

Norfolk County Council

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 March 2009

Present: Mr W Northam in the Chair

Mr A Adams	Mr C Jordan
Mr C Armes	Mr C Joyce
Mr J Baskerville	Mr J Joyce
Mr S Bett	Mrs B Lashley
Mr R Blower	Mr C Lloyd Owen
Mrs H Bolt	Mrs S Matthews
Dr A Boswell	Mrs R Monbiot
Mrs J Brown	Mr I Monson
Mr A Byrne	Mr P Morse
Mr D Callaby	Mr C Mowle
Mr M Carttiss	Mr S Murphy
Mrs J Chamberlin	Mr G Nobbs
Mr B Collins	Mrs T Paines
Miss E Collishaw	Mrs H Panting
Mr J Collop	Mr J Perry-Warnes
Mr D Cox	Mr J Pitt-Pladdy
Mr S Dorrington	Mr A Pond
Mr S Dunn	Mr R Rockcliffe
Mr T East	Mr J Rogers
Mrs J Eells	Mr D Rye
Mrs I Floering-Blackman	Mr M Scutter
Mr R Goreham	Mr N Shaw
Mr J Gretton	Mr J Shrimplin
Mr A Gunson	Mr B Spratt
Mrs S Gurney	Mr M Taylor
Mrs B Hacker	Mr A Tomkinson
Mr P Hacon	Miss J Virgo
Mr B Hannah	Mr B Walker
Mr D Harrison	Mrs C Walker
Mr P Harwood	Mrs C Ward
Mr G Hemming	Ms S Whitaker
Mr C How	Mr A White
Mr C Hull	Mr A Williams
Mr H Humphrey	Mr A Wright
Mrs S Hutson	Mr M Wright
Mr B Iles	

Total present: 72

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Baxter, Mrs G Harris, Mr J Holmes, Ms I Macdonald, Mr I Mackie, Ms M McKay, Mr B Morrey, Mrs S Rice and Mr T Wainwright.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Item 1: Minutes of the previous meeting. The amendment was proposed by Mr Scutter and seconded by Mr J Joyce.

2. Chairman's Announcements

Miss Jean Kennedy and Mr Brian Smith

The Chairman announced that two former Officers of the Council, Miss Jean Kennedy, the County Archivist, and Mr Brian Smith, the Chief Fire Officer, had both sadly passed away. Council stood for a minute's silence in honour of their memory.

Chairman's Events

The 'Great at 80' Reception, held on 20 February, had been very much enjoyed by all who attended and the Chairman thanked all those involved, including the EDP for the excellent coverage of the event.

On 5 March the Chairman hosted a reception for a delegation of visitors from Norway.

On 6 March the Chairman paid a return visit to Gorleston-on-sea Sea Cadet Corps for a Change of Command ceremony.

On 9 March the Chairman opened an Exhibition of Manuscripts at the Archive Centre. He offered his congratulations to Dr John Alban and his team on the wonderful exhibition and recommended that members visit the exhibition if they had not already done so.

On 16 March, staff and students from Sheringham High School held their School Council meeting in the Council Chamber followed by a visit to Norwich City Football Club.

On 17 March the Chairman hosted a reception for a delegation of teachers from Chongqin, Eastern China, and teaching staff and Governors of Framingham Earl, Litcham and Thorpe High Schools.

On 18 March the Chairman attended the launch of the Wholefood Planet Store in Old Hall Road, Norwich. Norfolk County Council and Norwich City College were the leading players in this project and were praised by Kevin Brennan, the Minister for the Third Sector, who opened the Store.

Audit Commission Rating

The Audit Commission has published its star ratings for council performance and Norfolk County Council had been awarded the top score of four stars and was assessed to be improving well in its direction of travel. The Chairman paid tribute to Council staff for their hard work and dedication, which he said had undoubtedly contributed to this positive outcome.

Charter for Member Development

An external inspection team recently visited County Hall to assess the Council's performance against the standards of the Charter for Member Development and the Council was subsequently awarded the Council Charter Status for a period of three years. The Chairman offered his congratulations to all involved.

Local Government Review briefing

The Chairman reminded members that a Local Government Review briefing would take place in the Council Chamber following the Council meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were noted:

Mrs Hacker declared a personal interest in Item 3 of the Cabinet Report for the 26 January 2009 meeting, Overview and Scrutiny Panel Issues, as a Governor of City College Norwich.

