

## **Communities Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 27 January 2016  
10:00am Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

### **Present:**

Mr P Smyth (Chairman)

Mr R Bearman

Mr C Aldred

Mrs A Bradnock

Mrs J Brociek-Coulton

Mr J Childs

Mrs H Cox

Mrs M Dewsbury

Mr N Dixon

Mr D Harrison

Mr H Humphrey (Vice Chairman)

Mr W Northam

Mr W Richmond

Ms C Rumsby

Mr M Sands

Mr N Shaw

Mr J Ward

### **1. Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr J Law (substituted by Mr W Richmond).

### **2. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2015.**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2015 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Urgent business**

- 4.1 There were no Member questions.

### **5. Local Member Issues**

- 5.1 There were no local Member issues.

### **6. Update on Key Service Issues and Activities**

- 6.1 The Committee received the report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which provided Members with fortnightly updates about key service issues and activities. The update enabled Members to discuss the latest position and identify any areas where the Committee would like to receive further information or updates.
- 6.2 The Committee asked for feedback from the Warm and Well grants that had been issues about how they had been spent.
- 6.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to:
- Review the latest service update at Appendices A to C and identify any areas where the Committee would like to see further information or update.

## **7. Communities Committee Strategic Plan (verbal update)**

- 7.1 The Chairman presented the Committee with an updated version of the Communities Committee strategic plan.
- 7.2 The plan and the progress were **NOTED** by the Committee.

## **8. County Council Plan – Re-Imagining Norfolk 2016-17**

- 8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (8) from the Managing Director, Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services and Executive Director of Resources which provided strategic direction for the Council, to guide and shape choices about investments and priorities for the coming medium term period 2016-2019.
- 8.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Consider the overall strategy for the County Council as set out in the report.
  - Consider the priority targets for the whole council as illustrated in the County Plan Tracker, Appendix 1.
  - Consider the service strategy for the areas which are the responsibility of this Committee as set out in section 10.

## **9. Strategic and Financial Planning 2016-17 to 2018-19**

- 9.1 The Committee received the annexed report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services and the Executive Director of Resources. The proposal in the report would contribute towards the County Council setting a legal budget for 2016-17 which would see its total resources of £1.4billion focused on meeting the needs of residents.
- 9.2 The Committee received a presentation from the Business Intelligence and Performance Senior Analyst detailing the outcomes from the budget consultation and the outcome of the Equality and Rural Assessments.

- 9.3 Members raised concerns regarding the transfer of firefighters to Earlham fire station from Dereham and the implications of this if there were to be an incident to the west of the County. The cost of this move was also questioned as it was more than the initial move to Dereham five years ago. It was clarified that the Government grant income would subsidise twelve firefighter posts. Earlham was the busiest fire station and there would be occasions where there was a conflict of their roles.
- 9.4 The Committee heard that the implementation of self-service technology pilot at Acle library was still in the early stages. Over 100 members of the public had used the library outside staffed hours but these were individuals who would visit the library at other times. The savings relating to the proposal of implementing Open Plus technology would result in the reduction of 47% of front line library staff and Members expressed serious concern at this level of staffing reduction. It was also expressed that the views of the Arts Council should be considered as they may take a dissatisfactory view of this level of staffing reduction and it could result in the Council losing future grants of considerable amount.
- 9.5 The Executive Director of Finance informed the Committee that the implementation of self-service technology was through a £1 million investment of capital but on the condition that it would make a considerable saving. If the savings were not to be realised then the investment could be withdrawn. However, it was noted that the library service would not be able to make the proposed savings without the self-service technology as there was not the capacity to make any further staffing reductions without it.
- 9.6 After some discussion around the implementation timings of the self-service technology and the subsequent staffing adjustments needed to realise the proposed savings, the Committee **AGREED** to delay this proposal and its savings for one year, to allow time to analyse the benefits of the technology using the pilot at Acle library and to re-think the staffing reduction.
- 9.7 Some Members felt that the savings proposed to realise for the reduction of the grants provided by the Norfolk Arts Services was too small a savings to be considered. It was also suggested by the Committee that many of the savings proposals which related to the arts needed to be deliberated whilst considering the County Council's priorities of real jobs, good infrastructure, excellence in education, and supporting vulnerable people.
- 9.8 Deep concern was expressed at the proposed closure of fire stations and suggested that fire stations and fire fighters be saved from the cuts if at all possible. The Chairman explained that the recent events such as that in Paris and the recent flooding had emphasised that more thought should be given to the impact on the fire service's ability to respond to multiple emergencies across the County and in events of crises.
- 9.9 The Chief Fire Officer explained that the proposal to save £600k consisted of ICT, procurement, training, the management of the control room, retained services, and senior management posts. In an already lean and cost effective service, it was

