

## **Economic Development and Cultural Services Review Panel**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 15 January 2009**

### **Present:**

Mrs J R M Chamberlin (Chairman)

Mr J R Baskerville  
Mr B J E Collins  
Mr S Dunn  
Mr R F Goreham  
Mrs B M Hacker

Mr J M Joyce  
Mr C Lloyd Owen  
Mr G Nobbs  
Mrs T I Paines  
Mr A Pond

### **Cabinet Members Present:**

Mr J R Gretton                      Cultural Services  
Mr B J M Iles                        Economic Development

### **Deputy Cabinet Member Present:**

Miss E Collishaw                      Economic Development

### **1            Apologies and Substitutions**

1.1            Apologies were received from Mrs S Rice (Mr J Baskerville substituting).

### **2            Minutes**

2.1            The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2.2            A query was raised relating to anonymity within minutes. The Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services noted that a paper reviewing minute style had been taken to the Group Leaders, and would be discussed within Groups.

2.3            It was noted that in paragraph 17.4 of the November 2008 minutes, Mr R Goreham had been incorrectly identified as Mr R Goreman. This error was noted.

2.4            An update was given relating to the Stone Curlews in Thetford, noting that it was hoped that a second site could be used. An issue relating to downy backed beetles was also highlighted.

2.5            Clarity regarding the name of the Panel was requested. The Chairman clarified that all meetings previously called 'Review Panels' had been renamed as 'Overview and Scrutiny Panels'. Scrutiny would still be carried out by these

groups, and it was noted that Scrutiny Committees had a different function.

- 2.6 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Development highlighted the item relating to European Funding within the Member Briefing. The Chairman noted that the Briefing was excellent and informative.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 No interests were declared.

### **4 Matters of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 There were no matters of urgent business.

### **5 Public Question Time**

- 5.1 There were no public questions.

### **6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions**

- 6.1 There were no Local Member issues/Member questions.

### **7 Cabinet Member Feedback on Previous Review Panel Comments**

- 7.1 The Cabinet Member for Cultural Services gave feedback on the 'Making Libraries a Safe and Welcoming Place' report, and noted that the Library Service had accepted the recommendations because they reflected current practice.

- 7.2 The Cabinet Member gave feedback on each recommendation as summarised below:

1. **Attendants:** This would need to be financially assessed, however RFID book issuing freed up staff for other duties. The use of badges or special clothing would be discussed with UNISON.
2. **Fragmented working:** This would be investigated further.
3. **Symbols to clarify the rules:** Public information had been revised and was being displayed on plasma screens. Ongoing review would be undertaken.
4. **New Code of Conduct and 5. Guiding Principle:** Many were already in place, and all had been accepted except permanent bans.
6. **'Front Office Roles':** This was noted as good practice, and many Managers had risen from within the service and were based in libraries. The Head of Libraries made regular visits to libraries within geographical groupings.
7. **Branch Libraries night opening:** This was under review.
8. **CCTV:** Security was reviewed by the Forum Trust Board, and tenants

meetings.

**9. Layout Review:** This had been done, and was under constant review.

**10. Method of recording complaints:** Internal reporting was in place. Cultural Services received more compliments than complaints, and received half of all County Council compliments in 2007.

7.3 The Cabinet Member thanked the Working Group for their interesting and useful report, and noted his full confidence in the Four Star Library Service in Norfolk.

7.4 A request was made for the Cabinet Member's notes in paper format. It was noted that the minutes would provide this.

7.5 Concerns were raised relating to the concept of using visual signage within the rules, for example a line through a beef burger, and that the signage should be more generic. In reply, it was noted that the rules would clarify 'no hot food', although cold food is permitted.

7.6 It was noted that evidence to support the claims relating to unacceptable behaviour would have been useful and that it was hoped a follow-up would be made in six months.

## Items for Overview

### **8 Contribution of Cultural Services to Health and Well-being**

8.1 The annexed report (8) was presented by the Head of Arts. It provided an outline of the contribution that Cultural Services made to Health and Well-being.