Mr Harwood declared a personal interest in Item 12 of the Cabinet Report for the 26 January 2009 meeting, 'Fair Funding: Outcome of Consultation', as a Governor of Sewell Park and because Mile Cross Primary School was in his Division.

Mrs Walker declared a personal interest in Item 4 of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report for the 29 January 2009 meeting, 'Midwifery and Maternity Services', as a member of her family was a trainee midwife at the James Paget University Hospital.

4. Cabinet Recommendations – 2 March 2009

Mr Cox moved the recommendations from the Cabinet.

RESOLVED: To approve the updated elements of the County Council Plan and to approve its extension to 2012.

RESOLVED: That Mr John Murfitt and Mr Jonathan Barclay be re-appointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel for terms of office ending on 31 March 2012.

5. Report of the Cabinet Meeting held on 26 January 2009

In moving the report, Mr Cox, Leader of the Council, drew Members' attention to key items and invited questions.

Public Question, paragraph 1.1

Dr Boswell asked for confirmation that the position was still the same and that local authorities in Norfolk were not stockpiling recyclate nor diverting it to landfill. He also asked if Members could receive a regular update.

In response, Mr Monson, the Cabinet Member for Waste Management and the Environment said that there had been no stockpiling of recyclates nor a redirecting of them to landfill and that there had been a slight improvement of the market for recycled goods. He agreed to liaise with officers to ascertain whether a regular report could be received by the Planning, Transportation, the Environment and Waste Overview & Scrutiny Panel (O&SP) or whether there would be a better way of reporting regularly to members.

Overview and Scrutiny Panel Issues, paragraph 3

Ms Whitaker referred to the opening of Wholefood Planet and said this seemed to be the only Social Enterprise that Norfolk County Council was involved in. She asked why the possibility of Social Enterprises had not been pursued for other items agreed at Adult Social Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

In response, Mr Mowle, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services, said that the Scrutiny Group felt it was inappropriate to set up a Social Enterprise for homecare but that other possible areas were being looked at closely for the future.

Mr Scutter asked whether the Administration had considered introducing a travel card.

In response, Mrs Monbiot, Cabinet Member for Children's Services said that Children's Services were working very hard with Planning & Transportation to ensure no young person was denied access to diploma courses. She said that Norfolk was at the forefront of looking at transport provision for young people in rural areas.

2008-2009 Finance Monitoring Report, paragraph 4

Mr Morse asked for an update on the Council's Icelandic investments. He asked where the Council got its advice from, whether the Council would consider suing Butlers and what were the planning assumptions if the Council was unsuccessful in getting this money back from the Icelandic banks.

In response, Mr Humphrey, Cabinet Member for Human Resources, Finance, Property and Corporate Affairs, advised members that the Council hoped to be listed as a preferred creditor but there was no indication yet as to the size of the settlement. He confirmed that the Council had no intention of suing Butlers who had given information and advice to enable officers to make decisions. The Council's Treasury Management Panel would be looking in detail at the situation at their meeting later in the day.

State of the Economy, paragraph 5

Ms Whitaker said that she was concerned that three separate groups of officers were involved in the work on looking at issues for Norfolk arising from the current economic situation and that there was a danger of impeding rather than helping the situation. She asked which Cabinet Member was in overall charge. Mr Cox said that he was aware that Cabinet Members had taken on parts of this role but he confirmed that he took an overview and ultimate responsibility lay with him.

Mr J Joyce asked about the length of time it took the authority to pay invoices, whether the invoice payment time had been reduced to twenty days and what the average payment time was. In response, Mr Humphrey confirmed that there were procedures in place and further information would be forwarded to all members

Delivering Joined-Up Health and Social Care Services, paragraph 6

Mr Callaby asked whether housing could also be linked into social care.

In response, Mr Mowle said that health and housing were jointly considered and that strategic planners would be involved in pilots; planning was underway for homes for the elderly for the next twelve years and the authority would be looking to work with landlords to further social housing.

Norfolk Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Control Development Plan Document – Publication of proposed Submission Document, paragraph 8

In response to a request from Mr East, Mr Gunson, Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation, confirmed that any representations received could be shared with opposition spokespersons before submission of the development plan document to the Secretary of State.

