



Business and Property Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 04 September 2018 at
10:00 in the Edwards room at County Hall

Present:

Mr B Stone (Chairman)

Mr T Adams

Mr D Bills

Ms C Bowes

Mr F Eagle

Mr A Jamieson

Mr T Jermy

Mr I Mackie

Mr M Sands

Mr C Smith (Vice Chairman)

Mr B Spratt

Mr J Timewell

Mrs K Vincent

1. Apologies and Substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mrs C Walker (Mr M Sands substituting), Mr R Brame (Mr B Spratt substituting) and Mr M Kiddle-Morris (Mr D Bills substituting).

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 3 July 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- 7.1 amend Mr T Smith to Mr C Smith
- 14.4: Mr Jermy felt the minutes did not reflect accurately the discussion about the Vauxhall centre consultation process; he recalled that Members were told consultation “had” taken place with tenants; he had since been told they had not
 - Mr Jermy asked whether Cllr Corlett had received a full reply to her concerns
 - the Head of Property confirmed that Cllr Corlett was consulted in line with member protocol. Site users Independence Matters, Deaf Connections and Childrens Services were informed of, and attended a meeting about proposals for the future use of the site on 18 January 2018. Norfolk Property Services and the City were establishing whether existing planning permission was sufficient or whether a new planning permission application was required.

3. Members to Declare any Interests

- 3.1 The following interests were declared
- Mr A Jamieson declared a Non-Pecuniary interest as a Director of Norse
 - Mr C Smith (Vice-Chairman) declared a Non-Pecuniary interest as a Director and Board member of Repton Properties Ltd
 - Mrs K Vincent declared a Non-Pecuniary interest as a shareholder representative of Norse
 - Mr B Stone (Chairman) declared a Non-Pecuniary interest as a board member of Repton Properties Ltd
 - Mr J Timewell declared a Non-Pecuniary interest as director of company based at Scottow Enterprise Park

4. Urgent Business

4.1 There was no urgent business discussed.

5. Public Questions

5.1 No public questions were received.

6. Member Questions

6.1 No Member questions were received.

7. Feedback from Members of the Committee about Member Working Groups or bodies that they sit on.

7.1 The Vice-Chairman:

- had attended the first anniversary of Norwich Aviation Academy, also attended by Mrs K Vincent
- had attended his first board meeting as a member of Repton Properties Ltd
- was due to attend the Revo conference in Manchester as Deputy Leader of Yarmouth Borough Council

7.2 Mr A Jamieson, as Director of Norse, was working with Adult Social Care on the project to develop houses on the Herondale site in Acle and Woodland site in Kings Lynn.

8. Forward plan and delegated decisions

8.1 The Committee reviewed the report outlining the forward plan and delegated decisions.

8.2 In response to a query, the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services confirmed that none of the Broadland Northway (formerly Norwich Distributor Road, NDR) acquisitions were surplus to requirements and **agreed** to add Economic Development to the forward plan.

8.3 The Committee:

1. **REVIEWED** the Forward Plan at Appendix A of the report, with the addition of a report on Economic Development
2. **NOTED** the delegated decisions

9. Finance Monitoring Report

9.1.1 The Committee received the report reflecting the financial position relating to the Committee as at the end of July 2018.

9.1.2 The overspend was driven by pressures in the corporate property team. The budget was reduced by £1m the 2018-19 financial year but an unexpected extra £50,000 in surplus was due to be delivered from Scottow; it was hoped that non-delivery of savings could be clawed back later in the year. Reserves were used as a one off and could be topped up when accounts were closed down for 2018-19.

9.2.1 A Member **suggested** using reserves from Scottow to build up reserves if they were not ringfenced; the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services confirmed they were not ringfenced and **agreed** to consider this.

- 9.3 The Committee **NOTED**:
- a) The 2018 – 19 revenue position for this Committee
 - b) The 2018 – 19 to 2020 - 21 capital programme for this Committee
 - c) The 2018 - 19 reserves position for this Committee

