



## Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 14 November 2022 at  
2pm in Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2DL

### Present:

Cllr Ed Colman (Chair)  
Cllr S Blundell  
Cllr A Birmingham  
Cllr G Carpenter  
Cllr N Daubney  
Cllr L Hemsall  
Cllr K Mason Billig  
Cllr B Price  
Cllr V Thomson

### Substitute Members Present:

Cllr B Jones (until 3.37pm) for Cllr T Jermy

### Also Present:

Cllr Tom FitzPatrick	Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance.
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance.

## 1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Duffin, James, Clancy and Jermy (substituted by Cllr B Jones).

## 2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.
- The Chair offered to meet Cllr Birmingham with Cllr Peck and Simon Hughes, Director of Property, concerning an unanswered question regarding the new tier of the car park at County Hall.

## 3 Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## 4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 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 None

## **7 Strategic and Financial Planning 2023-24**

Report by the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services

- 7.1 The annexed report (7) by the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services was received and presented by Cllr Andrew Jamieson, Cabinet Member for Finance. The report, following on from the latest Cabinet report, provided details of the saving proposals identified to date for the 2023-24 budget setting process.
- 7.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance advised:
- The council had an unprecedented challenge to meet the savings required of £60m. There was little room for manoeuvre given the recent budget savings achieved in previous years. There were additional challenges with uncertainty of central government support and further increases in inflation.
  - The Chancellor's Autumn statement, due to be presented to Parliament on 17th November 2022 will provide a framework for local government finance, although it would not be until mid December that the allocations for each individual council would be known.
  - The saving proposals in the report, including those announced in July total £32.51m. The sum excludes any savings from the Strategic Review which is anticipated will create savings of £15m+.
  - Since the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been produced additional pressures on the Council's finances have arisen such as the pay award which averages out at a 6% increase across the board. This increase adds an additional £7m to the savings gap over and above that was budgeted for.
  - Any national living wage increase adds additional cost to commissioned services, especially within adult social services. Every additional 1p per hour increase adds £270k to the bottom line. These increases could add significant cost to the Council's budget.
  - More work was being undertaken to establish the impact of inflationary pressures on departmental budgets. Inflation was in September running at 10.1% and expected to climb higher to a peak in mid 2023. This rate was substantially above what was anticipated when setting the budget for 2023-24.
  - Reforms within funding for adult social care were uncertain. The Autumn statement may provide some clarity. Changes to funding could have an impact on Council finances.
  - The Council are in negotiation with Department of Education as part of the Government's safety value programme relating to the funding pressures for special educational and disabilities needs. The aim is to agree a plan with the department to eliminate the historic deficit that has arisen because of under funding. This could also have implications for the MTFS.
  - Service demand in children's and adult services could see growth in department deficits on an annual basis. The fair funding review implementation date had again been postponed by government ministers and is not expected to be revived in 2023.
  - The service grant received in 22/23 as an one off grant of £10.68m has been assumed within the MTFS, that this will be received again in 23/24, although this has yet to be confirmed. Non receipt of the grant would increase the savings gap further.

7.3 In response to questions from members it was discussed and noted:

- The Council was actively engaging in a consultation with residents, parish and town councils to ascertain their views on levels of proposed council tax rises.
- The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that budget targets for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 had been achieved. Departments providing demand driven services such as adult social care and children's services may struggle to keep within budget constraints, in any one given year as they have statutory duties to undertake, particularly with regard to vulnerable children and adults.
- The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed extensive lobbying was taking place to central government regarding the fair funding review, although this had little impact.
- The MTFS had accounted for inflationary pressures but not at the level of current inflation of 10.1%. The current level had been universally underestimated by all financial institutions including the Bank of England.
- The Council were committed to 15% of the cost of the Norwich Western Link road and this had been accounted for within the MTFS. A proposal by Cllr Ben Price to use those monies to divert them away from the Norwich Western Link road and towards helping reduce the funding gap did not find a seconder.