Phase 3 Sure Start Children's Centres Services, paragraph 11

In response to several questions regarding Phase 3 of Sure Start, Mrs Monbiot confirmed that where Children's Centres were placed at existing schools, the budgets were kept totally separate. Mrs Monbiot also confirmed that there would be a Children's Centre based in Harleston. She said that the Government had slipped the final date from 2010 to 2011 but sixteen new Children's Centres would shortly be going out to contract bringing the total to 52 - all centres must be in place by March 2011 and the new phase would be based on outreach.

Mrs Lashley said that it had been stated that the criteria for the outreach service was that it should reach 600 children in towns or 1200 in urban areas. In Sprowston the centre would reach 1229 children but housing development in the area would increase this number in the longer term and she was concerned about Sprowston being oversubscribed. She urged all Members to look at what was proposed for their areas. Mrs Lashley asked for an assurance that the figures would be looked at again. In response, Mrs Monbiot said that Mrs Lashley's issues would be looked at and that

there would also be careful consideration of where the new centres should be sited.

Fair Funding: Outcome of Consultation, paragraph 12

Mr Harwood said that £1m - £1.5m had been taken from the budgets for schools in the most deprived areas and he asked how the impact of this would be monitored. Mrs Panting noted that cuts to school budgets in areas of high deprivation would be very difficult to manage.

In response, Mrs Monbiot said that Fair Funding had been through enormous consultation. Norfolk had suffered through a reduction in pupil numbers but the difficult decision to reduce budgets had been made due to the overall pot of funding being reduced. There were a large number of statements which was very expensive and that the new Special Needs Strategy identified that statements were not always the best approach.

6. Report of the Cabinet Meeting held on 16 February 2009

Mr Scutter questioned why an item appeared as urgent business for the creation of a Sixth Form at Taverham High School had not been included with the Cabinet papers.

In response, Mr Cox said that procedures had been followed as currently laid out in the Constitution but members could take this forward as part of the review of the Council's Constitution.

7. Report of the Cabinet Meeting held on 2 March 2009

Urgent Business – Statement by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services

Ms Whitaker said that members whose divisions were affected by the issues surrounding Careforce should have been informed when the issues first arose. Mrs Hacker said that many members were concerned about the monitoring of sub-contracts. Mr Morse asked whether it was time to review how contract specifications are drawn up and managed across the Council; his concerns extended beyond Adult Social Services as he had recent experience of difficulties in North Walsham with the contract to install new street lights. Mr Taylor felt that the Great Yarmouth Area committee should have been advised of this issue.

Mr Cox confirmed that contracts are continually reviewed and monitored by project managers and procurement specialists.

Mr Mowle said that the authority had worked very actively with Careforce to urgently improve the situation and he was pleased to report that things had improved a great deal. Careforce had improved their management capacity, completed all outstanding risk assessments and were now fully staffed. The number of complaints had now dropped considerably and until a week ago the Chief Executive of Careforce had reported on a daily basis to the Director of Adult Social Services whilst also making daily phone calls to about 400 of the most vulnerable service users to check on the service

they have received. To provide an independent scrutiny, a survey of Careforce clients would now be undertaken by Age Concern Norfolk and Age Concern Norwich.

Public Questions, paragraph 1.2

Dr Boswell expressed concern that £900,000 of lottery funding for the pedestrian and cycle links from the city centre and Thorpe Hamlet to Whitlingham Country Park could be lost and he hoped the authority could find some way to keep this lottery money in Norfolk.

Mr Adams, as Chairman of the Norwich Highways Agency Joint Committee, said that the overall cost of this scheme was £5m and there were grave concerns as to whether sufficient funds could be raised by the timescale.

Mr Monson said that the Council would continue to support the project through the Greater Norwich Development Project (GNDP) but the lead authority for this project was Norwich City Council who submitted the bid for funding. Norfolk County Council did not have a budget to fund this but would continue to try to find a solution through the GNDP.

Mr Cox agreed to write to Mr Morpew, Chairman of the GNDP, about this issue.

Motion to Council on 19 January 2009 – Consideration of Climate Change Issues in Decision Making, paragraph 5

Several Members expressed disappointment that the motion had been rejected by Cabinet as they felt that this issue should be kept at the forefront.

