



## Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16 January 2023 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:

None

### Also Present:

Cllr Tom FitzPatrick	Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance
Cllr Greg Peck	Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management

### 1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Terry Jermy. Cllrs Clancy, Daubney and James were also absent.

### 2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.
- Cllr Birmingham requested a meeting with Cllr Peck and Simon Hughes, Director of Property, concerning a previous answer given 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 Smarter Working Update

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 was introduced by Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick, Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance and presented by Sam Pittam Smith, Director of Strategy and Transformation. The report, followed on from the previous update to the committee in July 2022 and focused on the increasing understanding of Hybrid working, work on providing Smarter Places for staff to deliver their services as well as data and research being gathered to inform decision making.
- 7.2 In response to questions from members it was discussed and noted:
- Whilst Hybrid meetings were acknowledged as providing efficiencies it was suggested that a default format for those joining virtually would mean that the current speaker was shown on the screen only as opposed to a sea of faces of all attending. This would make it easier to get a point across and identify who was speaking.
  - The officers present advised that decisions regarding the Council's estate and especially County Hall were based on evidence from gathering data on aspects such as daily usage. Unfortunately, insufficient data had been collated at that time to suggest that spare capacity would have been available for the new merged back office functions of South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council to be placed in County Hall.
  - Ongoing monitoring of the daily usage of County Hall will provide more data to allow evidence based decisions about what areas can be considered for lease. In addition, this data will indicate what energy savings are being achieved and contributing towards the Council's carbon zero target by 2030.
  - Members were advised that work had progressed to reduce the overnight lighting at County Hall and that a recent thermal image of the building, taken at night, had evidenced that only two floors were partially lit and this was due to essential services operating during this time.
  - Officers acknowledged that some staff roles required a more face to face presence and that staff wellbeing was an important priority to ensure hybrid working was fit for purpose. The learning was still ongoing about achieving the balance between how staff share learnings remotely and the time spent in the office. Staff with disabilities were actively monitored by their line managers with support from HR to ensure their needs to deliver their roles were identified and acted upon.
  - The research being undertaken by UEA regarding hybrid working in Health and Social Care was a collaborative approach involving a number of other stakeholders across the county, with a view to help identify issues and shape possible solutions for the future. Whilst in the very early stages, it was thought that the results of this research would be considered by the committee once available.
- 7.3 The Select committee **reviewed** and:
- Noted the work completed and plans to date. An update would be provided in May 2023.

## 8 Work Force Strategy

- 8.1 The annexed report (8) by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation and Director of People was received and was introduced and presented by Rob Stafford, Head of Organisational Effectiveness and Workforce Development. The workforce strategy supported the 'Better together for Norfolk Strategy' and the report was delivered at a point where all relevant engagements and sign offs had been completed, with preceding relevant feedback from the Select Committee having been incorporated where it was appropriate.

The report considered that the final Workforce Strategy presented, effectively supported the 'Better Together, for Norfolk' strategy and accurately reflected NCC's ambitions and direction of travel as an organisation, as well as providing context and direction for directorate-level workforce strategies.

- 8.2 In response to questions asked the committee discussed and noted the following:
- The report highlighted that one of the key drivers of employee contribution was experiencing excessive pressure and that this had risen since 2020. Officers advised that staff wellbeing and mental health issues were front and centre of their work and that learnings on how to identify and tackle the issues before employees felt the need to take time off work was ongoing. There was a determination to ensure all staff were heard and their concerns were addressed.
  - Norfolk, as a rural area did have challengers to overcome when recruiting staff. However, hybrid working had made that challenge easier as it increased the scope of possible employees joining the Council. Work was ongoing to enhance and increase the 'NCC employee brand offering' to highlight the attractions of working for the Council.
  - It was suggested that members could work with their local parish councils in their divisions to increase awareness of the 'NCC employee brand offering'. Further details were requested by members to help aid discussions. Rob Stafford agreed to discuss this initiative with members outside of the meeting.

- 8.3 The Select Committee **resolved** to:

- Note the resubmission of the Workforce Strategy to the Committee for information and that it represented a relatively light touch following previous comprehensive reviews.
- Provide continued support to the 'Better Together for Norfolk' approach to its Workforce Strategy with make suggestions and ideas.

## 9. Emerging Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Objectives for 2023-2026

- 9.1 The committee received the annexed report (9) from the Executive Director for Community and Environmental Services and was presented by Jo Richardson, Head of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
- 9.2 The report summarised the previous three years as well as setting out the arrangements to prepare the new Plan, the challenges to address and the evidence gathered that included consultation with 250+ residents from diverse backgrounds.

- 9.1 In response to member's questions the following was discussed and noted:
- The Council has a statutory duty to publish the report annually.
  - The committee congratulated officers on the quadruple award nominations and wins for the work to promote and implement EDI within the Council.
  - It was acknowledged that accessibility included a wide range of topics including use of technology to enable disabled employees to compete on a level playing field for employment and career progression and leadership opportunities. The Council, working with young people's disability groups, aimed to empower disabled young people to achieve their full potential and see themselves, as future leaders. Engagement opportunities with disabled adults was also being explored. The Council has a disabled employees forum that provides feedback to senior management on their experiences of working within the Council environment.
- 9.2
- The Council is working with all stakeholders, including schools to better understand and tackle racial inequalities for young Black and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Children's Services have prioritised this and have agreed to conduct an in depth analysis about some key inequalities. This was acknowledged as an UK wide issue.
  - The council was committed to tackling racism and supporting employees who experienced racial abuse. It was acknowledged that Social Care had a particularly diverse workforce and this made the plan's goals even more important. The Council has a range of policies around this issue available to all staff and line managers as to what procedures to follow if racism was experienced. Opportunities had been identified to strengthen this guidance and this was taking place. The policies were undergoing review by HR with a view to providing clearer direction and also available on one webpage for ease of reference.
  - The Council's learning and development offer review to members was currently underway and could include training on EDI. Much progress had been made within the Council's framework since a motion at Full Council was carried in July 2020, which set out the determination to eradicate racism, and a motion later the same year on disability. However, the Council was not complacent and recognised the wide-ranging work to do to address racism and prejudice in relation to disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and other protected characteristics.

The Committee requested an annual report to be presented to the committee with a shorter 6 monthly briefing in between the annual submissions.

- 9.2 The select committee **resolved to:**
1. Note the progress made in delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2020 to 2023, set out in Section 2.
  2. Acknowledge the challenges set out in Section 3; the actions that have taken place so far to prepare new objectives, and the emerging objectives set out in Section 5.
  3. Agree that the final EDI objectives to be determined by the Cabinet in March 2023 are:
    - a) Promote race equality and eliminate racism across our workforce, services and communities.
    - b) Provide services, information and environments that can be accessed, understood and used independently and with dignity to the greatest extent possible by all disabled people.
    - c) Promote inclusion for our LGBTQ+ service users and colleagues.
    - d) Deliver our EDI transformation actions in response to external inspections, peer and safeguarding reviews (this includes our EDI plan for Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service; our EDI

actions in response to Adults Peer Review 2022; and our EDI actions in response to Recommendation M (tackling racism) Safeguarding Adults Review – Joanna, Jon and Ben.)

4. To recommend to the Cabinet the future timing of reports on EDI to Select Committee should be annual with a shorter 6 monthly report update in between annual submissions.

### **13 Forward Work Programme 2023**

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

**Meeting concluded at 2.55 pm**