

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 15 October 2013
10:00am, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Mr C Jordan (Chairman)

Ms E Corlett

Mr A Dearnley

Mr P Hacon

Mr I Mackie

Mr R Parkinson-Hare

Mr A Proctor

Mr D Ramsbotham

Mr W Richmond

Mr B Spratt

Mrs A Thomas

Mr T White

Non-Voting Cabinet Members:

Mr S Morphew

Finance, Corporate and Personnel

Mr D Roper

Public Protection (Public Health)

1 Apologies and Substitutes

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr S Clancy, Mr S Hebborn (Mr C Aldred substituting), Miss A Kemp (Mr B Bremner substituting), Mr J Mooney (Mr T Garrod substituting) and Mr B Watkins (Dr M Strong substituting).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2013 were approved by the Panel and signed by the Chairman subject to the deletion of the final sentence of paragraph 14.1.

3 Declarations of Interests

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 There were no items 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

7.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Personnel gave the Panel the following feedback:

- Consultation on the Council's budget proposals was proceeding as planned.
- The Council was examining options to achieve the greatest value for the disposal of surplus furniture following the introduction of the "Norfolk Work Style" project.
- The Senior Management Review process was underway and no proposals had yet been put to Cabinet. The following interim appointments had, however, been made:
 - Anne Gibson, Acting Managing Director
 - Sheila Lock, Interim Director of Children's Services
 - Peter Timmins, Interim Head of Finance
 - Tom McCabe, Interim Highways Assistant Director (currently part-time and full-time from 4 November 2013)
 - Lucy Macleod, Acting Director of Public Health

7.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Protection (Public Health) reported that a second day of strike action had been called by the Fire Brigades Union for this Saturday. This was expected to be more challenging for the Fire Service than the earlier day of strike action.

8 2013/14 Resources Finance Monitoring Report

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the Interim Head of Finance was received. The report provided an update of finance monitoring for services within Corporate Resources.

8.2 In the course of discussion the following key points were made:

- The Panel asked for the forecast financial outturn position for Member allowances to be reviewed to take account of a reduction in the number of Member positions within the Council's Cabinet structure, and of an increase on the number of Party Spokespersons following the last County Council election.
- It was noted that the sum £0.027m within the approved budget for County Farms related to asset appreciation and depreciation costs.
- The Panel asked for information on the amount of income that was raised from County Farm rents. (After the meeting, the County Farm rent amount for 2013/14 has been confirmed at £1.664m).
- It was noted that the County Council was expected to recover 85% of the money which it had invested in the Kaupthing Singer and Friedlander Icelandic bank. The Council had so far got back 79% of its investment and was expected to receive a further dividend payment in November 2013. Recovery levels in the other two Icelandic banks were adjusted to take account of realised foreign exchange gains and losses.
- Members asked for the chart at paragraph 1.9 of the report to be revised so as to include additional columns for the level of expected recovery of money invested

in Icelandic banks and for the level of recovery that had so far been achieved.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report.

9 Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

9.1 The annexed report (9) by the Head of Democratic Services was received.

Members agreed the scrutiny topics and reporting dates set out in paragraph 9 of the report subject to the addition of draft terms of reference for scrutiny of maximising revenue from the County Farm Estate for the next meeting of the Panel.

10 Opportunities for Income Generation

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Interim Head of Finance (which had been published with the supplementary agenda) was received.

10.2 In the course of discussion, the following key points were made:

- The Panel welcomed the report and asked for it to be expanded to include examples of how the Council was looking to maximise all sources of income generation.
- It was noted that income generated through advertising and promotion work for outside organisations was being examined by the Communications Unit within Resources.
- It was also noted that the Council had no plans to remove museum admission charges or to raise the level of Council tax.
- It was pointed out that for commercial reasons the Post Office was reluctant to take on responsibility for the issuing of blue disabled badges.
- Dr Strong asked to be given details after the meeting to show the running costs and the level of subsidy associated with the Council supporting Holt Hall.
- It was pointed out that project funding was available to the County Council from the EU; the County Council employed an EU Development Officer to maximise its funding from EU sources.
- It was said that Government sources of funding for specific projects should be pursued whenever and wherever possible and that reference to these sources of funding should be added at paragraph 1.4 of the report.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report.

11 Report of the Constitution Advisory Group

11.1 The annexed report (11) by the Chairman was received. The Panel received a report on the work which had so far been undertaken by the Constitution Advisory Group.

11.2 In the course discussion, the following key points were noted:

- Dr Strong made a number of detailed comments about the work of the Advisory Committee which are set out in the Appendix to these minutes.

- The Chairman said that he did not necessarily agree with all the comments that had been made by Dr Strong.
- Other Members pointed out that the delay before the first meeting of the Advisory Group was because a Member briefing session had been held in August 2013 to scope the work of the project.
- It was noted that in order to make informed choices as to what was the right governance structure for Norfolk, the Advisory Group was analysing various models around executive and committee governance.
- A straightforward comparison with other Council models was proving to be difficult.
- The Advisory Group was looking to put forward models of governance that were appropriate to local circumstances in Norfolk and the County Council's strategic objectives that could stand the test of time.
- The work of the Advisory Group was not yet complete, and the Advisory Group was not confident that it would be in a position to put forward sufficiently advanced proposals to CROSP and to Council in November 2013.
- The Advisory Group had been advised that it would not be possible to move the Council's AGM from May 2014 to June or July 2014.
- Any resolution to move to a new system of governance made after November 2013 would not allow sufficient time for the required detailed work on a new constitution and for public consultation to be undertaken in order to change the governance structure by the time of the Council's AGM in 2014.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the work that had been undertaken by the Advisory Group so far. The Panel also **RESOLVED** to ask CAG to continue with its deliberations and to work towards being able to propose a Committee system of governance to CROSP at its meeting in November, whilst recognising that the Group's work on an improved Cabinet system would also be a valuable proposition if the Council did not resolve to move to a Committee style of governance at its meeting in November 2013.

