

# Infrastructure and Development Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday 12 July 2023  
10.00am, held at County Hall, Norwich

**Present:**

Cllr James Bensly – Chair

Cllr David Bills  
Cllr Graham Carpenter  
Cllr Philip Duigan  
Cllr Jim Moriarty  
Cllr William Richmond

Cllr Robert Savage  
Cllr Vic Thomson  
Cllr Brian Watkins  
Cllr Maxine Webb  
Cllr Chrissie Rumsby

**Also Present:**

Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Highways and Transport
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

**Also Present:**

Titus Adams	Assistant Director of Finance
Alex Cliff	Highway Network and Digital Innovation Manager, CES
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director Strategy and Transformation
Tom Galer	Finance Business Partner, CES
Gary Hewitt	Interim Head of Programmes, Growth and Investment
Nicola Ledain	Committee Officer, Democratic Services
Karl Rands	Assistant Director, Highway Services, CE
Sarah Rhoden	Director of Community Learning and Information CES
Chris Starkie	Director of Growth and Investment
Kevin Townly	Asset, Programmes and Funding Manager, CES

**1. Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies received from Claire Bowes and Saul Penfold (substituted by Philip Duigan and Brian Watkins respectively)

**2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 Cllr Maxine Webb declared an 'other' interest as her husband worked for Norse.

**4. Items of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

## **5. Public Question Time**

- 5.1 There were five public questions received and the responses are appended to these minutes.

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

- 6.1 There were no members questions submitted.
- 6.2 Cllr Rumsby raised a question regarding the closure of Wensum Lodge. It was asked if anyone had contacted creative groups such as Men's Shed that were currently based at Anglia Square which was going to be re-developed to see if they could move to Wensum Lodge to make it more viable. The Director of Community Learning and Information agreed to discuss with Cllr Rumsby after the meeting.

## **7. Strategic and Financial Planning 2024-25**

- 7.1 The committee received the report which formed an important part of the process of developing the 2024-25 Budget, representing a key opportunity for the Select Committee to provide its views on priorities and the approach to preparing budget proposals for the services within its remit.
- 7.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- 7.2.1 A multi year budget settlement from central government would be vital to put together the gross budget and was beyond overdue.
- 7.2.2 With reference to table 8 and the saving of £11.4m for the next financial year, members asked how that amount of savings could be realised without impacting the delivery of services. The Cabinet Member for Finance explained that table 8 references how the overspend was worked out, but he noted that departments were receiving more than had in previous years. Savings did not always mean doing less and it could be achieved by delivering the services differently. To continue to offer the services to residents, constant review of the services needed to happen.
- 7.2.3 It was acknowledged that the workforce was an important asset. In a fast-changing world, jobs and roles could change due to efficiencies, technology and other ways in which roles could change. The workforce were valued and the results of staff surveys represented that.
- 7.2.4 It was confirmed that the figures in table 6 regarding the CES figures showed that the budget next year would have been £199m but the council were looking to save £11m off that figure.
- 7.2.5 Although it was noted that services change and evolve, residents could still experience services being lessened. As interest rates and price rises, this had impacted on the delivery of services. It was always the case that issues in various divisions were identified and rectified as much as was possible.
- 7.2.6 The criteria of deciding what schemes went ahead, were deferred and those that were stopped would be dependent on the business plan put forward by the spending departments. Cabinet members explained that corrective action had to take place as many decisions had previously been taken in a time of low interest rates.

## 7.2.7 **RESOLVED**

1. To consider the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy position as reported to Cabinet in June 2023 (Appendix 1), noting in particular the following elements as set out in the appended report, which form the context for 2024-25 budget setting:
  - a. the budget gap for 2024-25 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period.
  - b. The Departmental saving targets.
  - c. The overall timetable and approach to developing the 2024-25 Budget.
2. Agree that the Committee will provide input to the 2024-25 Budget process in July (this meeting) and in November, with the latter (November) report providing an opportunity to comment on the detailed savings proposals being taken to public consultation.
3. Consider the key issues for 2024-25 budget setting as they pertain to the services within the Select Committee's remit (as set out in this paper, the appended Cabinet report, and the 2023-24 Budget Book), and in particular to endorse:
  - a. The overall service strategies as set out within the 2023-24 Budget Book.
  - b. The budget setting principles set out in Section 3 of the appended Cabinet report, which will provide the broad framework for savings development for services within the Select Committee's remit.
4. Consider whether there are any specific areas of activity that the Select Committee would recommend exploring for savings development, in order to provide input to the 2024-25 budget process and inform the saving proposals put forward to Cabinet later in the year.

