

Communities Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 13th May 2015
10:00am Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Mr P Smyth (Chair)

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

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 There were no apologies received.

2. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015.

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015 were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 Cllr Roper declared an 'other' interest in respect of item 7 as he worked for Norfolk and Suffolk Probation which delivered domestic abuse programmes.

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

4.1 The Chair reported that there was an item of urgent business which would be deferred to the end of the meeting an exempt item titled 'Health Child Programme 0-19'. It had to be taken as urgent due to the time sensitivity of the report.

5. Local Member Issues / Member Questions

5.1 There were no member questions.

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 update.

6.2 The Committee **RESOLVED**;

- To review the latest service update at Appendices A to E and identify any areas where the Committee would like to receive further information or update.

7. Norfolk Domestic Abuse Change Programme

7.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report explained the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Change Programme which would improve how Domestic Abuse was identified and tackled, and which often underlies other issues such as substance misuse and mental health. The focus of the Change Programme is on prevention and early intervention, ensuring a non-acceptance culture.

7.2 The Change Programme was welcomed by the Committee. It was confirmed that there was work being carried out with older teenagers to raise awareness not to accept domestic abuse, as part of education on healthy relationships, but further work was necessary.

7.3 It was noted that while society was less tolerant of violence generally, domestic abuse was still affected by significant underreporting. However, reports were increasing which indicated that victims had greater confidence in how any disclosure would be handled.

7.4 As part of embedding the tackling of domestic abuse within the development of Early Help, 3 Domestic Abuse Coordinators had been recruited, part funded by Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, and partly from Children's Services.

7.5 Concern was expressed about the reduction of legal aid that was being provided. Therefore it had become more important to raise the profile and all members had a role in doing so. As a Committee it would be important to review if advocacy services were able to meet the increased needs.

7.6 The Committee expressed that the fundamental cause of domestic abuse was attitudinal, and this had not been included in the report. Individuals in society felt it had been their right to abuse others. There was a growing level of disrespect in young men towards young women who may not even be on the radar with various agencies. Therefore, greater recognition was needed that it was beliefs and attitudes that contributed towards domestic abuse, and not just a certain set of

circumstances.

- 7.7 The Committee were informed that one of the improvement areas being taken forward related to Communications & Campaigns. This would be underpinned by market research work with the public, service users and professionals to gauge attitudes and perceptions, which would be used to inform more nuanced campaigns.
- 7.8 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Agree the four key improvement areas identified in the report.
 - To note that the help could be given through libraries, registrars and customer service centre. Updates could also be given to the Committee on the fortnightly update that the Committee receives.
 - To note that Cllr Harry Humphrey is a member of the Norfolk County Community Safety Partnerships Scrutiny Sub-Panel.

8. Norfolk Adult Education Service – Member Steering Group Update

- 8.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report updated the Committee on the work of the Steering Group for Norfolk Adult Education Service.
- 8.2 The Committee heard that the Adult Education service had appointed an Interim Head of Service, Helen Wetherall, who, it was anticipated, would be in post until the next Ofsted inspection.
- 8.3 The inspection was triggered as some of the achievements made by the 16-18 learners last year were not good enough.
- 8.4 Cllr Bearman had attended a Governance Conference in London, and reported that the Adult Education Steering Group was not a formal Governing Body similar to one for a Further Education establishment or College, but it was a group that could help to challenge and steer the Service. He noted that the Service was liked and respected by its learners.
- 8.5 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the progress being made by the Adult Education Steering Group.

9. Interim Report of the Norfolk Library and Information Service Review Group

- 9.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The interim report updated the Committee on the progress being made on the Member review of the Norfolk Library and Information Service (NLIS).
- 9.2 The Committee heard that the working group was considering all angles of the library and information service to try to find opportunities for the service to change and develop. The Officers involved in the working group were thanked for their help and the information they had provided so far.
- 9.3 Some Members were concerned that a possibility of outsourcing the libraries to a

private company could be an option in the future and wanted it noted that they were against this option. The priority was to keep real jobs, and it would be good to see closer working with other services of NCC.

- 9.4 It was suggested that more volunteers could be taken on to make more of the libraries and extend their services, however, this would have to be in addition to staff not to replace staff.
- 9.5 The Committee heard that there were still some issues to be considered by the working group and difficult decisions to be made. There were some mobile libraries that were coming to the end of their life, and a decision would have to be made about whether to order new vehicles. It was acknowledged that it was important to retain as many as possible as it was a valuable source of quality of life.
- 9.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Note the progress being made with the review of the Norfolk Library and Information Service
 - Encourage elected members to use libraries (including the mobile service) for holding their surgeries.
 - Approve the definition of a 'comprehensive and efficient' service.

