

Communities Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 21 October 2015
10:00am Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Mr P Smyth (Chair)

Mr R Bearman (Vice-Chair)
Mr C Aldred
Mrs J Brociek-Coulton
Mr J Childs
Ms E Corlett
Mrs H Cox
Mrs M Dewsbury
Mr N Dixon

Mr B Hannah
Mr D Harrison
Mr H Humphrey
Mr J Law
Mr W Northam
Mr M Sands
Mr N Shaw
Mr J Ward

1. Apologies and substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Ms C Rumsby, substituted by Ms E Corlett.

2. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2015.

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2015 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. Urgent business

4.1 There were no member questions.

5. Local Member Issues

5.1 There were no local member issues.

6. Update on Key Service Issues and Activities

- 6.1 The Committee received the report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which provided Members with fortnightly updates about key service issues and activities. The update enabled Members to discuss the latest position and identify any areas where the Committee would like to receive further information or updates.
- 6.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Review the latest service update at Appendices A to C and identify any areas where the Committee would like to see further information or update.

7. Finance Monitoring Report at period 05 2015-16.

- 7.1 The Committee received the annexed report (7) by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which provided the Committee with information on the latest monitoring position for the Committee for 2015-16. It also provided information on emerging issues and the position on the expected use of reserves for Communities purposes.
- 7.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the forecast revenue outturn position for the 2015-16 as at period 05.
 - Note the forecast capital outturn position for the 2015-16 capital programme.
 - Note the current forecast for use of reserves.

8. Re-Imagining Norfolk: Service and Financial Planning 2016-17 to 2018-19

- 8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (8) by the Executive Director of Communities and Environmental Services and Executive Director of Resources which provided the strategic framework of Re-Imagining Norfolk, for the County Council to refocus its role and pursue its priorities within a radically reduced level of resources. The report positioned the County Council to produce its budget for 2016-17 in accordance with the law and proper standards.
- 8.2 The Committee **AGREED** that there would be a fourth category for the savings proposals which would identify that the Committee would have fundamental concerns about those proposals as they identified unacceptable risks. The precise wording for that category would be drafted, circulated and agreed post-meeting.
- 8.3 The Committee heard from the Director of Public Health that the proposal relating to public health should be moved from a green risk rating to an amber risk rating. As the Director was new to post, there had not been the opportunity to bring all the relevant information to Committee relating to this proposal in order for the Committee to make an informed decision. The Committee **AGREED** to change the category of the proposal to amber and to a risk category B.
- 8.4 It was confirmed that there was no statutory amount for the grant for Healthwatch but Healthwatch had statutory obligations to undertake. The grant was currently £600k which was higher than some other Councils, for example Suffolk was £450k.

- 8.5 The Committee questioned if it would be plausible to find public buildings at no cost to house a registration office. The Head of Democratic Services said that the experience so far had been that partner organisations had welcomed registration offices on this basis.
- 8.6 The Head of Libraries and Information confirmed that lone working in museums would only take place where it was felt safe to do so, and health and safety considerations had been taken into account. The Committee suggested that volunteers could be present during these periods to ensure that there were two persons on site.
- 8.7 The Head of Libraries and Information updated the Committee that the Open Plus technology for the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library would be installed on the first floor rather than the ground floor due to the practicalities of the installation. There would be an invest to save associated with this proposal as demonstrated by the costs in the first year. In response to Members questions, it was clarified that the saving would be the equivalent of two average staffed hours per day.
- 8.8 In response to Member's question it was reported that the reshaping of the customer service team would not alter the overall capacity of the service. It was clear that the service was being drawn on to help other departments achieve savings.
- 8.9 There was a medium risk (amber) associated with the proposal to reduce the Norfolk Record Office (NRO) opening hours due to the conditions of the grant received from the Heritage Lottery Fund that helped to build the NRO. Discussions were underway with the Heritage Lottery Fund about this issue.
- 8.10 The Head of Libraries reported that the savings associated with the reduction of stock for libraries and associated staff reflected the loss of income that would be a consequence of this proposal. In response to Member's questions, the staff implications of this proposal would be the equivalent of four full time equivalent staff.
- 8.11 Members of the Committee asked for the impact on jobs to be included especially mandatory redundancies on the report to the Policy and Resources Committee so Members were fully aware of the situation.
- 8.12 The pilot of Open Plus technology at Acle Library was reported to be going well. There had been a concern that the implementation of the self-service technology would prevent people from using the library but it had, in fact, had the opposite effect with people able to make visits at other times. The £622k savings represented the approximate staffing reduction of 13 full time equivalent posts. It was confirmed by the Head of Libraries and Information that this proposal would not lead to libraries being open with only technology, it would lead to libraries being open for longer hours with restricted and reduced staffed hours.
- 8.13 The Head of Democratic Services clarified that the red risk rating attached to the proposals of registration service accommodation costs and registration service income generation represented the realistic aim of achieving those additional

