



Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22 September 2022
at 10 am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Cllr Steve Morpew (Chair)

Cllr Lana Hemsall (Vice Chair)

Cllr Carl Annison

Cllr M Dalby (substitute for Cllr Carpenter)

Cllr Phillip Duigan

Cllr Barry Duffin

Cllr Fabian Eagle (substitute for Cllr R Price)

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr Keith Kiddie

Cllr Jamie Osborn

Cllr Steve Riley (substitute for Cllr Brain Watkins)

Parent Governor representative

Mr Giles Hankinson

Also present (who took a part in the meeting):

Cllr Andrew Proctor

Cllr Andrew Jamieson

Cllr Margaret Dewsbury

Cllr Eric Vardy

Tom McCabe

Nick Johnson

Caroline Jeffrey

Mark Johnstone

Phil Watson

Ceri Sumner

Scott Norman

Peter Randall

Tim Shaw

Leader of the Council

Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Head of Planning

Principal Planner-Minerals and Waste Policy

Head of Youth Offending Service

Director of Children's Social Care

Director of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager

Committee Officer

Chair's Opening Remarks Regarding Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The Chair said that it was deeply sad that the momentous reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had ended. Norfolk County Council had joined the nation's mourning and, even though the official period had passed, he would like to begin the meeting with a minute's silence, so that Members could pay their respects and reflect on a life lived in service to others.

1A. Apologies for Absence

- 1A.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Lesley Bambridge, Cllr Graham Carpenter, Cllr Ed Maxfield, Cllr Richard Price, Cllr Brian Watkins, Ms Helen Bates (Church Representative) and Mr Paul Dunning (Church Representative).
- 1A.2 An apology was also received from Cllr John Fisher (Cabinet Member for Children's Services) for the item about the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan for which Cllr Andrew Proctor (the Leader of the Council) attended as a substitute.

1B New Member of the Committee—Ms Helen Bates

- 1B.1 The Chair reported that Ms Helen Bates had replaced Mrs Julie O'Connor as a Church representative on the Committee.

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 20 July 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest,

4 Urgent Business

- 4.1 No urgent business was discussed.

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 There were no public questions.

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

- 6.1 There were no local member issues/questions.

7 Call In

- 7.1 The Committee noted that there were no call-in items.

8 Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service – HMICFRS Improvement Plan

- 8.1 The Chair agreed that the Committee should receive the annexed report (10) on today's agenda as the next item because Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships) had to go to another commitment.
- 8.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report by the Director of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service that outlined the outcomes of the recent HM Inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (and the associated improvement plan) where the service had been rated as 'requires improvement'. Members of the Scrutiny Committee also received a presentation about the sustained period of pressure faced by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service during the momentous events of summer 2022.
- 8.3 During discussion of the report and of the presentation with Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships) and Ceri Sumner (Director of

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service), the following key points were noted:

- The monitors in the Council Chamber were used to show a presentation about the dangers that fire crews had faced in the summer of 2022 during what was the most sustained period of pressure that the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) had ever faced. The presentation explained the command structures that were put in place to address the strategic and tactical requirements to tackle these significant events.
- During this period, fire crews had attended 63 wildfires.
- The technical response vehicles (4x4) were new but had proved to be a key asset for the service.
- There was liaison with regional services to co-ordinate mutual assistance.
- The NFRS had enlisted the support of Fire and Rescue Services from across the country when a major incident was called in July.
- The Director of Fire had commissioned a review of the NFRS response during the events of Summer 2022. The review would be a full investigation into the service response and examine performance against specific outcomes and standards. Outcomes would be fed into the Community Risk Management Plan for future planning.
- Productive conversations with the farming community about issues such as access to local sources of water had already started to take place.
- The Cabinet Member said that while the inspectors remained concerned about outstanding issues to address fire prevention work, they had visited Norfolk during a period of high levels of Covid which had restricted such work. The development plan on pages 137-145 of the agenda showed how the service had completed or was in the process of completing work to rectify this situation.
- The areas of work which the inspectors had found were most in need of improvement were included in the improvement plan on pages 147-171 of the agenda.
- Cllr Eagle said that he wished to place on record thanks to the NFRS and the fire crews from other areas of the country for the work that they had done to tackle wildfires in his division during the summer.
- Other members also spoke about the work that was done during this period in their divisions.
- It was pointed out that discussions were currently taking place with the farming community about the use of special adapters for fire crews to be able to tap into various sources of water on or near to farmland.
- In reply to questions the Director said that she was currently scoping an exercise to better understand the future needs of the service and inform future capital investments and revenue requirements.
- The NFRS was able to benchmark itself against other counties in the Eastern region. The inspectors published comprehensive data for all fire services in the country.
- In reply to other questions, the Committee was assured that a considered and proportionate approach would be taken to providing the level of resources required for tackling wildfires in future years.
- The initial draft community risk management plan was due to be presented to the I&D Select Committee on 26 September 2022 prior to it going to Cabinet and public consultation before it went back to Cabinet, and then Scrutiny Committee and Full Council with recommendations in March 2023.

