

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 14 October 2016 at 10am
in the Edwards Room at County Hall**

Present:

Mr M Wilby - Chair
Mr R Bird
Mr A Boswell
Ms C Bowes
Mr B Bremner
Mr J Childs
Mr S Clancy
Mrs M Dewsbury
Mr T East

Mr B Iles
Mr T Jermy
Mr M Kiddle-Morris
Mrs J Leggett
Mr G Plant
Mr M Sands
Mr G Timewell
Mr A White

1. Apologies and Substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr C Foulger (Mr M Kiddle-Morris substituting) and Mrs C Walker (Mr M Sands substituting).

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2016 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman, **subject to an amendment** to paragraph 10.2.3, to read:

Discussion was held over the potential impact on other areas of the County and possible safety mitigation measures which may be needed in these areas. "Mr Jermy spoke up on this matter for his local community".

3. Members to Declare any Interests

- 3.1 No interests were declared.

4. Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chairman asked the Committee to delegate permission to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to sign off the County Council's response to the Breckland Local Plan once finalised.

4.2.1 The Committee **AGREED** to delegate permission to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Development and Transport Committee to sign off the Breckland Local Plan.

4.2.2 The Chairman agreed to send a copy of the plan to Committee Members when complete, and invited Breckland District Councillors to stay behind after the meeting if they wished to discuss this matter.

5. Public Questions

5.1 One public question was circulated; this was a supplementary question from Mr Robinson arising from the question he had asked to the previous Committee meeting on the 16 September 2016. Please see appendix A.

6. Member Questions / Issues

6.1.1 Cllr Strong attended the meeting on agreement of the Chairman to speak in support of a petition raised by one of her constituents.

6.1.2 A local resident had collected 1,599 signatures in response to the worsening traffic problems at Cherry Tree Corner, the junction of the B1105 and A148 which linked King's Lynn and Cromer and was a main route in North Norfolk.

6.1.3 The petition was supported by Wells Town Council and 11 parishes which interacted with the junction: Holkham, Warham, Binham, Wighton, Walsingham (Little and Great), Hindringham, Houghton St Gile and the three Barshams.

6.1.4 Cllr Strong reported that gridlock and long queues at the busy junction resulted in drivers taking risks and accidents, resulting in concerns for driver safety and impact on the local economy.

6.1.5 Residents and adjoining parishes were petitioning for a system to be designed to increase traffic flow and safety at the junction and reduce accidents, preferably a roundabout as previously favoured by Norfolk County Council, or by another means.

6.2 The Committee **AGREED** to accept the petition.

6.3.1 The Chairman confirmed that the result of the petition would be reported back to the Committee.

6.3.2 Cllr Strong noted that Cllr Fitzpatrick had a divisional interest and had voiced support to improvements in the junction.

7. Verbal update/feedback from Members of the Committee regarding Member Working Groups or bodies that they sit on.

7.1 There were no updates or feedback from member working groups or bodies.

8. Finance Monitoring

- 8.1 Members considered and **NOTED** the report introduced by the Finance Business Partner for Community and Environmental Services reflecting the forecast outturn position for the services from Community and Environmental Services relevant to the Committee. The Committee considered and **NOTED** the current risks to the budget highlighted in the report.
- 8.2.1 During discussion the following points were raised:
- 8.2.2 The Finance Business Partner for Community and Environmental Services agreed to provide a detailed breakdown of the income and expenditure related to transport services.
- 8.3.1 Discussion was held around the cost to the Council of concessionary fares, which were partially paid by central Government, and whether in light of recent changes seen in Government these could now be fully funded.
- 8.3.2 The Committee **AGREED** that the Chairman write to central Government seeking for concessionary fares to be fully funded by Government.

9. 2017-18 Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning 2017-18 to 2018-19

- 9.1 The Committee received the report providing an update on the Council's budget setting process, and details of the actions required by Service Committees to enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2017-18.
- 9.2.1 During discussion the following points were raised:
- 9.2.2 Following a query about the consultation into Town and Parish Councils' Council tax percentage increases being "capped", the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services clarified no freeze grant was available for Norfolk County Council.
- 9.2.3 A request was made for additional cost factors to be shown separately for clarity in future reports.
- 9.2.4 The Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services clarified that the Autumn budget statement from the Chancellor was due in November, and the final settlement letter was due to be received around the end of December; this would show the final grant settlement for NCC.
- 9.3.1 The Committee **NOTED** that the Council's budget planning includes an assumed increase in council tax of 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, and an inflationary increase of 1.8% in 2017-18;
- 9.3.2 The Committee **RESOLVED TO AGREE** to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the use of the £4.6m 2016/17 transitional grant monies to help ameliorate the level of savings required in 2017/18;

- 9.3.3 In order to help close the 2017-18 budget gap:
The Committee **RESOLVED TO AGREE** the proposed new savings for 2017-18, for consultation where necessary;