7.4 The Select committee **reviewed and:**

- **Considered** the latest Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy position as reported to Cabinet in October 2022 (Appendix 1), **noted** in particular the emerging risks and uncertainties within the Council's planning position.
- **Considered** and **commented** on the savings proposals for 2023-24 as set out in Appendix 1, which fall within the Committee's remit.
- **Noted** the significant budget gap which remains to be closed for 2023-24 and in this context **commented** on any areas the Select Committee would recommend exploring for savings development in relation to the services within the Select Committee's remit, in order to provide further input to the 2023-24 budget process and inform the final package of saving proposals put forward to Cabinet later in the year. In particular, the Committee **considered** savings opportunities under the following headings:
  - a. New initiatives which would deliver savings;
  - b. Activities which could be ceased in order to deliver a saving;
  - c. Activities which the Council should seek to maintain at the current level as far as possible (i.e. areas where the Committee considers there is limited scope for savings);
  - d. Commercialisation opportunities.

## 8 **Amendments to the Constitution to include Financial Regulations update 2022-23 & changes to statutory officer designations**

8.1 The annexed report (8) was received and introduced by Helen Edwards, Director of Governance. The report included proposed changes to the Constitution before recommendations are made to Full Council. These proposals included the annual review and update of Financial Regulations as well as changes to statutory roles following the resignations of the Director of Governance and Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services.

- 8.2 In response to questions asked the committee discussed and noted the following:
- The changes to the Financial Regulations were minor and most were within the remit of tidying up the document for clarity.
  - To a question asked regarding regulation of treasury management, the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services committed to return to the committee as he was not familiar with the position that councils would have to consider selling assets before undertaking further borrowing.
  - Carbon pricing guidance was now embedded into the Financial Regulations.
  - Any grant received over £1.25m will now be allocated to an individual Cabinet Member decision to accept the monies and be added to the budget. This would provide more transparency for members, if funds are received mid way in any financial year.
  - The Chair, on behalf of the committee, thanked both Director of Governance and Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services for the help and support they have provided the committee in their time at the Council.

The Select Committee **resolved** to:

- **Note** the proposed amendments to Financial Regulations and recommend these to Full Council.
- **Note** the proposed amendments to statutory officer designations set out in para 2.2 below and **recommend** these to Full Council
- **Agree** that later changes required following the departure of the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services, to go directly to Full Council without needing to be brought first to the Select Committee.

## 9. Policy for Parental Leave for Councillors

9.1 The committee received the annexed report (9) from the Director of Governance and was presented by Karen Haywood, Democratic Services Manager.

9.2 The report outlined details of a draft policy for parental leave, to include sickness, for Councillors which makes appropriate provision for the payment of allowances.

- 9.1 In response to member's questions the following was discussed and noted:
- The policy is not a legal requirement but had been drafted following the guidelines and best practice from the Local Government Association (LGA).
  - It was considered that the policy should reflect still birth and that this should be added to the document before consideration by Full Council.
  - Similar policies to that proposed had been adopted by a wide range of councils across the country.

9.2 The select committee **resolved** to:

- **Endorse** the attached draft policy for parental leave, which includes cover for extended periods of leave for Councillors and recommend it to full Council for adoption.
- **Recommend** to Council that it agrees to authorise the Director of Governance (in consultation with the Leader of the Council) to make any minor or consequential amendments to the Constitution necessary for, or incidental to, the implementation of these proposals.

## 10 Digital Strategy Update

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services was received and introduced by the Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance.

10.2 The report provided an update on the NCC Digital Strategy and Roadmap for the 2020s which had been approved by cabinet in April 2021. Geoff Connell, Director of Information Management Technology (IMT) undertook a presentation which is [available on the committee's website pages](#).

10.3 In response to questions asked the committee discussed and noted the following:

- When applying for planning permission, mobile phone network providers often did not consider the limitations of the sites proposed for masts. This could mean that even when permission was granted masts may still not be erected.
- The Director of IMT committed to consider developing an app so that residents could easily provide details of 'not spots' in the county for mobile coverage. This information was available on the County Council's website.
- Coverage for the mobile network in Norfolk is not as comprehensive for individuals using older handsets and where possible upgrades should be considered to take advantage of the 5G network that is rolling out across the county.
- myOracle software had experienced some minor clinches when first commissioned, but given the scale and purpose of the software this was to be expected. All errors, which related to a very small number of total payments, had been fixed promptly and payments and salaries paid. The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance praised officers, who had worked diligently at home, during the pandemic to bring the new software online. The software was a global system and was used by a large number of councils and other large organisations. The project had been split in to two phases, the first of which was implementation. The second phase would see the system being refined and streamlined.
- Broadband connectivity issues with providers should be report to Ofcom for resolution.
- The voucher scheme for Broadband roll out was about to be relaunched and the Director of IMT committed to provide members with an update.
- All information regarding mobile phone coverage and broadband availability was [available on the County Council's website](#).
- The committee suggested that an app could be developed for rural bus users giving them real time information of location of buses and services.
- The digital inclusion programme was helping residents to get connected by re purposing older NCC laptops with free software licensing added. The County Council's website also highlights packages that are available from providers for those on universal credit.
- The Director of IMT committed to providing training to update all members on mobile and broadband technologies available in Norfolk to enable them to promote and advise their residents.
- The libraries network across the county held digital and technology sessions aimed specially at children. The sessions provided children with the opportunity to use IT kit and learn new skills.
- The Chair commented that for future meetings separating the digital strategy and the programme focus and resource priorities should be considered as separate papers providing shorter, sharper updates on a quarterly basis.

