



Norfolk County Council at your service

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 January 2010

Present:

Mr A Adams	Mr P Morse (Chair)
Dr A Boswell	Mr R Rockcliffe
Mr J Dobson	Mr M Scutter
Mr P Duigan	Mr M Wilby
Mr R Hanton	Mr A White
Mr C Jordan	Mr R Wright
Mr J Joyce	

Also Present:

Mr D Cox, Leader of the Council
Mr D Harwood, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services
Ms A Steward, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Mr R Bearman, Norfolk County Council
Mr G Jones, Norfolk County Council
Dr M Strong, Norfolk County Council
Mr P Adams, Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services
Mr G Boyd, 14 – 19 Director, Children's Services
Mr J Bullion, Assistant Director - Community Care, Adult Social Services
Mr K Cogdell, Scrutiny Support Manager
Ms B Evans, Head of Norfolk Adult Education Service
Ms K Haywood, Scrutiny Support Manager
Ms C Money, County Strategic Partnership Officer
Mr R Morgan, Quality Assurance Manager, Adult Social Services
Mr C Walton, Head of Democratic Services

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Byrne and Mr M Kiddle-Morris.
Mrs S Hutson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services had also sent apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members declared the following interests:

Item 5, the call-in of the decision to create a Norfolk Infrastructure Fund:

- Mr Wilby declared a personal interest as Chairman of South Norfolk Alliance.
- Mr Rockcliffe declared a personal interest as the County's representative on the Nar Ouse Regeneration Scheme.

- Mr Joyce declared a personal interest as a Postmaster at a village store, a District Councillor and Vice Chairman of a Parish Council which currently has two affordable housing schemes going forward.
- Mr Dobson declared a personal interest as a member of West Norfolk Borough Council and Chairman of a Parish Council.

Item 6 'Abolition of the Learning and Skills Council':

- Mr Morse declared a personal interest as a member of the Corporation of Paston College.
- Mr Scutter declared a personal interest as a Governor at CNS.
- Mr Joyce declared a personal interest as a Governor at Reepham High.

Item 7 'Norfolk County Council's role in commissioning and developing services for people with dementia' - Mr Duigan declared a personal interest because he has a close relative with dementia in a nursing home.

3. Minutes

- 3.1 The minutes of the meetings held 22 December 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 3.2 The Chair asked the Head of Democratic Services to request written answers to outstanding questions put to MEP's and to circulate the responses.

4. Items of urgent business which the Chair decides should be considered as a matter of urgency

There were no items of urgent business.

5. Call-in Item(s)

5.1 Decision to create a Norfolk Infrastructure Fund

Mr M Joyce and Mr M Scutter wished to call in the decision taken by Cabinet on 4 January 2010 to reallocate the second homes money retained by Norfolk County Council into the newly created Norfolk Infrastructure Fund. They believed that the decision to create a Norfolk Infrastructure Fund and to reallocate second home tax to this project requires further scrutiny on the basis that:

- i) There had been a lack of consultation between the County Council and the affected District Authorities.
- ii) Norfolk's rural residents would be negatively affected as they would lose essential funding for affordable housing and other projects to compensate the impact of second home purchases within their community.
- iii) The report put to Council was deficient of the necessary information from which Cabinet could make a fully informed decision.
- iv) The decision making process did not incorporate or request the views of specific strategic stakeholders.

In introducing the reasons for the call-in, Mr Scutter stressed that he agreed that there was a need for the Norfolk Infrastructure Fund.

Mr Cox, Leader of the Council and Ms Steward, Cabinet Member for Economic Development attended the meeting and provided information to the Committee, together with Mr Adams, Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services.

