

## **Communities Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
10:00am Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

### **Present:**

Mr P Smyth (Chair)

Mr C Aldred  
Mr B Borrett  
Mr J Childs  
Ms E Corlett  
Mrs H Cox  
Mr A Dearnley  
Mrs M Dewsbury  
Mr N Dixon

Mr J Law  
Mr W Northam  
Mr D Roper  
Mr M Sands  
Mr N Shaw  
Mr D Thomas  
Mr J Ward  
Mrs M Wilkinson

### **1. Apologies and substitutions**

1.1 Apologies were received from Colin Aldred and Jonathan Childs.

### **2. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015.**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

3.1 No interests were declared.

### **4. To receive any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency**

4.1 The Committee had a discussion regarding ways that the service Committees (except Adult Social Care) would achieve the extra £500k of efficiency savings that had been agreed at Full Council as part of the amended budget. The chair asked the Conservative Group members of the committee if they had any plans concerning the share of the agreed savings that the Communities Committee would be responsible for making. There were no suggestions made.

## **5. Local Member Issues / Member Questions**

- 5.1 No member questions had been received prior to the meeting.

## **6. Norfolk Armed Forces Community Covenant Annual Report 2014-15**

- 6.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report detailed the action undertaken to support the Norfolk Armed Forces Community.
- 6.2 The Committee heard that the District Councils had signed up to the covenant and were supporting the Norfolk Armed Forces Community by offering such things as allowances on housing and discretionary relief on business rates for premises used by Cadet groups.
- 6.3 It was noted that there had been an additional focus on help for veterans for mental health, homelessness and substance misuse problems.
- 6.4 The Committee asked for updates to be added to the fortnightly update on key service issues and updates.
- 6.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the progress of the Norfolk Armed Forces Community Covenant.
  - Agree that regular updates would be given in the fortnightly update on key service issues and activities.

## **7. Trading Standards Service Plan**

- 7.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report presented recommendations to Committee on the proposed policies and priorities for 2015/2016 for consideration and comment prior to making recommendations on adoption of the plan to Full Council.
- 7.2 The Committee heard that the Food Standards Agency requires Trading Standards to run a programme to inspect premises at regular intervals. The Service's work was based upon intelligent enforcement and knowledge, and it was the business operator's responsibility to meet their legal requirements.
- 7.3 The Committee noted that the department were offering a service which appeared to be as good as or even better than the National average.
- 7.4 The Committee heard that if there were concerns made of a sector, a complete sweep of that sector would be undertaken by Trading Standards.
- 7.5 The annual seizures were reported in the fortnightly update of activities and issues.
- 7.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Review the Trading Standards Service Plan including Annexes I and II and recommend adoption of the plan to Full Council

- Approve the Business Services Policy and the Consumer Services Policy and their adoption by the Trading Standards Service.
- Support the Trading Standards Service's proposal to explore alternative options to generate additional income in 2016/17.

## **8. Communities Committee Finance Monitoring Report at Period 10 2014-15**

- 8.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report provided the Committee with information on the financial position of the Service for 2014/15. It provided information on the variances from the original budget, emerging issues and the position on the expected use of reserves for Communities purposes.
- 8.2 It appeared that there had been a reduction in the use of reserves for Adult Education, however this was due to grants being held for specific projects which didn't follow the financial year. The money would be committed to that project and used for that purpose.
- 8.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the forecast revenue outturn position for 2014-15 as at Period 10 of a £0.039m underspend.
  - Note the forecast capital outturn position for the 2014-15 capital programme.
  - Note the current forecast use of reserves.

## **9. Performance Monitoring and Risk Report**

- 9.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report reviewed quarter three (October to December 2014) performance results for the services areas that are covered by the Communities Committee.
- 9.2 There was concern expressed about the levels of sickness shown in the data for the customer service department. The Committee were reassured that there was robust procedures in place for managing sickness absence and the sickness absence figures were low in comparison to national figures.
- 9.3 The Committee heard that a change to the system which recorded library visitors had affected the accuracy of the figures. Manual counting had also taken place so adjustments could be made.
- 9.4 It was clarified to the Committee that there was nothing on the corporate risk register that fell within the remit of the Communities Committee. An explanation was given to the Committee regarding the escalation of departmental risks to corporate risks.
- 9.5 The Chair asked Officers if the workshop for the Communities Committee Members on performance management could be rearranged.
- 9.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

- Review and comment on the performance information
- Consider any areas of performance that require a more in-depth analysis

## **10. Adult Education Service Performance Academic Year August 2013 to July 2014**

- 10.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The agenda item was changed to enable the Communities Committee to receive a verbal report on the outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection for the Adult Education Service and the planned initial response to that report.
- 10.2 The Assistant Director Community and Environmental Services (Cultural Services) and Head of Libraries and Information and Adult Education reported to the Committee that the Norfolk Adult Education Service had received an inadequate report as a result of the recent Ofsted Inspection. Although there were improvements to be made, the report had highlighted the strengths of the service, such as apprenticeships, the planning of the curriculum and the delivery to local needs.
- 10.3 The Committee heard that a post Ofsted action plan had been put into place. The service had also received support from an Ofsted inspector and a further education commissioner in order to make the improvements required. The next inspection would be within the next 15 months. The steering group had seen the draft report and a report from the steering group would be received at the Communities Committee in May.
- 10.4 The service were also working with colleagues in Children's Services and Adult Social services to review the overall strategic vision. It was also noted that the Ofsted criteria would be changing in August so the boundaries would change.
- 10.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Comment on the outcome of the Ofsted inspection and note the planned response to that report.

## **11. Customer Services Strategy 2015-2020**

- 11.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The Customer Service Strategy defines the transformation of service delivery over the next 5 years (2015-2020) by simultaneously improving focus on customer service, and reducing cost. The strategy forms part of the Council's policy framework and is therefore a matter for Full Council.
- 11.2 There was concern expressed that the number to call Norfolk County Council was not free and some residents would not have access to the internet to be able to email. The Committee heard that this was being constantly monitored, and there were free phones available to use in libraries.
- 11.3 It was noted by the Committee that the department had made effective cost savings and these pockets of good practice should be shared with other

departments.

- 11.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Agree the proposed Customer Service Strategy and implementation approach for the financial year 2015/16.
  - Recommend the Customer Service Strategy for agreement by Full Council.
- 12. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2014**
- 12.1 The annexed report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report enabled the County Council, as the Fire and Rescue Authority for Norfolk, to meet its statutory obligations to produce an annual Statement of Assurance.
- 12.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the assurances that financial, governance and operational management of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service meet statutory requirements.
  - Consider and approve the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2014 (Appendix 1 of the report) and commend the statement for signature by the Chief Fire Officer and by the Committee Chair on behalf of the Communities Committee.
- 13. Appointment to Norfolk Tobacco Control Alliance (NTCA) and Charles Burrell Community Benefit Society**
- 13.1 The annexed report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report highlighted the objective of the Norfolk Tobacco Control Alliance.
- 13.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Appoint Mr P Smyth to Norfolk Tobacco Control Alliance
  - Appoint Mr I Monson to Charles Burrell Community Benefit Society
- 14. Update on Key Service Issues and Activities**
- 14.1 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 update.
- 14.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the latest service update.

The meeting closed at 12:15pm.

**CHAIRMAN**



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