaths. Members asked if the footpaths and rights of way and the suitability and safety of the route could be re-assessed again following this pilot. Officers reassured members that they would review it as part of day-to-day to business.
- 10.6 Members reported that at Field Lane in Gaywood there was a TRO in place with enforcement being encouraged as much as possible through spot checking by the local police. It was being continuously raised at SNAP meetings as police were concerned that there was persistent dangerous parking. The volunteers who were trying to help were being subject to abuse which the Committee agreed, was not acceptable. Officers agreed to speak to the local Member following the meeting.
- 10.7 The Committee noted that this reinforced that initiatives, plans and ideas had to be embraced by the public and parents to make them work. It would also be helpful if those initiatives could be widely publicised through Members.
- 10.8 Having reviewed the report, the committee
1. NOTED that alternative options for enforcing the Robert Kett School Street are being reviewed, which will help inform the delivery of School Streets elsewhere in Norfolk, subject to external funding being secured.
 2. NOTED the wide range of existing interventions available to schools, including those which are low or zero cost options, and that awareness raising of these will be undertaken.

11. Forward Work Programme

- 11.1 The committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services, which set out the Forward Work Programme for the committee to enable the Committee to review and shape.
- 11.2 The Chair thanked all the officers for their hard work in producing the reports. He also thanked the members for all their contributions
- 11.3 The Select Committee **agreed** the Forward Work Programme for the Select Committee, as set out in Appendix A.

The meeting closed at 12.10am

James Bensly, Chair



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Infrastructure and Development Select Committee
Wednesday 17 January 2024
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda item 5	Public Question Time
	None received
Agenda item 6	Local Member Issues/Questions
6.1	<p>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton</p> <p>Parking permits for carers are currently available from Councils across England, Wales and Scotland. The most well-known scheme run by Devon County Council has been running for over 10 years. With the Norfolk Parking Partnership increasing parking enforcement across Norfolk, carers face more issues in parking safely, close to the residents they are looking after and a higher possibility of being fined. Will the Infrastructure and Development Committee support a proper piece of work to explore if there is demand for carer parking permits across Norfolk through public consultation, establish the financial implications of bringing in such a scheme and consider the outcome of this work at a future meeting?</p> <p>Response from the Chair</p> <p>I am sorry to hear of the issues some carers experienced whilst carrying out this extremely valued service within the community. It is acknowledged that parking can add to the pressure when trying to deliver this important service to vulnerable clients, but I trust that the following helps to explain the current position with regard to parking on the highway and alternative measures that can be adopted.</p> <p>The County Council is sympathetic to the request to provide permits for carers, but there are usually alternative arrangements to enable parking near to client addresses. We understand the majority of carers park legally in restricted areas using systems already in place to do this, including using visitors permits in residential parking areas.</p> <p>With regard to the Devon scheme, this was borne out of Devon County Council's (DCC) covid response and a large number of carers working in the Dartmouth area (then Exeter), which has a high property density and large number of residents parking zones. During the pandemic, DCC explored parking concessions and established an initial demand of around 2,000-3,000, which included doctors, social workers, nurses and carers. This number has now grown to approximately 10,000 permits.</p> <p>In terms of car parking, paid carers from domiciliary care services are expected to fund car parking, but in most cases seek to have this re-imbursed through travel claims via their employer.</p> <p>Due to the reimbursement option highlighted above and also the cost of both establishing and operating a scheme, there are no current plans to introduce such a scheme in Norfolk.</p>