- It was pointed out that the service had not lost an appliance because of tackling the summer fires.
- The Chair said that the inspectors had identified 15 areas for improvement that were outstanding from a previous inspection that dated back to 2018/19 and prior to Covid. The inspection plan explained the work that was being done to tackle these issues but gave no target dates. The Chair questioned whether the oversight group needed to be boosted in some way so that it could tackle issues more quickly.
- In reply, the Cabinet Member said that the appointment of the new Director of Fire provided the service with the more dynamic approach it needed to tackle outstanding issues. It was noted that steps were being taken to reform the composition and role of the Oversight Group.
- The service was due to be revised by the HM inspectors later in the Autumn.

8.4 **RESOLVED**

That the Committee note the current position in relation to the issues mentioned in the Cabinet report and request that a further progress report on the work to complete the inspection plan and the community risk management plan is brought back early in the new year, before the community risk management plan is presented to the County Council for approval.

9 **Minerals and Waste Development Scheme and Norfolk Statement of Community Involvement**

The annexed report (9) was received.

- 9.1 The Scrutiny Committee received an update report on the 2022 MWDS and the 2022 SCI, which were reported to Cabinet for agreement prior to adoption at Full Council, at which point the 2022 MWDS and the 2022 SCI would replace the existing MWDS (2019) and SCI (2018).
- 9.2 Cllr Eric Vardy (Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste) said that while the MWDS and the 2022 SCI did not form the minerals and waste local plan, and so did not refer to policies and sites, they were nevertheless important documents. The SCI set out how NCC would engage with individuals, local communities, and organisations about the wide range of cases relating to planning conditions and detailed opportunities for post decision engagement such as through liaison groups. The MWDS was in essence the timetable for taking the draft minerals and waste local plan through to adoption.
- 9.3 The Committee considered the following:
- It was suggested that on the County Council's website page relating to planning (as well as the statement of community involvement set out in the report) it should include hyperlinks that directed people looking to engage with the planning process for the first time to where they could access national and local policies about the planning process, alongside further information around expectations.

- It was pointed out that both the MWDS and the SCI were about the regulations and the planning process and not about the submission plan itself which was due to be published shortly. As such neither of the two documents required paragraphs that related specifically to environmental implications. This information would be made clearer to councillors and members of the public in the final plan.

9.4 **RESOLVED**

That having considered the proposed 2022 Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Appendix A to this report) and the 2022 Norfolk Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix B to this report) the Committee have no substantive recommendations. The committee further instructed officers to prepare a report for the Leader and Cabinet Member in accordance with section 11b of the Norfolk County Council Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules).