8.2 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was noted that Health and Well-being was becoming more important, and it was good to see that the Norfolk Arts Forum and Norfolk County Council generally were leading the way. It was noted that an overview of the subject across the County Council would be useful. The Head of Arts noted that there is a Corporate Health and Well-being group in place, and agreed to take this to the group and report back to the Panel.
- It was noted that this was a heartening report, and also noted that an exhibition at Ancient House was shortly to begin. The 'Fit Together' Nordic Walking scheme was clarified as being walking with long poles.
- A query was raised regarding the uptake of the 'book prescription' service. In reply, it was noted that this seemed to be working very well, with positive feedback. It was also noted that due to patient confidentiality, it was very difficult to measure the success of this scheme, however the use of certain books known to be regularly prescribed could be monitored.

8.3 The Review Panel **NOTED** the contents of the report.

## 9 King's Lynn Heritage and Cultural Asset Buildings Review

9.1 The annexed report (9) was presented by the County Archivist. It detailed the recent review of the buildings assets within King's Lynn, relating to heritage and culture. The Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services noted that a group had been set up to investigate implementation of elements of the review. They would then make recommendations and seek funding.

9.2 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was noted that the Panel should await the outcome of the feasibility study and then a report could be brought back.
- An indication of the value of the archives at King's Lynn was requested. It was noted that the King's Lynn archives went back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and were recognised as one of the finest municipal archives in the country, if not Europe. They were housed in the Town Hall where the storage facilities did not fully meet the standard, BS 5454, and where there was the threat of flooding. Air conditioning systems had been upgraded, however during a recent hot summer they were not up to standard. The building was not Disability Discrimination Act compliant, and the searchroom facilities were not up to the necessary standards of security. The preferred option was to upgrade the Town Hall with the necessary safety measures and enhancements.
- A question was asked regarding how local Members were being kept informed of progress. In reply, it was stated that a regular report was being submitted to the Records Committee.
- It was highlighted that a Norfolk-wide review of building suitability would be useful. A paper showing the archive 'hotspots' in Norfolk was requested.
- It was noted that Thetford had recently deposited their archives in the Archive Centre in Norwich. This had greatly improved access and storage. It was also noted that Great Yarmouth had deposited their Borough Archives at The Archive Centre, although a small amount of records remained within the Borough Council offices. Complementary items were held in the Time and Tide Museum. A Norfolk Record Office (NRO) Archivist acted as Great Yarmouth Borough Archivist. It was noted that King's Lynn opted to keep their records and staff from Norwich were sent there on a weekly basis to service the archives, with the NRO's Principal Archivist acting as Borough Archivist.
- It was noted that there were other historical collections within Norfolk including libraries holding early editions of books. Therefore the buildings that these were housed in should be reviewed.
- The Chairman noted that it would be useful for the Panel to make a visit to King's Lynn to see the buildings after the feasibility report had been

received.

- 9.3 The Review Panel **NOTED** the contents of the report and **AGREED** that the Officer Group should proceed with the feasibility study, and a progress report would be brought to a future meeting.

## **10 Cultural Services Budget Monitoring Report**

- 10.1 The annexed report (10) was presented by the Finance and Business Support Manager. It provided a budget monitoring update for the Cultural Services Department, including the latest projected outturn for the 2008/9 Revenue Budget, the 2008/9 Capital Programme and forecasts of Provisions and Reserves at 31 March 2009.

