

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 29 April 2014 at 10am
in the Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Committee Members Present:

Mr B Borrett (Chairman)

Mr B Bremner
Mr D Collis
Mr T Garrod
Mr H Humphrey
Mr T Jermy
Mr C Jordan
Mrs J Leggett

Mrs E Morgan
Mr R Smith
Mrs M Somerville
Mr J Timewell
Mrs A Thomas
Mr B Watkins

Other Members Present:

Mrs C Walker Cabinet Member for Economic Development.

Officers Present:

Mark Allen	Assistant Director Environment & Waste
Phil Bennett-Lloyd	Climate Change Manager
Mark Ogden	Programme Co-ordinator
Daniel Harry	Planning, Performance & Partnerships Manager
Karen Haywood	Scrutiny Support Manager
Tom McCabe	Interim Director Environment, Transport & Development
Chris Walton	Head of Democratic Services
Julie Mortimer	Committee Officer

1 Apologies and substitutions.

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr R Bearman, Mr R Coke, Mr S Hebborn, Mr M Wilby (Mrs M Somerville substituted), Dr M Strong (Mr J Timewell substituted), Mrs S Gurney (Mr T Garrod substituted), Mrs E Corlett (Mr B Bremner substituted), Mrs K Byrne and Mrs S Vertigan (Parent Governor representatives).

2 Declarations of Interests

- 2.1 Mr B Bremner declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Councillor for Norwich City Council in respect of the reference to CNC Building Control in the report entitled "Delivery of Duties under the Flood and Water Management Act".

Mr J Timewell declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 (Delivery of Duties under the Flood and Water Management Act) as a Member of the Broads Authority.

3 Minutes

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5 Call-in item

No call-ins were received.

6 Delivery of Duties under the Flood and Water Management Act.

- 6.1 The reports by the Scrutiny Support Manager and the Interim Director of Environment, Transport and Development updating the Committee on current progress in the delivery of Norfolk County Council's duties as Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 were received.

- 6.2 During the presentation of the report the Committee were informed that the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) Regulations had not yet been received from Government, although it remained a priority. The Committee also noted that 15 bids for funding capital schemes had been made to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which, if successful would invest up to £19m into the community to put in measures to prevent flooding in the future.

- 6.3 During the discussion, the following key points were noted:

- Members were advised that there was no scheme of coordination by the Environment Agency of the routine works to be carried out in local areas; therefore it would not be possible to advise Local Members when work was due to be carried out in their division. Major schemes of work were planned in advance and therefore a more coordinated approach could be adopted.
- The primary function of the Norfolk Water Management Partnership was to coordinate the work of the flood risk authorities in Norfolk. The Strategic Forum was chaired by Mr M Castle and its membership included Cabinet Members of District Councils whose portfolios included the environment. The remit of the Forum was to coordinate and consider the flood risks across Norfolk.
- The 15 bids submitted for funding capital schemes had been based on a variety of measures including the protection of property. Due to the nature of the funding schemes, the bids had concentrated on urban areas.
- Norfolk County Council had a duty to investigate areas of concern with regard to flooding and had a set criteria for carrying out flood investigations.
- Flood and water management would come under the remit of the new Environment, Development and

Transport Committee, who would be responsible for overseeing this work.

- Demaining was a legal process to enable the EA to relinquish flood risk responsibility for certain watercourses currently designated as main rivers. Where the watercourse was within an Internal Drainage Board (IDB) District the relevant local IDB had the opportunity to take on this management role. If it was outside the IDB area, the responsibility for regulation would fall to the County Council. The Committee considered the financial risk to the County Council in the event that the responsibility for demaining rivers passed to the County Council without the necessary funding and urged officers to closely monitor the situation.
- Following the extensive flooding experienced during the winter period, particularly in Somerset, it was noted that any legislation imposed by the Government to enforce regulations around sustainable drainage systems, such as attenuation instead of letting surface water flow into the rivers, would only apply to newly built properties.
- The Environment Agency undertook a catchment-based approach to produce management plans, which would be reviewed and incorporated into the new Flood Risk Management Plans.
- Once the Government review had been completed into the circumstances around the flooding in Somerset any recommendations within the report could be considered and any remedial actions taken.
- DEFRA had allocated £24m to risk management authorities in Norfolk in 2013/14, including Norfolk County Council, district councils and the Environment Agency to install measures to prevent flooding. Of the £24m, a significant proportion had been allocated towards the Great Yarmouth tidal defence scheme. £16m was expected to be allocated in 2014/2015.
- The Environment Agency was criticised by the Committee for not maintaining rivers to a standard by which they needed to be maintained in order for the rest of the drainage systems to work properly.
- Following a suggestion that land owners should be contacted about what action could be taken to reduce the amount of silt entering the water courses, it was noted that discussions with some landowners had taken place and some progress made, although the willingness of the landowners to take part in such schemes was key to any future progress in this respect.
- The Surface Water Management Plan had been effective in identifying the risk to properties and critical services and drainage problems in the larger urban areas. Data relating to the flood impact on land was not yet available.
- Surface water drainage plans, highlighting flood risk and potential ways of mitigating the risks, had

been produced for Greater Norwich and Great Yarmouth. Plans for King's Lynn, North Norfolk and South Norfolk were currently being worked up.