10. Annual Local Levy Setting for the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees

- 10.1.1 The Committee received the report by the Senior Flood Risk Officer giving background on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 and the annual Local Levy.
- 10.1.2 Mr Bird gave overview on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs):
- There was no Council representative on the Northern RFCC;
 - Cllr Long was the Council's representative on the Central RFCC;
 - Mr Bird & Cllr Castle were the Council's representatives on the Eastern RFCC;
 - There was a rolling plan of projects, which had now been extended to cover 6-10 years;
 - £1 in investment in the RFCC by the Council could result in approximately £17 funding from National Government [subsequent to the meeting it was clarified that £1 in investment in the RFCC by the Council would result in between £4 to £17 allocation of funding from National Government];
 - A number of years ago the Council's representatives had sought the 0% increase but the Local Levy majority vote was for the 5% increase; this increase had been pursued since;
 - Mr Bird's recommendation to the Committee was that the 5% increase, Option D, should be pursued this year.
- 10.2.1 Discussion was held over the challenges faced by frequent flooding in Great Yarmouth. The Planning Services Manager clarified that Anglian Water operates separately to the RFCC. He explained that investigating and costing solutions to problems and seeking funding from the RFCC for projects could take several years.
- 10.2.2 The Senior Flood Risk Officer clarified that the systems in Great Yarmouth were heavily dependent on Anglian Water; bids were being put to the RFCC and large capital schemes being investigated. It was felt that large capital schemes would be needed to address the problems experienced in this area of the County.
- 10.2.3 It was confirmed that the funding for the North Norwich, Sprowston and Old Catton flood protection came from the Department of Transport (DfT) "challenge funding", however, Local Levy funding was being sought to further improve these systems.
- 10.2.4 Discussion was held regarding flooding in the County; Members discussed problems caused by flooding experienced in areas across the County, and how they could be addressed.
- 10.2.5 It was suggested that a meeting could be held with stakeholders such as Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Internal Drainage Board (IDB), joining up with the Local Plan making process, to look into a clearly defined policy and so that all stakeholders, including Norfolk County Council, could work together to address adequacy of water supply

and individual responsibilities to strengthen flood defences and flood protection in Norfolk.

- 10.2.6 Members agreed that inviting stakeholders to a Committee meeting or hosting a seminar or similar event would be valuable.
- 10.3 After a short discussion, Mr Plant recommended that option C, a 2% increase in Local Levy should be sought.
- 10.4.1 The recommendations of Option D by Mr Bird, and Option C by Mr Plant were put to a vote:
- 10.4.2 With 8 votes for and 9 against, the recommendation to choose proposal D, 5% increase in Local Levy, was lost.
- 10.4.3 With 12 votes for and 5 abstentions:
 - The Committee **AGREED** Option C, 2% increase in Local Levy, as Norfolk County Council's preferred position on the annual Local Levy.
- 10.5.1 Further discussion was held:
- 10.5.2 The IDB (Internal Drainage Board) meetings were highlighted by a member as an existing forum to discuss flooding and associated issues.
- 10.5.3 On reference to the flood working group which she chaired, Cllr Strong requested to be copied in regarding information of any working group, seminar or meeting.
- 10.5.4 The Planning Services Manager explained that sewerage issues did not come under the RFCC's remit but fell under Anglian Water's asset management plan; they were keen to improve Anglian Water's activity to engage with this.
- 10.6 The Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services **agreed** to discuss with the Planning Services Manager and team, to look into whether it would be best to invite the stakeholders discussed in Paragraphs 10.2.5 to a future Environment, Development and Transport Committee meeting, or for a separate seminar to be arranged. He stressed the importance of identifying the best way to move forward in order for all stakeholders and Norfolk County Council be held to account for the greater good.

11. Highway Asset Performance

- 11.1.1 Members received the report introduced by the Head of Highways highlighting performance of the highway asset against service level priorities based on previous Member decisions; this covered planned capital structural maintenance of the assets.
- 11.1.2 The Chairman raised an amendment to point 4.2.2.1 to read that there would be one early cut and one late cut. Members asked to be provided with the additional cost of this amendment; the Head of Highways clarified that it was likely to

increase by around £50,000 and it was agreed to provide the cost from elsewhere in the budget.