- 10.2 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- In response to a question on utility costs that included oil prices, it was confirmed that these are regularly reviewed and any reductions taken into account within budget forecasts.
- The income figure within the Adult Education budget was queried, and in reply it was noted that this was a rare occasion where the income was greater than the expenditure because it was received in advance. This would be spent as planned, and a break even position would eventually show.
- The slippage of the Wymondham Library budget related to unrepresented invoices.
- The expenditure of £14,000 relating to the Norfolk Guidance Services came from grants. This expenditure would increase nearer the year end. Further detail relating to the Guidance Services was requested, and it was suggested a further report be presented at the next meeting. A brief overview of the Guidance Service was given, detailing that it offered careers guidance to adults.
- The figures within the Archaeology revenue were queried. It was clarified that the £10,000 was district income for planning applications. It was also noted that the Norfolk Archaeology Unit had become part of NPS, and therefore did not appear in the report.
- An overview of the 'Art of Living' gallery was given, highlighting that it was a new gallery at the Castle Museum, displaying domestic arts from the Medieval period to the 1960's. Costumes and paintings were on display.

- 10.3 The Review Panel **NOTED** the contents of the report.

## **11 Service and Budget Planning 2009 - 2012**

- 11.1 The annexed report (11) was presented by the European and Performance Manager and the Finance and Business Support Manager. It provided Members

with information about the proposals for service planning for the Cultural Services Department, and the Economic Development Unit for the period 2009 – 2012.

11.2 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Relating to the Economic Development budget, it was noted that there had been no changes since the November meeting. It was noted that the cost neutral changes had been separated, and those costs that the department had no jurisdiction over had been removed.
- A Bill in the Queen's Speech requiring development of an Economic Assessment was highlighted and Members asked where the money for this would come from? In reply, it was noted that the service was aware of this, and had made some budget provision, although the full requirements were not yet known. This would become clearer over the following months (there may be government funds to assist).
- With reference to school admissions, it was noted that the aspiration was for free museum entry for school parties and it was hoped that funding could be found.
- It was noted that the reserves had been identified as a source to make provision to cover savings, however this was a fallback position and alternative savings would be found if necessary. There was no intention to restrict service, and it was hoped that the reserves would not need to be used.
- It was noted that the Adult Education expenditure budget was high, and some savings could be made.
- A question was asked why Adult Education basic price inflation was shown as a minus figure, unlike other services. It was explained that in calculating the budget, it was necessary to apply inflation to both income and expenditure and that the figure shown summarised non-pay and income inflation together. As Adult Education income is much higher compared to other services this accounted for the difference in the presentation.

11.3 The Review Panel **NOTED** the contents of the report, and recommended that Norfolk County Council continued to provide free school admissions to its museums and not cut the current funding of £46,000.

## 12 **Economic Development Budget Monitoring Report 2008/9**

12.1 The annexed report (12) was presented by the European and Performance Manager. The report provided information about the Economic Development Unit's revenue and capital budgets.

12.2 The European and Performance Manager noted the following comments in relation to the report:

- In relation to Table 1 on page 76, item 3 the 'EDU (Economic Development Unit) contribution to the Operating Plan projects', this related to grant payments to projects, which would receive their second 50% of funding in January. A better indication of the year-end position could therefore be given in March.
- In relation to Table 2 on page 77, the work on the Nar Ouse project had commenced, and a claim from the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk was expected. In relation to the Breckland roundabout, work would commence in late 2009. In relation to the ring-fenced money for a Great Yarmouth project, a revised bid had been submitted.

12.3 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- A member recognised the work that Norfolk County Council had put into the Thetford Business Park, and noted that the area was short on industrial sites.
- Queries were raised in relation to the ring-fenced Great Yarmouth money, relating to the figures shown. The cost of the site was questioned and in reply it was clarified that the original bid was £30,000 and that this had been increased. Additional funds to support these negotiations might have come from the Industrial Sites Unallocated Funds. It was noted that this was a piece of land in a strategically significant location.
- It was noted that the Thetford and King's Lynn project funds would not be spent by the end of the financial year due to the partnership issues outlined in the report, so these would carry over. It was noted that funding for capital works is not restricted to any one year.

12.4 The Review Panel **NOTED** the contents of the report.

## Items for Scrutiny

### 13 Outline Programme for Scrutiny

13.1 The Chairman asked members to speak with scrutiny leads to get the list updated. It was noted that the next scrutiny meeting would be 17<sup>th</sup> February.

