Norfolk County Council

Digital Innovation and Efficiency Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18 September 2017
10:00am Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

Present:

Mr T Garrod (Chairman)

Mr D Bills   Mr D Rowntree
Mr E Colman   Ms S Squire
Mr S Eyre   Dr M Strong
Mr T Fitzpatrick

1.   Apologies for Absence

1.1   An apology for absence was received from Dr C Jones.

2   Declarations of Interest

2.1   Mr T Fitzpatrick declared an "other interest" because he worked as an IT consultant.

3   Items of Urgent Business

3.1   There were no items of urgent business.

4   Public Question Time

         There were no public questions.

5   Local Member Issues/ Member Questions

5.1   There was one member question from Mr S Aquarone which can be found together with the answer as an appendix to these minutes.

6   Chairman's Update

6.1   The Chairman said that he had recently attended a meeting of a steering group of the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce at which a wide range of issues about broadband infrastructure were discussed. It was recognised that businesses and

communities in Norfolk needed a wider coverage of high speed broadband and mobile connectivity to be competitive.

6.2   The Chairman added that mobile phone providers would be invited to attend the January 2018 meeting of this Committee to discuss issues about mobile phone coverage and how mobile phone services could be better delivered in Norfolk. In reply to questions about whether these were issues that fell within the remit of the Committee, the Chairman said that he believed it was the County Council's intention that the Committee should provide the political leadership for ensuring that Norfolk was best placed to exploit fully the opportunities that digital technologies offered and to help identify new ways to generate financial savings.

7   **Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22**

7.1   The annexed report (7) by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services and Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services was received.

7.2   The Committee received a report that set out Policy and Policy and Resources Committee's guidance to the Committee on the actions required to support preparation of a balanced budget for 2018-19.

7.3   The Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services said that the Council needed to continue to innovate and exploit digital technology to facilitate the transformation of public services across the county and to help generate technology-driven financial efficiencies in the Council's operations and activities. A wide range of ideas for bringing about innovative efficiency savings would be brought before future meetings of the Committee.

7.4   In reply to questions the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services confirmed that an additional 1% pay award would add an extra £2.5m to the Council's wage bill. This risk would be included in future budget setting reports that came before the Committee.

7.5   **RESOLVED**

        That the Committee:

        1) Note the budget planning guidance for 2018-19 agreed by Policy and Resources Committee and in particular note:
           a. **the budget assumptions set out in this report;**
           b. **the budget planning principles for 2018-19;**
           c. **the forecast budget gap of £100.000m reflected in the Council's latest financial planning;**
           d. **the allocation of saving targets for the MTFS period 2018-19 to 2021-22 to Departments and Committees, noting the existing savings for 2018-19 and beyond which were agreed as part of the 2017-18 budget round;**

        2) Agree the service-specific budgeting issues for 2018-19 as set out in

section 3 of the report,

3) Note that planned 2018-19 savings could be implemented during 2017-18 to provide an in-year saving; and

4) In order to help close the forecast 2018-19 budget gap (as defined in recommendation 1)c, commission officers to report to the October Committee cycle:
   a. whether any savings identified for 2019-20 have the capacity to be brought forward to 2018-19;
   b. to identify alternative new savings for 2018-19;
   c. to identify further savings for the future years 2019-20 to 2021-22 to close the budget gap identified in those years.

8.   **IMT Performance**

8.1   The annexed report (8) by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services and Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services was received.

8.2   The Committee received a report that provided an up to date view on performance management information for the IMT Department. It included operational dashboard information which was based on the 'vital signs' performance indicators previously reported to the Policy and Resources Committee. A more detailed monitoring report would be brought to future meetings.

8.3   Members' attention was drawn to the high demand from service departments for projects listed on the IMT dashboard. This meant IMT teams were fully committed for the next few months. In reply to questions, the Head of ICT said that capacity constrains meant that some ICT teams might require more resources to address short-term pressures and that the projects listed in paragraph 3.3 of the report had yet to be prioritised.

