

# Infrastructure and Development Select Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday 28 January 2021**

**10.00am, held virtually via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Cllr Barry Stone – Chair  
Cllr Graham Middleton (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Mick Castle  
Cllr Danny Douglas  
Cllr Claire Bowes  
Cllr Tim East  
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr Beverley Spratt  
Cllr John Ward  
Cllr Colleen Walker  
Cllr Brian Watkins

**Cabinet Members Present:**

Cllr Margaret Dewsbury  
Cllr Martin Wilby

Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships  
Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

**Also Present:**

Tom McCabe	Executive Director for Community & Environmental Services.
Sarah Rhoden	Assistant Director, Performance and Governance, CES
Tim Edwards	Chief Fire Officer, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service
Grahame Bygrave	Director of Highways and Waste, CES
Jan Holden	Head of Libraries and Information, CES
Ceri Sumner	Director, Community, Information and Learning, CES
Denise Saandvandi	Head of Adult Learning, CES
Mark Ogden	Flood and Water Manager, CES
John Jones	Head of Environment, CES
Steve Miller	Director, Culture and Heritage
Mike Auger	Projects Manager, CES

**1. Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Graham Middleton, Cllr Vic Thomson and Cllr Jess Barnard, substituted by Cllr John Ward, Cllr Tony White and Cllr Danny Douglas respectively.
- 1.2 In the absence of the Vice Chair, Cllr Graham Middleton, Cllr Stuart Clancy was elected as Vice Chair for this meeting.

**2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 There were no interests declared.

### **4. Items of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

### **5. Public Question Time**

- 5.1 No public questions were received.

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

- 6.1 The list of Local Member questions/issues is attached at Appendix A.
- 6.2 No supplementary question was asked.

### **7. Flooding**

- 7.1 The Select Committee heard from the Director of Highways and Waste, who explained that the recent intense rainfall on the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020, fell onto already saturated ground which overflowed water courses and ran off into nearby properties creating flooding in properties and impacted the highways network. There was an immediate response by Norfolk Fire and Rescue and the Highways out of hours teams. There had currently been 180 plus reports of internal flooding but these were still being received.  
The care operation also continued with immediate repair to the highway network, cleansing the existing highway drainage system.
- 7.2 An additional £650k of revenue and capital money was agreed following the event to allow the essential repair to be carried out. In addition £1.5 million in the next financial year. There had also been a taskforce set up to work with MPs and the Environment Agency.
- 7.3 Members added that the former Environment, Development and Transport Committee had several meetings to discuss this area and to form a taskforce to address this issue, and it seemed that there had been limited progress. Although the additional funding was welcomed, more was needed and an action plan with accountability on the agencies involved could help.
- 7.4 Members felt that there needed to be investment into coastal protection and help with climate change. Since 2015, there had been 212 instances of flooding in Norfolk, excluding the most recent ones.
- 7.5 The Chair reported that there was going to be a working group set up to address the issues and to see how things could be improved moving forwards.
- 7.6 The local highways teams were reviewing and dealing with a variety of reports of the networks, which included the public footpaths and roads. They were aware, for instance that a number of public bridges passed over water courses which were so high, they had moved. Due to the extent of impact on the network, it was an intense piece of work which would carry on over several months.

- 7.7 One of the key components of the working group would be to consider the financial costs of the extreme weather as well as pulling together the future strategy.
- 7.8 The Chair concluded that everyone had a responsibility to tackle the issue of environmental change. He suggested that NCC should have an environmental champion working alongside all local councils and agencies to highlight that we all had a role to play.

## **8 Adult Learning Annual Plan**

- 8.1 The Select Committee received the annexed report (8) which outlined the annual plan. The annual plan had been developed to reflect the changing demands of the current landscape and was closely aligned to both local and national priorities and responded to the needs of the county as a result of the impact of Covid-19.
- 8.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- 8.2.1 Councillors agreed that Adult Learning had achieved recent success and performance across the board compared favourably with other local authorities across the Council and staff should be congratulated for the consistent high standards. There had been a shift in learner behaviour and as a result and to be flexible to meeting learner demand, there were plans to maintain balance between classroom provision and online provision moving forwards with scope to expand the online provision more widely.
- 8.2.2 There were plans to expand the range of level 4 qualification in other areas to address gaps. Accountancy and a teaching assistant qualification at level 4 was already offered but there were plans in place for the next academic year to expand the apprenticeship programme from level 2 to level 5, and a focus on health and social care. Adult Learning would work alongside other Higher Education Institutes.
- 8.2.3 There had been significant progress made with learner involvement (learner forums, learner awards etc.) since the last Ofsted visit. In order to achieve outstanding, gaps had been identified and they were consistently being worked on. identify gaps and things can improve, persistently work on them.
- 8.3 The Select Committee **RESOLVED** to
1. Note Adult Learning's performance outcomes and contribution to Norfolk priorities
  2. Consider and comment on the Adult Learning Annual Plan for 2020-21 and beyond.