13.2 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was suggested that the significant job losses in Norfolk needed to be informally addressed at the next meeting and it was noted that a new Head of Service (Fiona McDiarmid) had been appointed within Economic Development, so further information and work would be forthcoming.
- Members noted that Breckland Council were holding drop in sessions relating to debt counselling, accounts and budgeting and other current issues. This was an excellent initiative, and a question was asked as to whether the County Council would do anything similar? In reply, it was

noted that Shaping Norfolk's Future would be holding a conference.

- It was suggested that a good avenue to explore would be the use of unoccupied sites, for expansion, education and other activities; there was a need to enhance opportunities.
- It was suggested that it would be useful to look at credit availability to small businesses, especially because some were becoming economically unviable due to credit cuts.
- It was noted that tourism was a key area in Norfolk. It was also noted that there was a need to look at training, development and skills for manufacturing and agriculture. In reply, members were advised that the EDU would come up with a proposal for areas to scrutinise, with Fiona McDiarmid, following feedback on the report on the County Council's response to the economic downturn that was going to Cabinet on 26 January 2009.
- It was suggested that the new Chief Executive of Norwich Airport could be invited to a future meeting to report on future development, which could have a positive impact on businesses. The Panel agreed that this could be useful.
- It was noted that some businesses may be struggling due to the Authority's credit terms. Paul Adams replied that this was being looked into corporately, with steps being taken to try to identify those smaller suppliers who could be paid more urgently. The EDU was in contact with districts and other partners, such as JobCentre Plus, in relation to what was being done to help businesses, and weekly updates were being sent to EEDA at the request of the East of England Minister.
- It was proposed by Mr Joyce, and seconded by Mr Nobbs and **AGREED** that an additional meeting of the Panel would be called on 9 February 2009 to discuss the response to the current economic climate. It was agreed that representatives from business in Norfolk would be invited to attend.

## **14 Norfolk County Council's Contribution to Tourism in Norfolk**

14.1 The annexed report (14) was presented by the European and Performance Manager, the Norfolk Tourism Project Officer, and an Elected Member. The report identified both current and future support to this important sector. An additional appendix was circulated to the Panel.

14.2 During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- The statement that Norfolk was in the top five tourist destinations was queried and it was clarified that this should read that Norfolk was in the top five counties. The context of the top five was questioned, and it was suggested that more could be done to attract people, or local visitors. It was suggested that it was unclear as to why Norfolk was in the top five. It

was agreed that additional information would be circulated relating to measurements and indicators. It was also noted that there was no reference to churches or cathedrals and the Norfolk Tourism Project Officer gave a brief overview of the work Norfolk Tourism does in this area.

- When asked what more could be done to assist the tourism sector, it was noted that this sort of development activity was included in the draft tourism strategy and action plan for Norfolk, which would be delivered by a range of partners. The action plan included the development of a short breaks product for Norwich, as well as identifying actions to attract low season visitors.
- It was noted that Norfolk rated very highly in terms of visitor activity (expenditure, number staying and day trips).
- It was noted that the work of Norfolk Tourism, the established public/private sector partnership, is supported by many active partners who contribute a range of projects including improving PR, a range of marketing activities including promotion of year round activities, and sector skills training. The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) funding might be cut, affecting East of England tourism.
- It was noted that there had been a decrease in the NCC Economic Development Unit contributions over the previous three years from £114,050 to £77,500, however the figures relating to visitor expenditure in Norfolk were increasing. In reply, it was highlighted that page 89 of the agenda detailed the funding sources of Norfolk Tourism and the County Council's contribution had not been increased for a number of years although other local authority contributions had. It was confirmed that the development of the tourism strategy and action plan would help the County Council to assess its contribution to the sector based on an assessment of needs and delivery.

14.3 The Review Panel **NOTED** the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.15pm.

Attached: Appendix to Report 14.

#### CHAIRMAN



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