#### 10.4 The Select Committee **resolved to**:

1. **Note** the updates contained in the report.
2. **Commented** on whether the Committee would wish to consider any alterations or additions to the current plans.
3. **Consider** options to improve mobile coverage.

### 11. 2022 Staff Survey 'Our Voice Our Council': Summary Report and Next Steps

- 11.1 The annexed report (11) by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation and Director for People was received. The report provided the headline findings from the 2022 survey and an overview of action plans at Directorate and organisational level.
- 11.2 Rob Stafford, Head of Organisation Effectiveness & Learning presented the report and advised that the period covered by the survey was when employees were working under some level of Covid restrictions and the results reflect a stabilising environment, following actions that had been put in place following previous survey results. The current results placed NCC in the top quartile of comparable organisations. Key drivers of openness and honesty, wellbeing, goal setting, leadership and empowerment all featured highly within the survey. The 2022 survey is the fourth year a survey has been undertaken, and the focus for action is switching away from new initiatives to embedding and developing existing ones. The survey also reflected the employees were adapting well to hybrid working in the post pandemic world of work.
- 11.3 In response to questions from members the following points were discussed and noted:
- The Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation confirmed that market supplements were available across all departments of the Council and that a pay and reward strategy was being developed to ensure clarity around where NCC may vary its pay structure from the norm.
  - The apprentice levy was actively promoted and had been taken up by all professions and levels across the organisation. This provided opportunities and helped retention of staff as well as providing pathways for new careers to aid recruitment.
- 11.4 The committee **resolved** to:
- **Note** both the key messages from this year's survey and the actions being taken in response
  - **Provide** support for the performance, engagement and wellbeing of colleagues.

### 12. Organisational Performance Framework

- 12.1 The annexed report (12) by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation was Received and introduced by Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance. The report provided the committee with an update on the Council's Organisational Performance Framework. The Framework lays out the approach and expectations against the following areas:

- Performance Framework Principles
- Performance Governance
- Performance Management Culture
- Vital Signs measurement, reporting, target setting and trend analysis
- Performance Reporting Cycle

- 12.2 Stacey Palmer, Organisational performance Lead gave a presentation which is [available on the committee's website pages](#).

- 12.3 In response to questions from members the following points were discussed and noted:
- Introducing and embedding cultural changes within the Council would develop as the strategic review moves forward and the challenges arising from that producing a more collaborative working approach. Work within adult social services was already seeing better outcomes working collaboratively to address performance culture in locality teams.
  - The strategic review will include how ownership of responsibilities is managed within the changing culture of the organisation and how this best fits with delivery of services to residents. Working with Councillors will be key to ensuring the roadmap of implementation is successful.
  - It was suggested the quickest way to bring about cultural change was to adopt a top down approach with senior officers and members delivering from their positions of influence.
  - It was recommended that a full list of policy framework documents were made available to councillors to include expiry and renewal dates to enhance member's understand before debating items at meetings.
  - The report, before being presented to the committee, had been reviewed by all performance leaders in each Directorate as well as the executive leadership team.
  - The Chair suggested that an updated report could be brought back to the committee regarding the KPIs outlined, possibly within three months if there was sufficient information and data available. Otherwise, this update item would be placed on the forward work programme.

- 12.4 The committee **resolved** to:
- Endorse** the accompanying framework document and **recommend** to Cabinet for approval.

### 13 **Forward Work Programme 2022/23**

The committee **resolved to agree** the forward work programme.

**Meeting concluded at 4.12 pm**