reported that it was exceedingly difficult to make even more savings.

- 9.10 Mr C Aldred proposed, seconded by Mrs H Cox to remove the following proposals from the list of proposed savings; CMM014, CMM015, CMM019, CMM020, CMM021, CMM028, CMM030 and to remove £300k worth of savings from CMM023.

- 9.10.1 With a unanimous vote in favour, the proposal was **CARRIED**.

- 9.11 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

- 1) Consider and comment on the Committee's specific budget proposals for 2016-17 to 2018-19, including the findings of public consultation in respect of;
  - The budget proposals set out in Appendix 3 and Appendix 5 (part 5); and
  - The scope for a Council Tax increase of up to 1.99%, within the Council Tax referendum limit of 2% for 2016-17, noting that in contrast to previous years there is no Council Tax freeze grant being offered in respect of 2016-17, and that central Government's assumption in the Spending Review is that all Councils will increase Council tax by CPI each year (forecast 1.2% in 2016-17).
- 2) Consider and comment on the findings of equality and rural assessment, and in doing so, note the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to;
  - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
  - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who share it;
  - c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3) Consider and agree any mitigating actions proposed in the equality and rural impact assessments.
- 4) Agree and recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the draft Revenue budget as set out in Appendix 3, removing any savings unacceptable to the committee, as per list below, and recommending a commensurate increase in Council Tax of 0.27% to meet the shortfall for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016, to enable them to recommend a sound, whole Council budget to Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016;
  - a. The savings classed as unacceptable savings by the Committee were;
    - i. CMM014 - To reduce grants provided by the Norfolk Arts Services
    - ii. CMM015 – To move to lone working across the 10 museums managed by the Norfolk Museums services, where it was safe to do so,
    - iii. CMM019 – To reduce service standards for the Norfolk Record Office to reduce hours for the search room, accept new items for the archives two days a week only with an appointments and reduce conservation work
    - iv. CMM020 – To reduce the opening hours by 42% to approximately 24 hours per week and stop the archive specialist working at the Norfolk

and Norwich Millennium Library.

- v. CMM021 – To reduce libraries spend on stock and the staff who manage new stock
- vi. CMM028 – To re-design the museums service to focus on the three main sites (Norwich Castle, Gressenhall, Time and Tide) with the only a basic level of service at the remaining seven sites.
- vii. CMM030 – Fire Service – to reduce crews on retained fire stations down to a minimum establishment, removing 2<sup>nd</sup> appliances and their retained crews.
- viii. CMM023 – Fire Service -To re-design the operational support structures to rationalise and remove some teams, and reduce the operational training budget. Re-design of some operational activities and redeployment of associated resource to other community focused activities. It was **AGREED** to remove £300k worth of savings from this proposal.

- 5) Agree and recommend the Capital Programmes and scheme relevant to this Committee as set out in Appendix 4 to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016, to enable Policy and Resources Committee to recommend a Capital Programme to Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016.
- 6) To recommend the IRMP to Full Council for approval, subject to the Director of Community and Environmental Services amending the draft IRMP to reflect the outcomes of the Committee deliberations at this meeting and at the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 8 February 2016.