## **9 Norfolk Library and Information Service Update**

- 9.1 The Select Committee received the annexed report (9) which provided an update on how the library service had responded to the pandemic, and how it continued to support reading, learning, literacy and provide information to citizens in Norfolk.
- 9.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- 9.2.1 Libraries were a vital resource and a huge benefit to so many people. There was a judgement and balance to be made each year with regards to the budget and the purchasing of physical materials. If the purchase of electronic materials rises, the purchase of physical materials decreases. A real change made would be the limited

purchase of newspapers as there were over 12k downloads of newspapers per week.

- 9.2.2 There were approx. 70/80 volunteers available at present, compared to 750 volunteers pre-Covid. Volunteers were still kept up to date and in contact via events via Zoom.
- 9.2.3 Libraries would obviously re-open when it was safe to do so. It was obviously restricted by the guidance but also the primary responsibility would be the safety of the staff who would be in a face to face environment all day. Re-opening the libraries would be done so on a case to case basis.
- 9.2.4 There was no intention to increase library charges next year to make up for the loss of income from the pandemic. However, there would be an income gap, and this would need addressing.
- 9.2.5 The Community Librarian team were a team of 10fte, and had to be reduced by 3.3, leaving 6.7 fte. They were now in charge of the online offer.
- 9.2.6 Newspapers were popular in the libraries, however they were not the most cost-effective as only one person could read one at a time, whereas the electronic version of the newspaper would allow as many people who were logged on to read the copy.
- 9.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the report.

## **10. Progress with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

- 10.1 The Select Committee received the annexed report (10) which provided an update for members on progress with delivering the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan (NAIP) which was adopted by the Council in 2015 and runs for 10 years.
- 10.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
  - 10.2.1 It was a priority to look for opportunities for all-abilities access wherever possible. The approach taken is to look at the main settlements and the routes alongside them, such as market towns. The idea behind the NAIP is that the priorities could be changed on a regular basis, so if there were strong messages to alter this approach, it could be done. Recent works had been completed on Holkham path and Weavers Way to improve access for all.
  - 10.2.2 There was concern about the landowners who are not maintaining the public rights of way. Officers explained there were set procedures to deal with obstructions on the public rights of way, but it was complex depending on the obstruction. Landowners were negotiated in a friendly and approachable way where possible. It could lead to legal procedures, but wouldn't want to do this more than when was necessary.
- 10.3 The Committee **RESOLVED**:
  - 1. To note ongoing work to deliver the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan;
  - 2. To note processes in place to monitor the plan;
  - 3. To note recommendations made by the Norfolk Local Access Forum arising from the monitoring reports.

## 11. Forward Work Programme

- 11.1 The Select Committee received the annexed report (11) by the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services setting out the Forward Work Programme to enable the Committee to review and agree it.
- 11.2 Some Members would like to see more around Economic Development on future agendas.
- 11.3 The Chair reminded the Committee that the issues surrounding the flooding had been picked up by Scrutiny Committee.
- 11.4 The Select Committee reviewed the report and **RESOLVED** to
- **Agree** the Forward Work Programme for Infrastructure & Development Select Committee.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm

Chair  
28 January 2021



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**INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE****5. Public Question Time.**

No questions received.

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

What actions have been taken by the County Council to respond to the COVID crisis in terms of the increased use of the Marriot's Way by people using the Norfolk Trail for daily exercise and key workers for going to work, has it moved resources to deal with increased maintenance issues on the footpath and will it assist me in bringing to the attention of Norfolk Police some users concerns about security on the path during the evening?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Trails team have been working closely with our communications team to encourage safe use of the Trails such as the Marriott's Way and to follow social distancing guidelines. We have not directed additional resources towards the route in the current financial year, however we intend to deliver a 2021-22 Action Plan that recognises the impact of increased usage due to Covid-19 on the Trails network, including the Marriott's Way, which will prioritise repairs and upgrades that address the user concerns raised in the question.

The Trails team would be happy to work with you and bring to the attention of Norfolk Police some users concerns about security on the path during the evening.

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