12 Carbon and Energy Reduction Programme Report for 2012-13

- 12.1 The annexed report (12) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. The report provided a progress update on the Council's Carbon and Energy Reduction programme.
- 12.2 The Panel **RESOLVED** to note:
- (a) The reductions in non-schools building, and Traffic Street Lighting energy use mentioned in the report, and to support the continued delivery of the Carbon and Energy Reduction Programme to meet its obligations and address ongoing energy costs;
 - (b) The marketing to schools of other options to finance energy improvements, including the package developed by Norse Energy Ltd.;
 - (c) Further delivery improvements, in the areas identified in Section 6 of the report.

13 Energy and Carbon Management Programme 2014-2020

- 13.1 The annexed report (13) by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development was received. The report explained how over the course of the Energy and Carbon Management Programme energy costs and carbon savings had been achieved, demonstrating that the programme was on track to deliver its carbon reduction target.

13.2 In the course of discussion the following key points were made:

- The 25% carbon reduction target (from its baseline year of 2008/09) was, apart from schools, already near its target.
- Schools formed 81% of the buildings-related component of the carbon footprint.
- Over the course of the programme there had been significant investment in improving the efficiency of the County Council's property portfolio.
- The carbon reduction targets needed to be set against the backdrop of the rising cost of heating oil, as well as energy prices for gas and electricity.
- The Council planned to extend its carbon reduction programme which was due to conclude in March 2014, so as to put in place a phase two from 2014 until 2020.
- It was noted that the Council had no direct control over the use of energy within schools which had significant implications in meeting increased overall performance targets for the entire Council estate.
- It was suggested that schools should be further encouraged to be more responsible for meeting their own performance targets.
- The Panel asked for the next report to include a graph to show separate carbon reduction targets for schools.
- The programme was expected to achieve significant savings for the Council over the period to 2020.
- Outside of the main focus of the building estate, the part night street lighting programme was showing signs of a turnaround in performance; however there was disquiet within the city about the merits of having street lights switched off during the night. This disquiet did not extend to rural areas of the county.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to support

- (a) The expansion of the Energy and Carbon Management Programme, and support the adoption of an increased stretch target to 50% reduction from the 2008/09 baseline with the focus on the corporate estate only.
- (b) Track the school estate performance separately, but not within a corporate target, with the Children's Services Department reporting this performance directly to either CROSP or Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a monthly basis.
- (c) Support the exploration of external, alternative financing arrangements of the programme, particularly with respect to the school estate.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am.

CHAIRMAN



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Appendix to the minutes of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel 15 October 2013 --In Respect of Item No 11

Dr Marie Strong made the following comments during consideration of Item 11 which she has asked to have appended to the minutes:

Other than the Chairman I am the only minority group member of CAG present at this meeting and thought it appropriate, with the Chairman's permission, to make a few comments -

Members noting 7.3 of the paper might be surprised as to why:

- a. CAG have been discussing an enhanced Cabinet system (referred to an enhanced status quo)
- b. It is suggested CAG is not confident it can make advanced proposals to CROSP or Council in November
 - implying the Cabinet system would remain status quo

The answer to a. is that at an early meeting the Chairman proposed as well as a Committee system the Group should give consideration to an enhanced Cabinet system and both would be put to Council.

The non-Conservatives objected to the proposal, quoting the motion passed by Council on 24 May. Advice was given that the Group could decide how to proceed. A vote was taken. The three non-Conservative Members voted in favour of concentrating solely on a committee system; the Conservative Members voted to work on a cabinet system as well as a committee system and the Chairman used his casting vote. Since then we have spent as much time discussing a cabinet system as a committee system.

Therein also lies part of the answer to b., as to why it is suggested CAG might not be ready to offer advanced proposals at November's Council and not be ready (6.8.1) to move to a committee system in time for the AGM 2014.

Additionally Members may have noted that whilst the time-frame for us to move in principle to a committee system commenced on 24 May the first meeting of CAG was on 28 August – we had lost 3 valuable months.

To aid me in working towards that task I am attending the LGA (Local Government Association) workshop for Councils working towards a committee system. Richard Bearman, Leader of the Green Group is also attending. I hope that representatives of other groups will attend in order to gain knowledge as to how we can achieve the task we have been given. I certainly look forward to sharing experiences with Councillors from other counties.

All that apart I believe that with the right will – particularly if we adhere to the spirit and intent of Council's motion - a good and useful paper could be put to CROSP and Council in November. I hope CROSP will encourage the Members of CAG to fulfil the task set by Council.

My thanks to the Chairman for his indulgence.

Marie Strong

County Councillor Dr Marie Strong
Leader Liberal Democrat Group