8.4   The Head of ICT said that the Committee would be involved in discussions and decisions about ICT projects that addressed the County Council's most important priorities and desired outcomes, and supported the achievement of savings within the Council. The Committee would be updated about proposed changes in the tendering of ICT services for a wide range of Council services. ICT would explore opportunities for providing an apprenticeship scheme for people looking to work within the IT industry and aim to report back on this matter to a future meeting. A more comprehensive performance monitoring report would be brought before the next meeting.

8.5   **RESOLVED**

          That the Committee:

          1) **Note the information provided in this report**
          2) **Agree the performance reporting dashboard format for future meetings.**

9   **Better Broadband for Norfolk Programme update**

9.1   The annexed report (9) by the Executive Director of Community and
        Environmental Services was received.

9.2   The Committee received a report that described the Better Broadband for Norfolk
        (BBfN) Programme which underpinned theme 1 within the UK Digital Strategy.

9.3   The Committee also received a presentation from the Better Broadband
        Programme Director that can be found on the Committee pages website. As part
        of the presentation, Members were informed that proposals to use more
        technology and provide services online depended on the robustness and reliability
        of key local infrastructure (broadband, mobile reception). This could present issues
        for some rural areas, where the infrastructure might not be in place to enable
        equitable access.

9.4   Individuals seeking further information about the infrastructure to their property
        were encouraged to go to:
        https://www.btwholesale.com/includes/adsl/adsl.htm
        It was pointed out that once a fibre solution was available to them a "VDSL" option
        would be shown.
        To find an Internet Service Provider individuals were encouraged to go to:
        https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-
        consumers/costs-and-billing/price-comparison

9.5   Members were informed that the Programme Director had attended several Parish
        Council meetings to answer questions about the Better Broadband for Norfolk
        programme. To make the best use of officer time it was suggested that Parish
        Councils should group together to make joint requests for talks on this subject.

9.6   Members suggested that the district council planning role for new housing
        development should in some way include a recognition of the need for Broadband
        services. It was noted that while this was not a statutory requirement Local
        Planning Authorities and housing developers required more clear planning
        guidance and policies in relation to broadband services. Members asked officers
        to provide evidence to a future meeting as to what they saw were the main issues
        of concern.

9.7   Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Committee would be
        followed by a tour of various Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) implementation
        sites that was being planned for between 2 pm and 5 pm on Thursday, 12 October
        2017. The tour would provide Members with an opportunity to:
        -   See the programme in action
        -   Meet key people within Norfolk's Openreach Deployment Team
        -   Learn more about the technology that BBfN is implementing.

9.8   **RESOLVED**

That the Committee:
1. **Note the progress of the BBfN Programme to date.**
2. **Receive an update report on BBfN every 6 months.**
3. **Receive a report at a future meeting on the local planning process and the provision of broadband services.**

10   **Digital Inclusion**

10.1   The annexed report (10) by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received.

10.2   The Committee received a report that explained several initiatives that were underway within Community Information and Learning to address barriers to digital inclusion.

10.3   The Assistant Director (Community, Information and Learning) explained the four main barriers to digital inclusion:
• access: the ability to connect to the internet and go online
• skills: the ability to use the internet and online services
• confidence: a fear of crime, lack of trust or not knowing where to start online
• motivation: understanding why using the internet is relevant and helpful
Several initiatives to address these barriers are currently underway within Community Information and Learning, and the highlights are included in this report.

10.4   The majority of Members were of the view that the Committee did not require a more clear definition of its role in relation to digital inclusion than was set out in its existing terms of reference.

10.4   It was pointed out that DAB radio had a 90% coverage in Norfolk and was an issue that should be kept under review.

10.5   **RESOLVED**

That the Committee:
1. **Endorse plans currently in place to improve digital inclusion in Norfolk and discuss future aspirations.**
2. **Task officers to develop a digital inclusion strategy for Norfolk.**

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

Chairman

Appendix 1
Question from Mr Steffan Aquarone:

"With the plans underway to promote digital inclusion via training sessions in Libraries, has the committee considered whether Norfolk's mobile

libraries could also be equipped (for example with the 'roaming' iPads we councillors have) to offer these sessions?

Answer:
"Thank you for your helpful question. I do not believe that this option has been considered as yet. However, should this committee decide to initiate the development of a new digital inclusion strategy, then this approach could be added to the options for consideration".