10. Strategic and Financial Planning

- 10.1.1 The Committee received the report outlining the Council's overall budget planning position, forecast budget gap for 2019-20 to 2021-22, and details of the strategic & financial planning framework for Service Committees as agreed by Policy and Resources Committee.
- 10.1.2 Assumed savings in the medium-term plan would be reviewed through Autumn to see if savings were still deliverable in the timeline; a high level of property savings had been assumed.
- 10.2.1 A Member was disappointed at the savings, which he felt were cuts to services; he felt a bespoke report on the Business and Property budget would have been helpful to see how the department could generate income to offset cuts across the Council. The Chairman replied that proposals in the report were savings and that Council policy was to make savings by improving services and providing services in a more efficient way which cost less. The Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services clarified that most savings made over the past years were efficiency savings, not cuts to services.
- 10.2.2 The Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services clarified that since the Council received a proportion from business rates an increase in the number of large retail and industrial developments would support the budget.
- 10.2.3 The Chairman mentioned the consultation on the Local Government Association green paper on proposals for Adult Social Care funding; the Government green paper was not yet published.
- 10.2.4 The contribution of Business and Property to the Council's overall budget and the work done in all service areas to generate savings was acknowledged. Adult Social Care and Children's Services gross budgets had been increasing over the years; investments had been made by Council and Government alongside savings and efficiencies to offset this.
- 10.2.5 The Chairman agreed that a fairer funding deal from Central Government would be welcome, but recognised this would not be easily achieved; the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services noted that in 2021 it was assumed the Council would lose £38m of Government grant and it was necessary to plan for this.
- 10.3 The Committee:
- 1) **NOTED** the Council's budget assumptions and the budget planning principles for 2019-20 which had been approved by Policy and Resources Committee (paragraph 3.3 and 3.4 of the report);
 - 2) **NOTED** the forecast budget gap of £94.696m (table 3 of the report), which reflects the changes from the 2018-22 Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the resulting indicative savings targets for the Committee over the period 2019-20 to 2021-22 (table 4 of the report);
 - 3) **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED** the key areas of risk in relation to 2019-22 budget planning for the Committee's budgets, including any additional pressures and the

robustness of existing planned savings as set out in section 5 of the report.

- 4) **AGREED** the proposed approach and key themes to focus on in developing savings proposals for 2019-20 to 2021-22, including how the principles of the Council's Strategy, Norfolk Futures, would inform and shape budget planning activity set out in section 5 of the report, having regard to the existing savings for 2019-20 and beyond which were agreed as part of the 2018-19 budget round (table 1 of the report);
- 5) **AGREED** to **COMMISSION** officers to develop detailed savings proposals to be presented to the Committee for consideration at the October meeting in order to help close the forecast 2019-20 to 2021-22 budget gap; and
- 6) **NOTED** the budget planning timetable (section 6 of the report).

11. Apprenticeships update

- 11.1.1 The Committee considered the report giving an update on apprenticeships in Norfolk.
- 11.1.2 The impact of reforms in 2017 had been seen in a fall in apprenticeship starts, as anticipated, but in Norfolk they had fallen less than nationally.
- 11.2.1 Demand for apprenticeships in health & social care and if number of apprenticeships at Norse was queried. The Employment and Skills Manager commented on the resource that would be available for health & social care apprenticeships if the European Social Fund specification was successful. She **agreed** to find out about apprenticeships at Norse; the Chairman **asked** for this to be circulated to the whole Committee.
- 11.2.2 In his role as Norfolk representative on the youth advisory board, Mr Jermy fed back that many young people were not taking up apprenticeships due to the cost of public transport which was sometimes higher than take home pay. the Employment and Skills Manager acknowledged the challenge of transport costs; she wanted to work with young people and local businesses to make more local opportunities available.
- 11.2.3 Ways to reduce bureaucracy for small businesses was queried. The Employment and Skills Manager reported that Officers supported small businesses to reduce bureaucracy through online and phone support. Feedback was gained anecdotally and through district colleague feedback from engagement with small businesses.
- 11.2.4 Cllr S Clancy gave an update; he reported from the Apprenticeship Forum that Norfolk County Council had a reputation as a trusted provider. It was important to present apprenticeships well in schools as a viable alternative to University and make the process of employing apprenticeships easier for Small and Medium Sized Businesses.
- 11.2.5 The Norse apprenticeship scheme was praised, and opportunities across the Council for work experience and apprenticeships noted. It was suggested that work to develop the Adult Social Care social work academy should be accelerated.
- 11.2.6 Information on apprenticeships at Norse to support people with disabilities was requested. the Employment and Skills Manager reported that Norse were involved in Project Search which gave opportunities to people with learning disabilities.
- 11.2.7 The Broadland Northway (formerly Norwich Distributor Road, NDR) contract had offered apprenticeships to people with learning disabilities.
- 11.2.8 The number of apprenticeships in Norfolk County Council had increased in 2017 in all departments and Learning & Development colleagues were developing this further. Work experience opportunities were also being developed. The University of East

Anglia business school offered social work apprenticeships as a leading way forward. Opportunities for apprenticeships in the construction industry were noted.