- As Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Development and Waste, Mr D Harrison currently held the portfolio for Flood and Water Management.
- The Committee agreed that they would like to receive regular progress reports on the flood and water management strategy and SUDS.
- Members asked to receive feedback on the implications for projects where funding had not been allocated and also the details of the bid applications received.
- Members requested that information about Climate change should be included in future reports.

6.4 **RESOLVED to**

- note progress on the delivery of the County Council's duties under the Act.
- endorse the approaches taken to deliver an effective and efficient flood risk management service.
- Pass to the Environment, Development and Transport Committee with a strong recommendation to consider the issues highlighted to ensure the policy highlighted and given the importance required.

7 **Rural Isolation Working Group**

7.1 The Committee received the report and suggested approach by the Rural Isolation Member Working Group.

7.2 Mr B Watkins, Chairman of the Working Group introduced the report during which the following key points were noted:

- The Chairman of the Working Group thanked the group members and officers for their contributions and commitment and said that the work completed had been very important and had raised the profile of rural isolation issues.
- The investigations carried out by the working group had recognised the excellent work carried out by the Rural Community Council and other organisations to address issues. Some of the investigations originally identified for scrutiny by the working group were being addressed by the Rural Development Strategy and to avoid duplication these areas had not been progressed further by the working group.
- Three priorities had been identified where it was felt a difference could be made. These were:
 - Technology infrastructure in

- rural areas to allow people in rural areas to access services.
- Support demand responsive transport in rural areas to reduce isolation in rural areas.
- Support and enable rural communities to become strong, sustainable and caring.

7.3 The Chairman welcomed Mrs C Walker, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and thanked her for attending.

7.4 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- Members could play a very active role in the work of the group by letting officers have evidence of the work that was taking place in their areas. This would assist in the development of an 'enabling' approach work being undertaken by the Director of Adult Social Services, looking at how NCC can build upon what was already in place.
- Employment issues were covered under the remit of the Rural Development Strategy.
- The Better Broadband for Norfolk project would take a further two years before it was completed. Due to the rural nature of Norfolk, the funds from the Government and BT would provide superfast broadband to 80-85% of Norfolk. Norfolk County Council was currently bidding for additional money from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Government to obtain additional funding.
- A wi-fi approach could be an option for those communities who would not be covered by superfast broadband. Those Communities would be able to buy into various other commercial services. Norfolk County Council would be happy to engage with communities to investigate various options if requested to do so.
- The Interim Director of Environment, Transport and Development would feed back to members as to whether the communities that would not be receiving superfast broadband had been informed of that fact and what alternative options may be available.
- Members recognised the importance of community hubs and providing services such as day care facilities and were reassured that all options had been, and would continue to be, considered within the Rural Delivery Strategy.
- The Committee made reference to the various different demand led transport schemes in operation across the County and raised the issue of whether concessionary bus passes could be used on them.
- Members agreed that opportunities to provide a coordinated approach of working with

partners to provide services should be explored and noted that there were many examples of how Norfolk County Council already worked with local partners.

- The Committee highlighted the work of mobile libraries in communities and drew attention to the fact that often mobile libraries provided services in addition to book lending, providing a base for other County Council services or other services providers such as Police Community Support Officers.
- Once the Holdall card had been operating for a few months and was working properly, it was planned to roll out the system to all bus companies. The initiative had been funded by the Department for Transport and once established it was hoped that it would provide seamless transfer of journeys as users would be able to purchase one ticket for their complete journey.
- Customers who wished to purchase a holdall card but did not have access to a personal computer, could visit their local library where library staff would be able to assist users in setting up an email address and purchasing a card. Ways of offering a discounted card to customers without internet access were under consideration.
- Members reiterated the importance of improving broadband coverage particularly in isolated rural areas and discussed the move towards people accessing County Council services on line and the challenges that this may bring to people unable or unwilling to access the internet.

7.5 The Chairman thanked the Chairman of the working group for the report.

7.6 The Committee **RESOLVED** unanimously to

- Note the report from the working group.
- Support the recommendations of the working group and forward them to Cabinet for consideration.
- The Committee agreed that it wished to highlight in particular, the issues of rural broadband, demand led transport and the use of the mobile library service in rural communities to Cabinet.

The next meeting will be held at 2pm on Tuesday 20 May 2014 in the Edwards Room, County Hall.

The meeting ended at 11.50am

CHAIRMAN



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