- 5.2 During discussion of this item, the following points were noted:
- 5.2.1 Mr Cox denied that consultation had not taken place; he had consulted with all District Council Leaders before Christmas.
- 5.2.2 Whilst Mr Cox had stated that District Council Leaders had been informed, Mr Scutter suggested that they were not aware of the impact this decision could have upon them and he believed that districts would not have confirmed their acceptance of this decision if they had been aware of the impact. In response, Mr Cox said that if District Leaders had raised issues or concerns then these would have been brought to the attention of the Cabinet. However, the Leader of North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) had emailed him in December and described the move as “extremely welcome”; he had received nothing to suggest there were significant concerns from District Leaders.
- 5.2.3 Mr Scutter asked about the timing of the consultation as it appeared that the consultation period had been two weeks over the Christmas period. Mr Cox said that there was a need to address the infrastructure deficit and the proposal had been circulated to the District Councils throughout December with the information being sent to the Leader of NNDC on 22 December. Mr Cox did not know the precise dates when other district leaders had been contacted. Dr Boswell said that sending information on 22 December, just prior to the Christmas holidays, was not a good example of cooperative working.
- 5.2.4 Mr Scutter requested that Mr Cox, as Leader of the Council, delay the decision to allow further consultations with district leaders. In response, Mr Cox said that whilst concerns would be taken into account, none of the District Leaders had any issues with the proposal and the Cabinet had accepted the principle of the proposal. The report would now be taken to full Council on 15 February.
- 5.2.5 Mr Dobson asked Mr Scutter and Mr Joyce to explain the statement about NNDC substituting the tax income received as revenue with its own capital funds to benefit budget management. Mr Joyce said that his understanding was that this was a simple accounting procedure to enable NNDC to predict what its income would be. Mr Jordan voiced concern and suggested that NNDC should be asked to clarify its use of the fund. The Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services did not recall the County Council approving any changes to how the money could be spent. Mr Nobbs said that this call-in was about a scrutiny of a decision and should not be a cross-party attack.
- 5.2.6 Dr Boswell said that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee had previously received a presentation from the Community Cohesion Officer which highlighted issues of community cohesion in Norfolk; he felt and there should have been wider consultation concerning the impact of the proposed change. Further, he said there was a lack of clarity regarding how funds had been distributed.

- 5.2.7 Mr Jordan asked whether Mr Cox believed there was any real difference between providing homes and infrastructure. Mr Cox said that homes could not be built in isolation and infrastructure was required to enable housing to be built.
- 5.2.8 Mr Scutter agreed that infrastructure was important but there was no point in putting additional infrastructure in place without additional housing and he advocated that where second homes had caused a disbenefit then the income from the second homes should be used to offset this.
- 5.2.9 Mr Wright said that there would be benefits if blighted communities were to build affordable homes but in North Norfolk the number of affordable homes being provided was woefully low.
- 5.2.10 Mr Nobbs suggested that the information circulated to Conservative Group members of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on numbers of affordable housing delivered should have been made available to all members of the Committee.
- 5.2.11 Mr Cox advised that he had received letters from many Parish Councils stating that the authority was taking funding out of North Norfolk. This was not the case and the Cabinet Report set out infrastructure requirements across the whole County. NNDC had delivered the lowest level of affordable homes across the County over the last two years. District Councils used Local Development Funds (LDFs) as their main source of delivering affordable housing. The Cabinet Report contained a recommendation that criteria would be needed on how the proposed fund would be used and further consultation would also take place through the Public Service Leaders' Board.
- 5.2.12 Mr Joyce said that local communities should be empowered to build affordable housing because villages blighted by second homes suffer a lack of schools, shops and other amenities and he believed that the decision making process should remain with local communities. Further, the proposal did not set out what parish and district councils would receive in place of second homes funding.
- 5.2.13 Mr Dobson disagreed that this proposal would take away the ability of local people to decide what happens. Parish Councils were the places where decisions could be made regarding affordable housing because parishes are able to use the exception site policy to enable land to be made available for building. Over the past 5 – 6 years many villages in West Norfolk had taken part in affordable housing schemes with funding coming from the Housing Corporation and its successor the Homes and Communities Agency which was currently looking to fund schemes of this nature.
- 5.3 Mr Dobson proposed, seconded by Mr Jordan, to uphold the Cabinet's decision as set out in the Cabinet minute of 4 January 2010.
- 5.4 The Chair thanked Mr Cox, Ms Steward and the Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 5.5 The Committee agreed, with ten votes in favour and four against, to uphold Cabinet's decision as set out in the Cabinet minute of 4 January 2010.

