



Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 13 July 2020 at
10 am as a virtual meeting

Present:

Cllr Karen Vincent (Chair)

Cllr Penny Carpenter

Cllr Nigel Dixon

Cllr Fabian Eagle (sub for Cllr E Colman)

Cllr Colin Foulger

Cllr Terry Jermy

Cllr Brian Long

Cllr Ian Mackie

Cllr Sandra Squire

Cllr J Timewell

Cllr John Ward

Also Present:

Cllr Tom FitzPatrick (Cabinet Member for
Innovation, Transformation and
Performance)

1A Apologies for Absence

1A.1 Apologies for absence were received from Chris Jones and Cllr Ed Colman (with Cllr Fabian Eagle substituting).

1B Election of A Vice-Chair For The Meeting

1B.1 The Committee RESOLVED

That, in the absence of Cllr Ed Colman, the Committee elect Cllr Penny Carpenter as Vice-Chairman for the meeting, to deal with any issues that might arise in this meeting, should the Chairman experience connectivity issues as a result of being unable to maintain an internet connection.

2 Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

5 Public Question Time

5.1 There were no public questions.

6 Local Member Issues/Questions

6.1 There were no local Member questions.

7 Corporate Response to Covid-19

7.1 The annexed report (7) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance was received.

7.2 The Committee received a report which provided a summary of how the County Council services that reported to this Committee had responded to the Covid-19 crisis. The Committee's attention was drawn to the activities mentioned in Section 5 of the report which highlighted emerging opportunities that needed to be explored as the Council moved forward to the "normalisation" and "recovery" phases of the pandemic.

7.3 During discussion the following key points were noted:

- The Committee's thanks were placed on record to the staff, contractors, volunteers and communities who had worked as part of a huge community and partnership effort to help keep Norfolk people safe and protected throughout the pandemic.
- Councillors expressed particular thanks to those officers involved in the work of the internal command and control structure of Gold and Silver and with the work of the Resilience Forum which continued to meet twice a week to provide a watching brief throughout the pandemic.
- A recovery group that consisted of key players from silver and gold command and of others from across the county had been put in place to bring together the lessons that were being learnt and to move forward on the recovery journey.
- The Executive Director of Finance agreed to provide the Committee with details regarding what success looked like in relation to the continued roll out of laptops to children, including numbers of laptops that were issued and of those that remained to be rolled out to children.
- It was pointed out that the Council had published a local Outbreak Control Plan for Norfolk that set out our how we were preparing for people, businesses and communities to go about their normal daily lives as safely as possible whilst the COVID-19 pandemic remained.
- The health and safety of County Council staff working from home during the pandemic was being monitored through the work of the existing health and safety support help line and through closer working of managers and their staff.
- The Committee discussed the corporate work to shape a collective strategic

narrative (a “Norfolk PLC”) about Norfolk as a compelling place to live and to work. This was considered to be essential to the economic growth and social mobility agenda of Norfolk. The Executive Director of Strategy and Governance said that NCC’s role in “Norfolk PLC” would be to act as a convenor to engage with key players including the LEP, who were already working on a “Norfolk PLC” with Vince Muspratt, the Director of Growth and Development at the County Council. Councillors spoke about how they wanted to see the Working Group up and running as soon as possible and for NCC to be seen to be taking the leading role amongst the partners working on this matter. (The Committee considered this further when it considered its forward work programme).

- The Chairman asked members to indicate if they wished to join the Norfolk PLC working group chaired by Cllr Colman. Cllrs Carpenter, Eagle, Squire, Timewell and Vincent volunteered.
- The Chairman gave an update on the Strategic Asset Management Working Group that had met remotely, and another meeting of this group was planned to be held next week.

7.4 **The Committee RESOLVED**

- 1. To formally thank all staff involved in the significant effort to keep people safe and protected.**
- 2. To acknowledge the work that has been carried out by NCC central services during the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- 3. To endorse the priority areas for review that are mentioned in the report and add these areas of work to the Committee’s Forward Work Programme.**
- 4. To establish the cross party member working group that was agreed at the March 2020 meeting of the Committee (with a membership of Cllrs Colman, Carpenter, Squire, Timewell and Vincent and three other Cllrs who might not be members of this Committee) to work together with our partners to build our employer “Norfolk PLC” brand and attract the people we need to have come and live and build careers in Norfolk.**

8 **Business Transformation (Smarter Working) Programme – Covid-19 Pandemic Response Impact**

- 8.1 The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation (by Assistant Director of Strategy & Governance (Business Transformation)) and report (8) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance about how the Covid-19 Pandemic response had impacted, in both a positive and negative manner, on the County Council’s Business Transformation programme and the steps that were to be taken to re-shape and re-plan from the new baseline.
- 8.2 Cllr FitzPatrick covered the Introductory section of the report and specifically what was meant by smarter working meaning being more flexible about when and where we work, and how we creatively use space and technology to find new and more effective ways of doing things in a modern and business-like way.
- 8.3 During discussion the following key points were noted:

- It was pointed out that almost all County Council staff were now working from home, only travelling, meeting face to face and working from an office location where essential or where it was not possible to perform the role remotely.
- The County Council and wider Norfolk Resilience Forum had a three-phased plan in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic that moved from response, through a period of normalisation, to recovery. The response phase had commenced in February 2020, transition to normalisation commenced in June 2020 and it was anticipated that the normalisation phase would run through to September 2020.
- A further report would be made to this Select Committee, with an updated plan that took the business transformation programme forward from the new baseline.
- Councillors said that the gap between those who were able to access virtual council services and those who were unable to do this had grown as a result of the pandemic.
- It was pointed out that the financial implications of the new ways of working included a reduction in external venue hire and an asset management refresh that would be reported to Committee in September.
- Councillors requested details regarding the savings from holding virtual Committee meetings. It was pointed out that the annual budget for Councillors mileage expenses was £85,000, After three months of the financial year (and with the annual meeting of the Council still to be held) the savings from holding virtual meetings were estimated at between £15,000 to £20,00.
- Councillors then discussed the lessons that were being learnt from holding virtual meetings. They said that while they recognised that during the pandemic Council meetings needed to be held in this way, more work was needed on defining when it was and when it was not appropriate to hold virtual meetings and the possibilities going forward for hybrid virtual/ in person meetings. They recognised that there were issues of broadband connectivity in remote rural areas, of some people being better able to express themselves through this way of working than others, and the loss of personal face to face contact between people when meetings were not held in an open room. With people of Norfolk not travelling to meet face to face, this had an impact on the economy.
- Councillors also spoke about the impact of remote ways of working on staff morale and mental wellbeing and asked for the results of a staff wellbeing survey which was undertaken at the time when the pandemic had started to be reported to the Committee.

8.4 The Committee RESOLVED

- 1. To acknowledge how the Covid-19 Pandemic response had impacted, in both a positive and negative manner, our Business Transformation progress, against the original objectives, and the priority areas to focus on in re-planning of the programme.**
- 2. Agree that a further report be made to Select Committee, with an updated plan that takes our business transformation forward from the new baseline, in September 2020. The report in September should**

include an update on the most appropriate way of holding meetings at this time, ideas for how Council buildings could be repopulated and look to address issues of staff morale and mental wellbeing as part of the Council's response to the pandemic.

9 Human Resources and Finance System Transformation Project – Update

9.1 The annexed report (9) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance and Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services was received.

9.2 The Committee received a report that was introduced by Cllr FitzPatrick (Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance) that provided an update on the actions that had been taken since Councillors last received a report on this subject in November 2019 and to ask for support in assessing the impact of Covid-19 on the benefits and business adoption challenges presented through implementation.

9.3 During discussion the following key points were noted:

- The original cost estimates provided to Cabinet in May 2019 had been updated to reflect the outcome of the procurement process.
- Project team members who had been deployed to more critical areas of work had now been redeployed back to the project.
- Oracle and Oracle Consulting Services were both content to sign a contract as planned, in order to secure current prices, but to agree a deferral to the start of implementation for up to a 6-month period. To not do so would require a repeat of much of the procurement process when the programme restarted with all of the associated costs.
- In response to questions officers pointed out that the anticipated savings from this project were as expected and the business case review had confirmed the business assumptions. Officers said that the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated changes in working practices that should result in savings from this project being realised more easily than might have been thought and potentially achieved earlier than originally expected.
- The Chairman requested that the next progress report to come to Committee includes information on corporate risk RM027 (risk of failure of new Human Resources and Finance system implementation) as well as on the costs and anticipated savings from the project.

9.4 The Committee RESOLVED

To note the work completed to date, the next steps as described in paragraph 3 of the report, and to request an update on corporate risk RM027 with the next programme progress report.

10 Compliments and Complaints

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance was received.

10.2 The Committee received a report that set out data on formal compliments, complaints and representations made by members of the public and Members of Parliament and received by Norfolk County Council's Compliments and Complaints Team between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, providing comparison against the previous year.

10.3 During discussion the following key points were noted:

- During the period covered by the report there had been an improvement in the number of days taken to deal with complaints.
- It was pointed out that the Council's established and centralised Compliments and Complaints Team was now part of the newly formed Information Governance Service within the Insight and Analytics Directorate of the Strategy and Governance Department. This repositioning of the Compliments and Complaints Team enabled the Council to make better use of the intelligence information that complaints and compliments brought to the Council as a whole.
- The Council's Complaints Service Manager agreed to let Councillors know (via members insight) when the Children's Services Leadership Team had agreed to provide further funding to deal with the delays in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The Compliments and Complaints Team helped ensure that the public received a seamless service across the Council (and with other public organisations) to ensure that complaints were directed to the right place.
- At Councillors request, future reports to the Committee would include details about the method of how compliments and complaints were received and indicate where they came from social media sites.
- The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the Ombudsman had recorded a 97% compliance rate with his recommendations by Norfolk County Council against a national figure of 92% and congratulated the team on this positive outcome.

10.4 **The Committee RESOLVED**

- 1. To note the analysis of the representations received during 2019/20 as set out in parts 2 to 7 and 9 of the report.**
- 2. To note the information concerning the approach of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman set out in part 8 of the report.**
- 3. To note the current position, the impact of Coronavirus and the factors detailed in part 10 of the report.**

11 **Review of the Council Constitution**

11.1 The annexed report (11) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance was received. The report sets out the timescale for review of the Constitution, and the process that it was proposed should be adopted.

11.2 The Monitoring Officer explained the process for the review of the Constitution

which it was proposed should be carried out as detailed in paragraph 2 of the report. In response to questions the Monitoring Officer said that the workshops would be open to all Councillors by way of an email invitation.

11.3 The Committee RESOLVED

To agree the proposals and timescale for reviewing the Council's constitution, as set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.5 of the report.

12 Corporate Select Committee Forward Work Plan

12.1 The annexed note (12) by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance was received.

12.2 The Committee asked for an update at the next meeting from the Environmental Working Group about the current position regarding the conversion of more street lights to LED lighting and what further savings might accrue to the Council from doing this.

12.3 The Committee RESOLVED

- **To endorse the areas of focus for the Corporate Select Committee set out in the note subject to the following being moved forward to September 2020:**
 - **the HR & Finance system replacement – implementation planning**
 - **Norfolk PLC Update and consideration of NCC recruitment.**
 - **To agree that future meetings are structured as set out in the Committee's Forward work programme.**

The meeting concluded at 12.23 pm

Chair