In response, Mr Monson said that this authority was very serious about climate change and through its Climate Change Strategy had done a great deal to put in progress a five-year programme to achieve a reduction in its carbon footprint. The authority has also joined with the district councils to take the lead on climate change in this County.

Appointment of Domiciliary Care Contract, paragraph 8

Ms Whitaker said that the only briefing that had taken place concerning the decision to terminate an eastern locality based contract was to four of the Great Yarmouth members but other members should have been informed as they had been contacted by relatives to ask what was happening.

Mr Mowle said that the termination of the Briar Care Contract in the East of the County was unrelated to the current retendering process. This was a much smaller contract which the Council had been concerned about for some months.

County Farms Policy, paragraph 12

Mr Nobbs said that the amendments to the County Farms Working Group recommendations presented by Mr Baskerville had been accepted by Cabinet. However, Mr Baskerville was not a member of the Working Group and Mr Nobbs questioned the principle of who should be able to present reports to Cabinet. Mr Nobbs voiced concern that the recommendations as

put forward by the Working Group had been amended without their consent. Ms Whitaker suggested that, in future, only the Chair of the Working Group (where relevant) and the Chair of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee should present Cabinet Scrutiny Committee reports to Cabinet and this proposal was seconded by Mr Baskerville.

Mr Humphrey said that issues about Recommendation 33 had arisen which might have delayed its acceptance. The issues had been advised to Mr Spratt as Chairman of the Working Group and also Mr Baskerville. He had accepted the amendments as tabled by Mr Baskerville which dealt with those issues and would allow agreement of the report.

Mr Morse questioned why Cabinet had referred the report back to Scrutiny saying the conclusions were fundamentally flawed. Scrutiny did not make any significant changes to the report which was then accepted in its entirety by Cabinet, so all that had happened was everything was delayed by four months.

Ms Whitaker said that she believed that the wording of Recommendation 33, as set out in the report was an incorrect record of what Cabinet had agreed and she suggested that the wording be changed to read "...the tendering process should proceed, and among other items will need to consider the following".

In response, Mr Cox said that as the minutes of any meeting are confirmed at the next meeting of that committee, consideration could be given at the next Cabinet meeting to changing the wording of the minute.

King's Lynn – Proposed Lease of Priory House – corporate Accommodation Strategy Efficiency Project, paragraph 13

Mrs Brown was concerned about the cost of eighty extra parking spaces to be purchased and requested that this be reconsidered.

In response, Mr Humphrey said that the three buildings currently providing County Council accommodation in King's Lynn were unsatisfactory and were not DDA compliant. The new property would be much more energy efficient and DDA compliant - there was a need for car parking.

RESOLVED: with 40 votes in favour and 27 against, to note the report.

8. Report of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2009

RESOLVED: to note the report.

9. Report of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10 February 2009

Norfolk County Strategic Partnership (NCSP) Member Reference Group, paragraph 1

Mr Baskerville requested that the names of members representing the County Council on thematic partnerships, NCSP and District LSPs and the 'Team of Three' supporting each district LSP, be included in the year book.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

10. Report of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 29 January 2009

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11. Report of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 5 March 2009

RESOLVED: to note the report.

12. Report of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2009

RESOLVED: to approve the recommended amendment to the Audit Committee Terms of Reference and to note the report.

13. Report of the Planning (Regulatory) Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2009

RESOLVED: to note the report.

14. Report of the Joint Highways Agency Committee Meeting Held on 22 January 2009

Hobart Square – Request for Disabled Parking Bay, paragraph 1

Mr Adams confirmed that the Council would liaise with Norwich City Council concerning disabled parking.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

15. Report of the Joint Museums Committee Meeting Held on 16 January 2009

RESOLVED: to note the report.

16. Report of the Norfolk Records Committee Meeting Held on 16 January 2009

RESOLVED: to note the report.

17. Matters considered by Review Panels

RESOLVED: to note report.

18. Appointments to Committees etc (Standing Item)

There were no appointments to Committee.

The meeting concluded at 12.45pm.

CHAIRMAN



If you need these minutes in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Vanessa Dobson on 01603 223029 or minicom 01603 223833 and we will do our best to help.