- 11.2.9 Contracts were in place to look at good practice in District Councils or other Local Authorities to build on the work done in schools and with colleagues across the public sector. Work with care providers to take on apprenticeships was being explored.
- 11.2.10 The Employment and Skills Manager confirmed there had been discussions with colleagues in procurement to ensure apprenticeships were included in the contracts for upcoming infrastructure projects such as the third river crossing.
- 11.2.11 A member **requested** information was sent to Councillors to promote apprenticeships. The Employment and Skills Manager **agreed** to information with Members.
- 11.2.12 It was noted as positive that Norfolk County Council was the first organisation to share its level of levy sharing. There were national companies interested in discussing levy sharing to support vulnerable groups or for their supply chain.
- 11.3 The Committee **AGREED** to **ENDORSE** the actions outlined in the report.

12. Disposal and acquisition of properties

- 12.1.1 The Committee reviewed and discussed the report with proposals for disposals, acquisitions and exploitations of property in Norfolk.
- 12.1.2 Member feedback was received about the land at recommendation iii) from Cllr T East: Costessey Town Council was interested in purchasing the land to use for Queen's Hill. It was policy to allow this but the sale would be at land value
- 12.2.1 Comments had also been received from Mr T Jermy on resolution viii):
- 12.2.2 Mr T Jermy felt the amount of information in the report was not enough for the Committee to make an informed decision; Mr Jermy updated Members that Norfolk County Council had applied for planning permission and architect's drawings for a respite centre for people with disabilities on the site in a proposal to save £250,000 a year in transport costs; he recalled that at the July 2017 Adult Social Care committee meeting, money was in reserves for this and queried why it was not proceeding.
- 12.2.3 Elm Road had been surplus since 2011 and with Adult Social Care since 2013; in March 2018 the Executive Director of Adult Social Care was asked to make a decision on the site but no firm proposals were brought forward. It was necessary to divest of the risk and holding costs associated with the empty building. Mr Jermy queried whether selling it with planning permission would provide a better return on the site. The Head of Property replied that the site had been looked at for 16 months, discussions held with NorseCare, and self-development and planning permission considered. He did not believe the planning process would add much value.
- 12.2.4 The Head of Property confirmed for Mr Jermy that the Asset for Community Value Process was managed by the District Council; it would give a period of time to express an interest and a 6-month moratorium to acquire the site at open market value; if the community were interested in acquiring it, as it was beyond economic use they would need to factor in cost of demolition and rebuild. The Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services **agreed** to speak further to Mr Jermy outside of the meeting.
- 12.3 Mr M Sands **PROPOSED**, seconded by Mr T Jermy that "*a report on the Elm Road site*

was referred back to adult social care". The Head of Property pointed out that the original plans by Norfolk Property Services covered reuse of the existing building which was no longer possible as the building was beyond economic repair. With 3 votes for and 10 against the proposal was **LOST**.

- 12.4.1 The Head of Property clarified that the proposal at Attleborough (recommendation i) was for 200 homes; these would be policy compliant including affordable housing and there may be opportunities for housing with care, being discussed with Adult Social Care.
- 12.4.2 It was suggested that if there were to be self-build sites, that they could be available with less infrastructure costs
- 12.4.3 It was suggested it would be useful to look at Graydon Hill.
- 12.4.4 It was noted that 1/3 of capital receipts went to County Farms.
- 12.5 The Committee **AGREED** to:
 - (i) Formally declare the land East of Hargham Road, Attleborough surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting
 - (ii) Formally declare the land at A143 (area A and Area B), Brockdish surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt(s) exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.
 - (iii) Formally declare the land at Kestrel Avenue, Costessey surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.
 - (iv) Formally declare the land at Shrub Cottage, Long Stratton surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.
 - (v) Formally declare the land opposite Mill Farm, Litcham Road, Mileham surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.
 - (vi) Formally declare the land at Gravel Pits, Needham surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in

consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.

(vii) Formally declare the Strips of land at Old Lane, Reepham surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of Property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.

(viii) With 3 votes against and 10 votes for the Committee **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** to formally declare Elm Road, Thetford surplus to County Council requirements and instructed the Head of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Head of property in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Chair of B&P Committee was authorised to accept the most beneficial offer and report the fact at a subsequent B&P Committee meeting.

13. Exclusion of the public

13.1 The Committee **RESOLVED** to exclude the public from discussion of items 14 and 15, below, under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraphs 1, 3 and 3.5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

14. County Farms Estate Management Update

14.1 The committee considered and discussed the report.

14.2 The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

15. Exempt Minutes

15.1 The exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 3 July 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman subject to an amendment.

The Meeting ended at: 11.27.

**Mr Barry Stone, Chairman,
Business and Property Committee**



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