## **10. Public Health Strategy: Principles, Priorities and Finance Plan**

- 10.1 The Committee received the annexed report from the Director of Public Health which set out a visions and set of guiding principles to inform a public health strategy which was being developed to ensure that the Council's investment in public health supports the overarching Norfolk County Council strategy and priorities. The report also set out outline proposals for budget adjustments in line with the reduced funding recently announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement as well as ensuring that emerging priorities are considered.
- 10.2 It was hoped that the strategy could be launched on World Health Day which was happening on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016.
- 10.3 It was noted that NCC had not formally heard from the Department for Health for the 2016/17 budget but had an indication of a % decrease. Planning had been put in place for a 6.2% (£2.3m per year) clawback which had initially been a one-off in 2015/16. However, a 2.2% - 2.6% reduction per year equalling approximately £900k - £1m coming out of the ring-fenced budget had not been allowed for and therefore there would be a 2.5% gap in the proposed budget for 2016/17.
- 10.4 As the strategy develops it was noted that the new priorities would not necessarily match the use of resources but the new proposals were suggesting significant changes to what money is spent where.

- 10.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Set up a Public Health Working Group to help develop the vision and principles to inform public health strategy. The members would be, Mrs J Brociek-Coulton, Mr Jonathan Childs, Mrs A Bradnock, Ms C Rumsby, Mr H Humphrey and Mr D Harrison.
  - Approve the revised public health budget proposals, reducing the offer of cross cutting subsidies to £1.555m in 2016-17 and then to £0.75m from 2017-18 onwards.
  - Approve the current direction of proposals for public health investments and savings subject to developing strategy.
  - Agree priorities for continued investment: outreach and enhanced support for vulnerable groups.
  - Agree that the procurement for an integrated Healthy Lifestyle service should be discontinued and replaced with services for workplace health promotion and specialist stop smoking support only

## **11. Norfolk Community Learning Services: Business Plan for the new Vision**

- 11.1 The Committee received the report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which outlined the business plan which provided the financial justification for the re-visioning of Norfolk Community Learning Service.
- 11.2 Members discussed how it would clearly be more beneficial for the Service if the Ofsted inspection was later in the year but were assured by officers that the Service was planning for a potential inspection at any time.
- 11.3 There were currently 40 courses running with 350 students paying the full cost for the course and 50 being on a concession.
- 11.4 Members highlighted how they appreciated the work that had been done by Helen Wetherall and her team. Helen would be staying on as Interim Head of Service until a permanent appointment was made.
- 11.5 The Committee approved the Outline Business Plan and the on-going delivery of community learning services in Norfolk by NCLS and agreed to delegate to the member steering group the oversight of the development of the detailed Business Plan and its delivery.
- 11.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Approve the outline business plan and the on-going delivery of community learning services in Norfolk by NCLS.
  - Delegate to the member steering group the oversight of the development of the detailed business plan and its delivery.
  - Note the change of name for the member steering group from Norfolk Adult Education Service Member Steering group to Norfolk Community Learning Service Member Steering Group.

## **12. Finance Monitoring Report**

- 12.1 The Committee received the report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which provided the Committee with information on the latest monitoring position for the Committee for 2015-2016.
- 12.2 Members raised a query regarding the underspend from Trading Standards and were advised that the cost of recovery may not fall within this financial year.
- 12.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note;
- The forecast revenue outturn position for 2015-16 as at Period 08.
  - The forecast capital outturn position for the 2015-16 capital programme.
  - The current forecast for use of reserves.

The Chairman informed the Committee of a meeting that had been held with the Conservative Cabinet Member from Suffolk County Council and the Chief Officers from Suffolk and Norfolk Trading Standards departments to discuss the possibility of forming a joint Trading Standards service. A report would be presented to the Committee in March. This had been a positive meeting and had outlined 4 key areas that needed to be considered; these were:

- 1) Accountability
- 2) Responsibility
- 3) Priorities
- 4) Funding

It had been reported in the news that central government would create opportunities for Police and Crime Commissioners to take over responsibility for their local Fire and Rescue services but the Chairman wanted to reassure that at this time nothing was changing for NCC and responsibility for Fire and Rescue still remained with Norfolk County Council. There was some collaborative work ongoing between the police and fire services but this was around operational activity.

The meeting closed at 1.05pm

Chairman



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