- 11.2.1 During discussion the following points were raised:
- 11.2.2 The positive levels of customer satisfaction on page 39 of the report were praised.
- 11.2.3 It was queried why street lighting and public rights of way were not mentioned in the report despite receiving the least positive feedback from the customer satisfaction survey. The Head of Highways clarified that street lighting in Norfolk was, at that time, in the best condition it had been. It was however recognised that the survey reflected the public's perception, and confirmed that comments had been looked into. Arrangements for funding for public rights of way had changed, which meant that more grass and hedge cutting was now taking place. Therefore he hoped to see an improvement in customer satisfaction in the future survey.
- 11.2.4 The Head of Highways clarified that Item 1 detailed the areas being worked on in order to work towards a score of three in the self-assessment. If the self-assessment score did not reach three then funding would reduce; the previous year's score (2015) was two.
- 11.2.5 An update was requested on the failed pothole software which had been circulated to Members earlier in the year. The Head of Highways updated the Committee that an IT fix was imminent.
- 11.2.6 Mr Clancy asked whether the software provider had been paid for this piece of work and asked for it to be minuted that new software should be tested for compatibility with iPads prior to circulation to Members.
- 11.2.7 The Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services confirmed that the new highways software was working and the Highways Department were working towards a paperless system by the end of the year; using this new software, and the public could now report faults online. The pothole software referred to had been a new application which drew information from the existing CRM (customer relationship management) system and software. There had been problems viewing this on iPads, however, this was now being worked on and would soon be available to Members to view faults reported in specific areas.
- 11.2.8 The timescales of when the new i-pad functionality would be available was requested.
- 11.2.9 A query was raised over the adequacy of drainage maintenance discussed in the report. The Head of Highways clarified that, however they were currently looking into how problem areas could be cleaned more frequently than annually.
- 11.2.10 When a query was raised over past failed bids for Government Funding for improvements to the Fen Roads, the Head of Highways updated the Committee that the DfT were now discussing the next round of "challenge funding" bids.
- 11.2.11 A discussion was held over the closure of doctors' surgeries and movement of patients to Gorleston walk in Centre, and the potential difficulty of access and

distance of travel this could cause. It was clarified that because the decisions were made by the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), no consultation had been held with Highways; it was suggested these issues could be raised through the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 11.3.1 The Committee **REVIEWED** and **APPROVED** the proposed:
 - a. Revised Asset Management Strategy and Performance framework
 - b. Stakeholder Liaison and Communications Plan
 - c. Asset Data Management Strategy
 - d. Recommendations in the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), Management of Highway Drainage Assets
- 11.3.2 The Committee **REVIEWED** and **APPROVED** the proposed changes to standards and procedures for:
 - a. Frequency of highway safety inspections
 - b. Rural grass cutting **WITH AN AMENDMENT** to replace the single swathe cut with one early cut and one late cut.
 - c. Winter service decision making for the 2016-17 season.

12. Annual Review of the Enforcement Policy

- 12.1.1 Members received the revised Enforcement Policy and the annex documents to this policy, introduced by the Head of Trading Standards.
- 12.1.2 The Head of Trading Standards clarified that the main amendments related to services that reported to Communities Committee.
- 12.1.3 The Head of Trading Standards was thanked for her report and the clarity of the data and information.
- 12.2 The committee **AGREED** to confirm the revised Community and Environmental Services Enforcement Policy and its annex documents for consideration for approval by the Communities Committee, the approval body for the policy.

13. Recommendations of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership Board

- 13.1.1 The Committee received the report, introduced by the Principal Planner, giving background on the Greater Norwich Development Partnership, actions undertaken by the board since re-establishment was agreed at the Environment Development and Transport Committee meeting on the 8 July 2016, and progress on production of the Greater Norwich Local Plan.
- 13.1.2 The Principal Planner updated members that each district Council had a working party which County Councillors representing the area could attend and speak on greater Norwich planning issues.
- 13.2.1 During discussion the following points were raised:

- 13.2.2 A Member voiced his concern over the suggestion of a Green Belt; he felt that this could be a constraint and that the Norwich southern bypass protection zone was sufficient. He felt the Committee should not support a green belt around Norwich.
- 13.2.3 The Principal Planner explained that, since the Plan was in its earliest stages, it was important to retain all issues on the table in order to ensure each reasonable option was researched and considered thoroughly. Alternative approaches to a Green Belt, such as protecting important strategic gaps between settlements, would also be looked into as possible inclusions in the plan.
- 13.2.4 The first round of full public consultations would take place in autumn next year, 2017.
- 13.3 The Committee **NOTED** progress on production of the Greater Norwich Local Plan

14. Forward Plan and decisions taken under delegated authority

- 14.1 The Committee reviewed the forward plan introduced by the Business Support and Development Manager, setting out the items and decisions programmed to be brought to the Committee for consideration in relation to environment, development and transport issues in Norfolk.
- 14.2.1 The committee **AGREED** to add the following items to the forward plan:
- 14.2.2
- Update on outcomes of the petition regarding the worsening traffic problems at Cherry Tree Corner (See paragraph 6.3.1);
- 14.2.3
- Action on Flooding in Norfolk (see paragraph 10.6);
- 14.2.4
- Update and timescales regarding the wind power company Vattenfall's plans to build an onshore substation in North Norfolk within three miles of Necton as part of the Norfolk Vanguard wind farm;
- 14.2.5
- A report on street lighting, regarding progress on the capital invested in replacing existing street lighting with LED lighting, and the progress on switch offs in urban areas.

The meeting closed at 11:33am

Chairman