## **8. A County Deal for Norfolk**

- 8.1 The Committee received the report which detailed activity to date regarding the devolution deal which were part of Government's levelling up agenda as set out in the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper. The report explained the proposed next steps and offered a chance for the committee to feedback.
- 8.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
  - 8.2.1 With reference to page 47 and further funding for transport, officers reported that over the previous years, Government had prioritised transport funding and various infrastructure funds to those local authorities which had devolution deals in place. The Director of Growth and Investment was happy to provide a written answer with more detail and figures if that would be helpful.
  - 8.2.2 With reference to page 51, point 3.4.2, the pothole fund referred to funding that the council already received, but as part of the devolution deal, the funding would be available to be spent as the council wished. Otherwise, it would have been ringfenced.
  - 8.2.3 Guidance on quantifiable carbon reductions had not yet been published. When it was published funding would be available to promote those reductions and to respond to the guidance. The response was a statutory duty, but as part of a devolution deal, extra funding would be available to respond. The March publication date of the Local Transport Plan was under review due to the delay of the guidance being published, and this would be the case for all local authorities. Full Council would be kept informed.

- 8.2.4 Members acknowledged that all groups of the Council should engage in the information regarding the devolution deal to ensure that the best outcome was achieved for Norfolk residents. All members needed to be well informed so that they could participate in the decision to be taken in December 2023 to change the governance of the council.
- 8.2.5 It was noted that mayoral combined authority was only being offered to those counties which had a unitary model.
- 8.2.6 One of the areas that were being explored with officials are investment zones which had superseded the policies regarding enterprise zones. One of the criteria to have an enterprise zone, was that a devolution deal was in place. Up front capital funding would be available to attract and invest in companies, but potentially more importantly would be the ability to retain the business rates that were generated from that zone. Currently, this was only a policy that was available to those with devolution deals.
- 8.2.7 The £20m per year that the devolution deal offered would be a useful amount of money. The fund would give the opportunity for the council to invest in various projects such as the Winter Gardens Project in Great Yarmouth and the Marina Centre. These projects were only possible due to the investment attracting other sources of funding such as National Lottery Funding. Being able to invest would then in turn attract other funding.

### 8.3 **RESOLVED**

1. To offer thoughts and feedback on activity to date and proposed next steps, as summarised in this report
2. To agree that further progress reports are presented to the committee as appropriate

## 9. **Integration of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Functions**

- 9.1 The committee received the report which outlined the LEP integration into upper tier local authorities as announced in the Chancellor's March 2023 budget statement. The report updated the committee with how this was progressing and the proposed next steps and offered the committee the chance to feedback.
- 9.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the committee:
- 9.2.1 The panel heard that there were the skills and capabilities to manage the transition of the LEP functions into Norfolk and Suffolk local authorities. As a local authority, Norfolk had a long standing and established working relationship with the LEP. Service provision such as growth hubs, the delivery of the services and the activity of the LEP was the most important and the LEP team would continue to operate until the point of transfer. In terms of the transfer the priority was the services and programmes, and work streams were all being reviewed to see if they could continue pending available funding. It was hoped that it would be a smooth transfer and that Norfolk would benefit from it.
- 9.2.2 As part of prudent financial planning, it was ensured that there were suitable reserves to cover redundancies and other winding up costs that might occur if the

LEP was dissolved by central government.