6. Abolition of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

- 6.1 Members received a report by the Scrutiny Support Manager, together with a report from the 14-19 Director, Children's Services and the Head of Norfolk Adult Education Service.
- 6.2 Mr Boyd, 14 – 19 Director, Children's Services and Ms Evans, Head of Norfolk Adult Education Service attended the meeting to answer questions.
- 6.3 The 14 – 19 Director advised that an indication of resources to be made available by the Government to cover employment costs had now been received but the precise details were still being considered. Initial suggestions were that this funding would cover direct costs but did not appear to include an element of accommodation costs.
- 6.4 During discussion of this item, the following points were noted:
 - 6.4.1 National Government had taken the decision to disband the LSC some time ago and the authority had been in negotiation with the LSC concerning the transfer of staff. The Chair commented that he had attended a conference concerning the demise of the LSC two years ago; the decision to disband the LSC clearly predated the capital issue that arose last year.
 - 6.4.2 In answer to a question as to how the requirements of employers, HE providers and students could all be met at a time of significant resource constraints, Members heard that the changes should be seen in the broader context. The reforms were designed to raise participation. All young people up to the age of 18 would be involved in education or training in some way and research would be undertaken to decide what provision would be offered. All information would be fed through the 14 – 19 Strategy Group to enable the different strands and demands to be pulled together.
 - 6.4.3 The County Council had to be a neutral commissioning body and as such there might well be tensions between how we might have previously seen our role. However, these tensions had existed under the LSC system. The authority would have to identify learners' and employers' needs and also what providers were able to offer. Tensions should lessen over time. The 14 – 19 Strategy would enable the authority to understand where learners want to go and what the economy needed.
 - 6.4.4 Reassurance was sought that organisations such as Easton College and the Construction Industry Training Board at Bircham Newton would be supported. In response, the 14 – 19 Director said that currently 65% of the 16 – 19 population were served by organisations other than 6th Forms and therefore organisations such as these were part of the 'tapestry'. Members were reminded that commissioning for post-19 would be by the Skills Funding Agency rather than the County Council.
 - 6.4.5 In response to the question of how robust the authority would be if there were performance issues, Members were told that there would need to be clear lines drawn on the support it offered to institutions and commissioning arrangements. Therefore whilst some officers would undertake support functions other officers would be involved in commissioning arrangements.
 - 6.4.6 With reference to National Indicators (NIs) it was suggested that to continually improve performance to meet NIs over the next few years would become

increasingly expensive and officers were asked if they were confident that the authority could meet the targets within the existing funding arrangements. Members heard that Norfolk was catching up with the national average and was second in the region for the number of young people (aged 16) who accept an offer of education or training. In terms of how the system would operate, no allocated budget would be provided for the authority to spend, instead we would be required to make a case to the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) for funding. Members expressed some concern about this and the Chair said that the role of local authorities could become very complex and we must make sure that we have the capacity to fulfil this role.

- 6.4.7 There was a great deal of work ongoing concerning apprenticeships but this must be considered against the background of current economic decline. A huge number of apprenticeships are required and the authority is working with the National Apprenticeship Service which is the national agency. Officers are also publicising amongst departmental heads and employers that there were new opportunities concerning apprenticeships. The Head of Norfolk Adult Education Service said that the authority is also a provider of training for the apprenticeship scheme and had recently identified County Council posts that could be offered as apprenticeships.
- 6.4.8 Members heard that apprenticeship scheme was being encouraged nationally; the Government were publicising apprenticeships as a very good route for young people. Young people are offered vocational work whilst they are in school which could lead into apprenticeships with an employer at age 16 and then through to level 3 or 4 (which equals higher level study). There is a well developed vocational route through the apprenticeship scheme which will help to ensure that the ambition of each individual young person is not hindered.
- 6.4.9 Members asked how this work would sit within the ongoing organisational restructuring that was taking place within the authority and they heard this had yet to be considered.
- 6.4.10 Mr Dobson proposed, seconded by Mr Wilby, that the scrutiny of this issue was complete.
- 6.4.11 Mr Scutter proposed an amendment to add at the end "at the present time but this topic should be revisited at some time in the future, possibly by the setting up of a Working Group". With 3 votes in favour and 10 against, the proposed amendment was lost.
- 6.4.12 The Chair thanked the 14 – 19 Director, Children's Services and the Head of Norfolk Adult Education Service for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 6.5 It was agreed, with 10 votes in favour and 3 against, that the scrutiny of this issue was complete.
- 7. Norfolk County Council's role in commissioning and developing services for people with dementia**
- 7.1 Members received the suggested approach by the Scrutiny Support Manager together with a report from the Director of Adult Social Services.