10 **Norfolk Youth Justice Plan**

- 10.1 The annexed report (10) was received.
- 10.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report which provided Members with a copy of the revised Norfolk Youth Justice Plan and associated Cabinet papers. The plan formed part of the Norfolk County Council Policy Framework, which required a scrutiny process to take place in accordance with part 11B of the NCC constitution.
- 10.3 Cllr Andrew Proctor (Leader of the Council) (attending as a substitute for Cllr John Fisher the Cabinet Member for Children's Services) said that the vision set out in the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan was for a child first youth justice system. Because the Plan was a system wide strategic document the ongoing work to tackle day to day issues would be included in separate forward plans and action plans that measured the delivery of the performance measures. The constituent partners of the Norfolk Youth justice board were detailed on page 104 of the agenda. The service was doing well in places, particularly around reducing the level of first-time offenders, but that it was in reoffending that performance was not so good. The service needed to respond to the requirements of black, Asian and minority ethnic children and the changing profile of girls that were subject to youth justice. The plan put the child first, hearing the voice of the child, and fitted in with the NCC strategy of early intervention, recognising that children were influenced by what they experienced in their home. The aim was for children to enter adulthood without a criminal record. Funding for the service amounted to £3.9 m from several different sources. The Leader paid tribute to the work of those working within the youth justice system in Norfolk

The Committee discussed, received answers to questions and considered the following:

- Members spoke about how county lines were a big national issue for the Youth justice System and the importance of all the various agencies in Norfolk coming together to tackle this issue.

- Black and ethnic minority children were sentenced for the more serious offences which suggested that more work needed to be done with these groups at an earlier age.
- The youth justice system worked closely with social work colleagues and had specialist safeguarding teams that focused specifically on adolescents at risk.
- The Chair said that tackling a lack of local community cohesion lay at the centre of dealing with justice issues that impacted on young people. Young people with youth justice issues did not exist in isolation from their local community and they needed to be supported within their local community. He suggested that perhaps a large part of the answer to tackling youth crime lay in giving such children “something else that they wanted to do”. It was therefore important for the youth justice plan to link into a comprehensive local community plan that provided opportunities for community development.
- Officers said that this was an important national issue and the answer required working in partnership with the networks for vulnerable children and the serious violence duty group. There were opportunities for using monies from the youth endowment and youth improvements funds to co-ordinate solutions with communities and provide more youth facilities respectively.
- The Leader said that at page 63 of the agenda the report referred to the creation of safer communities with fewer victims. He would be happy to follow up this scrutiny point of view with the network partners and ask that going forward they should demonstrate the role that they had in achieving this important aim.
- In response to questions, officers said that all youth justice boards across the country had to submit information to the government on a national youth justice template. There was work to put in place a live tracking system in Norfolk to show trends at an earlier stage that could be fed back to partnership agencies.
- The Chair said that the re-offending rates in Norfolk were above the regional average and rising and the service therefore needed to demonstrate how it had a strong youth justice service.
- Officers pointed out that data was strong in other areas and the service were aware of and tackling re-offending rates. More lively and dynamic dashboards were being developed to improve the operational and strategic grip of the service.
- Cllrs pointed out the impact of school exclusions on young people offending.
- Officers stated that the Youth Justice Board included Members from the field of education and that some 80% of young people who were subject to the youth justice system were faced with school exclusion at some point in their lives. Personal education plans were being put in place for children known to the YJS and this was an expanding area of work.

- In reply to comments, the Chair suggested that the People and Communities Select Committee was the most appropriate Committee to monitor the way in which the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan was implemented after it was adopted. The Childrens Services Performance Review Panel would also be able to monitor the situation. The Scrutiny Committee would be able to revisit the plan should this become necessary.
- The Leader said that most of the work mentioned in the plan was part of “business as usual”.

10.4 **RESOLVED**

That having considered the proposed annual revision to the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan the Committee ask officers to produce a report to the Leader and Cabinet Member, in accordance with section 11b of the Norfolk County Council Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules), that provides feedback as set out in these minutes.

11 **Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme**

11.1 The annexed report (11) was received.

11.2 The Committee noted that that the Norfolk Rural Strategy Market Towns report that was originally expected to come before today’s meeting was now likely to come before the Committee at its next meeting (subject to confirmation with Members by email).

11.3 The Chair confirmed that the County Council’s response to extreme weather events would be added into the forward work programme as an additional item.

10.5 **RESOLVED**

That the Committee:

Note the current forward work programme as set out in the appendix to the report subject to confirmation with members by email that the Norfolk Rural Strategy Market Towns report can be added to the agenda for the meeting in October 2022.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am

Chair