### 9.3 **RESOLVED**

1. Consider the changes in policy for the integration of the LEP functions nationally and the role upper tier authorities were asked to undertake
2. Consider the approach proposed to integrate the LEP functions into Norfolk County Council
3. Provide feedback on the proposed approach

## 10. **Performance of Key Highway Contracts**

- 10.1 The Committee received the report which summarised the active contracts the Council's Highways Service has procured in terms of services provided, performance and value for money. The Highway Service Contracts reviewed in the report were Tarmac, Norse Highways, WSP, Swarco (formerly Dynniq), Amey and Eastern Highways Alliance (EHA).
- 10.2 Officers reported that there were 54k streetlights in Norfolk. The council had started work on upgrading the final 15k streetlights to LED so the project was on track to meet its target.
- 10.3 The second urban grass and verge cut had been started so any issues that had been expressed would be picked up with that. Performance had been difficult this year due to the growth of the grass, but the timings of the cuts had not changed. Issue relating to the cuts had been reviewed and interventions had been put in place. The issue of the unsightly cutting in the city areas would be taken forward with the contractor. The rural cuts started in the middle of May as per previous years with the second rural cut starting in August.
- 10.4 It was encouraging to see the performance across the contractors was high, and with one contractor specifically mentioned for innovation and new ways of working. Cabinet Members reassured the committee that there was a commitment from the contractors that they were taking the sustainability agenda seriously and there had been innovation carried out at all opportunities as referred to in the report. It was acknowledged that the term 'consideration' wasn't strong enough in the context of the report but there was an expectation from all contractors that they realised their responsibilities of carbon reduction. It was noted that the re-procurement of contracts that would be ending at the end of 2026, sustainability and carbon reduction would be part of any new contract that would be agreed.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED**  
To review and to comment on key highway contract performance and arrangements.

## 11. **Highway and Transport Network Performance**

- 11.1 The Committee received the report which provided an annual summary of how we are managing our highway assets and the highway network overall. It did not include the A11 and A47 which were the responsibility of National Highways.
- 11.2 There had been significant investment in active travel and that still continued. When compared against peer groups, Norfolk were broadly in line. Norfolk was a large rural county and there were challenges to provide active travel in an area

such as Norfolk. The red indicator as reported in the report were reflected in the public perception, but fluctuations of opinion were seen year on year. Officers reported that there were regular liaison meetings with National Highways which considered their performance and how their network was managed. Officers were happy to take forward any points directly to them such as litter, but it was acknowledged that litter was already on the agenda.

11.3 Whilst members welcomed £6.4 million for pothole funding and prevention, it was questioned if this was enough. It was suggested that lobbying should happen for a full reinvestment of the highways maintenance budget which had been reduced further year on year.

11.4 **RESOLVED**

1. To note the progress against the Asset Management Strategy Performance framework (Appendix C).
2. To note the progress in the development of congestion and reliability indicators.

**12. CES Policy and Strategy Framework – Annual Report**

12.1 The committee received the report which sets out information on the policies and strategies aligned to the work of this Select Committee, in the form of a Policy and Strategy framework. This framework was brought to the Select Committee annually to enable Members the opportunity to consider the full picture of aligned policies and strategies.

12.2 Members asked if the date that the Adult Education strategy was agreed could be checked.

12.2 **RESOLVED**

1. To note the work carried out by the select committee over the last year to develop and advise on policies and strategies.
2. Review the policy and strategy framework set out in Appendix A and identify any appropriate items for inclusion on the Forward Work Programme (where not already included).

**13. Forward Work Programme**

13.1 The committee received the report by the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services which set out the Forward Work Programme for the committee to enable the Committee to review and shape.

13.2 It was suggested that a report be brought to the committee regarding road safety around schools within the committee's remit and that this could be as part of the report already planned for the Committee to update on feedback from the school streets trial.

13.3 **RESOLVED**

1. To agree the Forward Work Programme set out in Appendix A with the addition of a report on road safety around schools.

2. To agree to task officers to bring an update report back to a future select committee with information to support the committee in considering the Rights of Rivers Motion set out in Appendix B.

**14. France (Channel) England Programme Update**

- 14.1 The committee received the report which gave an update on the NCC delivered France (Channel) England Programme. The last formal update was submitted to the Business and Property Committee meeting in January 2019
- 14.2 **RESOLVED**  
To comment on and note the programme update.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm

**Chair**



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