- 7.2 Mr Harwood, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services together with Mr Bullion, Assistant Director - Community Care, Adult Social Services and Mr Morgan, Quality Assurance Manager, Adult Social Services attended the meeting to answer questions.
- 7.3 During discussion of this item, the following points were noted:
- 7.3.1 Many people come to work in the care services with a strong vocation and whilst the amount of training they have already received varies, all those employed by Norfolk County Council are provided with training. The Care Quality Commission sets down minimum training standards for care workers. The authority's service specification does not set a minimum standard but it does detail best practice. Part of the Dementia Strategy is to offer training for existing providers. Members heard that it was important that the authority set a good example in the quality of care it provides and the authority also expects a minimum standard to be provided by other organisations providing care. The authority has a dedicated training budget and independent care homes can access the authority's training.
- 7.3.2 Mr Harwood, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services, gave reassurance that the consultation process concerning day centres was ongoing and involved all stakeholders. Once the outcomes of consultations were known a report would go to the Adult Social Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet prior to any decisions being made. Because of the authority's duty of care to people with dementia it may mean that we cannot deliver all other care services and discussions are ongoing with the voluntary sector to enable us to reach sustainable solutions. No one who receives a service at the moment will be left without a service in the future, but services may change. Mr Harwood gave reassurance that people would be kept informed of future developments concerning the day care centres.
- 7.3.3 Members heard that consultations would run until 8 March and the Adult Social Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel would consider the outcomes of the consultation on 11 May and the report would then be received by the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 June. With reference to the Strategic Model of Care, it was also planned to develop a programme of change and this would also be received by the Adult Social Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet.
- 7.3.4 In response to a question about how the authority would ensure the quality of preventative care, especially if some day care centres were to close, Mr Harwood said that the level of care required by people with dementia would be determined by specialists in dementia care, who were medical specialists. The authority's Strategic Model of Care will require a refocus of services and some dementia services will need to grow additional capacity; there is a projected shortfall of 1700 places. The NHS and the Council have both agreed that there is work to be done in primary care.
- 7.3.5 Around 70% of care services are currently provided through the voluntary and independent sectors and the authority does understand that it needs to work very closely with the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector is involved in consultations with the authority and with service users. Mr Harwood gave reassurance that stakeholders and carers would be consulted and he said that he had recently visited a care home and had spoken to relatives to outline what was likely to be happening and to keep them informed. It has always been the intention to consult fully with staff, patients, carers, stakeholders and anyone else involved.

- 7.3.6 There were a lot of people who do not have dementia that currently use day care centres and the question was asked how this service would be affected by the need to provide additional dementia services. In response, Mr Harwood said that this should not make any difference to those people who receive personalised budgets because they could use this money in any way they wished. It was pointed out that many of these people did not receive personalised budgets. The Assistant Director, Community Care said that many centres had a combination of people attending, some of whom received funding whilst others did not. The Day Services Review had looked at where there should be reductions or increases of funding for the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and of 104 organisations, 69 would not see any reductions. However, in the 35 other organisations the decision had been taken to reduce funding and this information had been shared with all councillors. It was recognised that there would be challenges for some organisations that may need to find alternative ways of raising funds.
- 7.3.7 In terms of more general issues, the Dementia Strategy requires the authority to agree and monitor the strategy so a Joint Project Group will oversee the project once it is agreed.
- 7.3.8 Members noted that Appendix 1 of the report set out what was currently happening in the authority's own care homes and they were pleased to see this. However, the question was asked how the authority could ensure that private sector care homes also achieve this level of service. They were advised that this would happen through sharing best practice and also through workshops with the independent sector. The next workshop would take place in Dereham on Thursday 21 January.
- 7.3.9 The Chair thanked the Mr Harwood, the Assistant Director, Community Care and the Quality Assurance Manager, Adult Social Services for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 7.4 It was agreed that the scrutiny of this issue was complete.

8. Child Poverty Working Group: Update on Recommendations

- 8.1 This item had been deferred until the next meeting.

9. Forward Work Programme

- 9.1 Members received and agreed the annexed report.

[The meeting closed at 12.35pm]

PAUL MORSE, CHAIR