10. Fire and Rescue Review – Interim Report from the Member Working Group

- 10.1 The report from the member working group was received. The working group had been established to undertake a strategic review of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and present recommendations on its future.
- 10.2 The report provided an evidenced view of the impact of a range of financial models on the delivery of services. It was reported that it was better to plan strategically for where the service wanted to be in five years, rather than make incremental annual cuts. There were a number of different options for what the service could be including delivering its statutory functions and nothing more. The interim report from the working group had highlighted that the aim was to continue with a full spectrum fire and rescue service, providing a range of prevention, protection and emergency response activities.
- 10.3 The Committee were reminded that, by legal requirement, the County Council as the Fire Authority has to assess the risks facing it, determine what role it want its Fire and Rescue service to take in managing those risks, consult publicly on its plan, and provide the resources necessary to deliver that plan. The results determined by this integrated risk management planning process were a local decision, with no mandated national minimum standards, but the process taken to reach those local decisions had to follow national guidance.
- 10.4 The Committee noted that they needed to consider the impact of the savings which had already been made by NFRS, in reducing the room for maneuver available for further cuts. CIPFA benchmarking data was presented which showed that NFRS in 2014-15 was the lowest cost County Council fire service, but that performance was now also declining. The report noted that, when starting from

such a low base, it was inevitable that further reductions in funding can only be met through changes in frontline service delivery.

- 10.5 The Committee heard from the Chief Fire Officer that a decision needed to be based on cost-effectiveness, as there were many Fire and Rescue Services that had bigger budgets than Norfolk but provided less of a service. The Working Group has agreed that officers will use the government supplied Fire Service Emergency Cover software package to provide evidence based options that present choices in terms of public safety risk and economic impact. Officers further noted that they would not present any proposals that created intolerable levels of risk to firefighters.
- 10.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Review the initial report at Appendix A of the report and identify any additional areas for consideration by the working group.
 - Agree the draft strategic vision for 2020 which would inform the future direction of the service.
 - Approve Councillor Harry Humphrey as a replacement for Councillor Hilary Cox on the working group.
11. **The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 SI 2014/2848 Scheme Manager Discretions**
- 11.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report was presented to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014.
- 11.2 The Officer clarified that all paternity and maternity payments were under a separate agreement to that of this report.
- 11.3 With regards to recommendation three, the Committee heard that there would not be a need to enter into discussions with trade unions as it would be case by case assessment. The Pension Board would provide the Governance over the scheme manager to ensure the scheme member was safeguarded.
- 11.4 The Committee **AGREED** the following;
- Discretion Pensionable Pay Regulation 17: Continual professional payments would be treated the same.
 - Discretion contributions during absence from work due to illness, injury, trade dispute, or authorised absence (regulation 111): The Scheme employer would require the scheme member to pay employer contributions in the case of trade dispute or authorised absence and may require the scheme member to pay employer contributions in the case of absence from work due to illness, but will not require the scheme member to pay employer contributions in the case of injury sustained whilst carrying out authorised duty.
 - Discretion Delegation (Regulation 5): That the Chief Fire Officer, or his / her nominated deputy, is given delegated authority to authorise all other scheme discretions as they arise, subject to the agreement of the Executive Director of Finance.

12. Establishment of Local Pension Board for the Firefighter's Pension Scheme

- 12.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report was presented to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Public Services Pensions Act 2013 as it relates to the establishment of local pension boards.
- 12.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Agree that, in order to comply with the requirements of the Public Services Pensions Act 2013, a Local Pension Board is established for the Fire-Fighter Pension Schemes with effect from 1st April 2015.
 - Agree that a terms of reference for the Board would be based on the model terms of reference produced by the LGA, as attached to the report.
 - Agree that the Chief Fire Officer, or nominated deputy, is given delegated authority to establish the Board and make decisions on daily administration of the Scheme.

13. Retirement of the Chief Fire Officer

- 13.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report requested consent for the retirement of the Chief Fire Officer. Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Norfolk County Council is the fire and rescue authority for the County. The power is exercised by Communities Committee and therefore the consent of the Communities Committee was required,
- 13.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Approve the request to retire and note the final date of employment as 29 September 2015.

14. Forward Plan for Communities Committee

- 14.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received. The report set out the Forward Plan for the Committee. The Forward Plan is a key document for the Committee to use to shape future meeting agendas and items for consideration, in relation to delivering communities issues in Norfolk.
- 14.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Review the Forward Plan and identify any additions, deletions or changes to reflect key issues and priorities the Committee wishes to consider.

15. Exclusion of the Public

- 15.1 The Committee excluded the public from the meeting under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the item below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

15.2 The Committee was presented with the conclusions of the public interest tests carried out by the report author and resolved to confirm the exclusion.

16. Healthy Child Programme 0-19

16.1 The report from the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services was received.

16.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;

- Agree on the award of the contract to Cambridge

The meeting closed at 12:15pm.

CHAIRMAN



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