- savings. There was concern that although the service was willing to take the challenge of making those savings, it was unknown if they were achievable. In response to Member's questions, the service needed to provide a registration system that was accessible to all residents but was restricted by the legalities of only being able to register births and deaths in person, which prevented online registering.
- 8.14 The Head of Libraries reported that there would be a change in supplying library books to those in residential care homes which would improve the service for many residents. For some, this would be a major change and would have to be managed carefully and therefore had been given an amber risk rating.
- 8.15 There was duplication of some mobile library routes and therefore there was a savings proposal to reduce the frequency of some of the routes. This would affect urban areas and it was reported that the local members of these two divisions had been consulted. There would be a capital saving of £100k as a mobile library vehicle that was nearing the end of its life would not be replaced.
- 8.16 The Head of Libraries and Information confirmed that the museums which would be effected in the proposal to re-design the museum service were Strangers Hall, Norwich; The Bridewell, Norwich; Cromer Museum; two museums at Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn museum and Ancient House at Thetford. The Arts Council awarded a 50% grant to the Council for this service and therefore this would be a significant point and could jeopardise future grants. Schools would continue to be able to visit but would have to provide their own professional staff to accompany them. Ancient House had recently been shortlisted for an award and there was doubt that this would happen if the museums were designed to have only a basic level of service.
- 8.17 The fire service operational support reductions and redeployments of working day services staff would result in a move of resources from King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth, where the number of fire calls were decreasing, to rural areas where the numbers of road crashes were increasing. The bulk of the savings would come from the reduction of incident commanders who manage more complex emergencies which are over and above the routine. These staff received a 20% call out fee for being available whenever the Fire Service needed them.
- 8.18 The Committee noted that although the Fire Service were performing well in terms of cost of the Service, the performance had decreased. The Chief Fire Officer, in response to Member's questions, confirmed that the performance had gone down as a result of previous years' budget cuts. Members of the committee felt that the baseline of the Fire Service was not enough currently and therefore should not be reduced any further. The Fire Service was the most under-funded service in the Country and therefore did not have the capacity to be reduced. The Committee **AGREED** to change the rating of the proposals of the fire support operational reductions and redeployment of WDS staff and the proposal of the re-design of operational activities from a B to a C.
- 8.19 The Committee heard that the proposal which related to the CES transport costs and CES supplies and services had been rated as a red risk due to the limited

development of the proposal at this point. The delivery of the proposed savings was uncertain without the proposal being further developed.

- 8.20 The Trading Standards Manager reported to the Committee that the Trading Standards Service had lost 45% of its budget since 2010/11, 15% last year. The proposed savings documented in the report would lose a further 33% which would equate to 13 full time equivalent posts from the service. This would mean that it would lose the capacity to identify rogue traders and would affect legitimate businesses and vulnerable people. It would also mean that the work to prevent rogue traders in the first instance would reduce. It would mean that the preventative market surveillance work which identified unsafe food and consumer goods, i.e. toys, would have to be reduced. It would also mean that the service would have less animal disease resilience in the case of an animal disease outbreak. There had been 5 cases since 2000, the biggest of which being in 2000 of swine fever. The service had a third less staff than they did in 2000 and half the number of animal health inspectors.
- 8.21 The Committee expressed a concern about resilience in dealing with future animal disease breakouts and commented that any savings would be negligible. There was a risk by reducing the staff and by reducing the ability to deal with an emergency crisis this would take the savings proposal to an unacceptable risk. It was felt that there would be a major public safety impact if the changes were implemented. The Committee **AGREED** to change this proposal rating from a C to a D.
- 8.22 With regards to the proposal of a fire service further re-design of 25%, the Chief Fire Officer reported that there were no easy choices to make when the service was being asked to lose half of its stations, crew and engines. The Committee **AGREED** to change the rating of this proposal from a C to a D.
- 8.23 The Head of Libraries reported that the proposal to re-design the library service was the difference between achieving the rest of the libraries savings proposals and achieving 25% savings. Other counties were moving towards a community based model and therefore it should not be discounted in the future as the Council was not in a position to fund 47 libraries in the way it could now. The Committee **AGREED** to change the rating of this proposal from a C to a D.
- 8.24 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Consider and comment on the service delivery model required to provide the service within a budget of 75% of addressable spend, set out in section 2.
 - Consider, comment and agree to refer to Policy and Resources committee, the list of savings proposals, including initial RAG rating, which are to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 26 October with a view to consulting with the public.

9. Fire and Rescue Review – Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

- 9.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9) from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which explained that the an IRMP was a

strategic plan that assessed community risks including risk to life, the economy, heritage and the environment and then determined best use of Fire and Rescue Service resources to meet the requirements of the risks. The IRMP process for 2016-2020 had provided an opportunity for a strategic review of fire and rescue provision in the context of Re-Imagining Norfolk and showed how Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service could be delivered with a reduced level of resources.

- 9.2 Members claimed that any changes made to the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service would come with too much of a significant risk. There was currently a lot of staff goodwill in the service and therefore the consequences of the proposed changes would be difficult to quantify.
- 9.3 The Chief Fire Officer reported that if any of the changes included a closure of a Fire Station, a judicial review would have to be made if there was one requested.
- 9.4 The graph on page A72 was explained as being the result of the calls made to the fire station and the calls which the fire engine attended to give a more accurate picture of the workload around that particular area.
- 9.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Consider and comment on the draft IRMP 2016-20.

10. Performance and Risk Monitoring Report (Quarter 1)

- 10.1 The Committee received the annexed report (10) by the Executive Director of Environmental and Community Services, which reviewed quarter one (April to June 2015) performance and risk results for the service areas that were covered by the Communities Committee.
- 10.2 It was noted by the Committee that the monitoring picture showed a relatively positive picture.
- 10.3 The Committee heard that a wide range of data was collected for cultural services with a limited amount being reported to the Committee. This was due to concern with the data concern in the past and was in the process of being rectified.
- 10.4 It was clarified that the performance relating to ICT was under the remit of the Communities Committee for the delivery of the Customer Relationship Management system.
- 10.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Agree the 2015-16 performance dashboard as the basis for reporting to this committee over the financial year.
 - Review and comment on the performance information.
 - Consider any areas of performance that required a more in-depth analysis.

11. Annual Review of the Enforcement Policy

- 11.1 This item was deferred to a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm

Chairman



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.