



Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11 July 2022 at
2pm in Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2DL

Present:

Cllr Ed Colman (Chair)
Cllr T Adams
Cllr S Blundell
Cllr A Birmingham
Cllr G Carpenter
Cllr P Carpenter
Cllr N Daubney
Cllr B Duffin
Cllr L Hemsall
Cllr S Morpew
Cllr B Price
Cllr V Thomson

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Stephen Morpew for Cllr T Jermy
Cllr Penny Carpenter for Cllr K Mason Billig
Cllr Tony Adams for Cllr J James
Cllr Graham Carpenter for the vacant position on the committee.

Also Present:

Cllr Tom FitzPatrick	Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance.
Cllr Greg Peck	Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Kay Mason Billig (substituted by Cllr Penny Carpenter), Cllr Terry Jermy (substituted by Cllr Stephen Morpew), Cllr Jane James (substituted by Cllr Tony Adams). Cllr Stuart Clancy was also absent.

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair subject to an amendment that Cllr Sharon Blundell's apologies were recorded and that Cllr Dan Roper was her substitute.

3 Declarations of Interest

- 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/Questions

- 6.1 There was one local member question from Cllr Kemp. A supplementary question was asked:

Why is there no policy from the current administration for levelling up in Kings Lynn and could the hierarchy of motions to council being considered, be removed, as it is considered to be discriminatory and puts Kings Lynn at the back of the queue?

The Chair responded by saying he did not recognise the sentiment or context that West Norfolk was being left behind by the County Council or was being discriminated against and that the County Council had a good record of touching all areas of the County through its extensive activities. The point about the hierarchy of motions to council being considered within the changes to the constitution had been noted by the Director of Governance. The committee would provide further such comment and a formal decision will be taken by Full Council on 19th of July 2022.

7 Smarter Working Update

- 7.1 The annexed report (8) was received and introduced by Cllr Tom FitzPatrick, Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance. The report focused on the approach to Hybrid working and the support in place for employees.
- 7.2 David Thom, Delivery Manager Strategy and Transformation undertook a [presentation which can be found on the committee's website pages](#).
- 7.3 In response to questions it was noted:
- A large number of employees had taken up the offer of a £250 grant to support home working.
 - Measures were in place for teams to meet and get together on a regular basis to help some tasks and build connectively to ensure work was completed in the most efficient and effective way. Managers also had training available to help them with working in a hybrid manner.
 - Guidance and principles have been issued to all line management to encourage some face to face meetings and tasks and this would enable managers to assess wellbeing and better manager staff working in a hybrid manner.
 - Members had been given access to the Smarter Working Dashboard and the Chair requested that if questions arose after viewing the dashboard that these should be sent to him so that a collective response can be obtained from officers. Responses to questions will be dealt with outside of meetings.
 - It was agreed that the item on Smarter Working would come to the committee at every other meeting. The next time the topic would be discussed would be on 14th November 2022.
- 7.4 The Select committee:
- **Reviewed** the work completed to date and **considered** the next steps and **provided** feedback on any areas of assurance the Committee requires to

form part of the next report.

8 Proposed Changes to the Constitution

8.1 The annexed report (7) was received and introduced by Helen Edwards, Director of Governance. The report included proposed changes within the appendices following a series of workshops attended by members and at a group leaders meeting. A final document would be produced for approval at Full Council on 19th July 2022.

8.2 In response to questions asked the committee discussed and noted the following:

- The 'incinerator clause' regarding referral of an item over £100m to full council should have been removed from the constitution when the council moved to a cabinet system as only cabinet can make an executive decision. All spending would need to be within the budget agreed by full council.
- Suggestions were made that an extra full council meeting in the schedule might assist in getting more of the Council's priorities discussed.
- Any changes in the constitution will still require the goodwill and discipline of members to ensure Council meetings function effectively.
- The reduction in members speaking time on a motion may create a situation that more members wish to speak to ensure all points are covered. The order of motions proposal may also create confusion if there is a cross party motion.
- The Director of Governance clarified that any motions that remain unheard at the end of a full council meeting will be considered to be moved and seconded without debate, and will move to the vote unless the proposer wishes to withdraw the motion for consideration at a future meeting.

8.3 Cllr Ben Price proposed a motion that the following changes to the proposed constitution should be recommended:

1. There should be 7 ordinary meetings of full council per municipal year.
2. Petitions to be validated by 1000 signatures.
3. Motions should be accepted on a first come first serviced basis with a limit of two motions per group.
4. Full council meeting length should be up to 4 hours with a 2 hour break if required.

The motion was seconded by Cllr Blundell.

The motion was **lost** on a show of hands.

8.4 The Select committee **agreed** to reaffirm support to the changes to the constitution as proposed.

A recorded vote was requested.

Cllr Adams	For
Cllr Birmingham	Abstain
Cllr Blundell	Against
Cllr G Carpenter	For
Cllr P Carpenter	For
Cllr Colman	For
Cllr Daubney	For

Cllr Duffin	For
Cllr Hemsall	For
Cllr Morphew	Abstain
Cllr B Price	Against
Cllr Thomson	For

The motion was **Carried**.

9. Communications Strategy 2022-2024

The committee received the annexed report (9) from the Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation and was presented by James Dunne, Head of Communications.

The report was provided for consideration and feedback and the version presented was also being considered in a range of forums concurrently before eventual sign off by the Executive Directors and Cabinet.

The council's priorities are guided by the corporate strategy, 'Better Together, for Norfolk' and the communications strategy is rooted in following those objectives. In communications much of the work of the past two years has been dictated by the council's response to Covid. The purpose moving forward was on how the Council joins up its communications and how the council effectively engages within the community. Monthly planner packs will be issued so that all members can see what campaigns and initiatives the council will be undertaking in the month ahead.

9.1 In response to member's questions the following was discussed and noted:

- The strategic communication groups were developed to work collaboratively, to break down silo working and to establish a connected and co-ordinated approach. The Head of Communications was chairing each group meeting to ensure consistency was achieved and action plans aligned.
- It was thought appropriate for the item to return to the committee in late Autumn 2022 so that the work in progress can be viewed and evaluated.
- The strategy produced did consider both in-house and external partners' developments with a view to working better together with other local and national authorities and organisations to promote common themes and thinking within communication delivery.

9.2 The committee **agreed**:

- a) to support the 'Better Together, for Norfolk' strategy
- b) that the strategy accurately reflects NCC's vision and direction of working effectively together both internally and with partners.

10 Commercialisation Update

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services was received.

The report provided the committee with an update of the council's commercial activities and also considered the scope for further commercial investment ideas to produce an income to contribute to the setting of a balanced budget.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management undertook a [presentation which is available on the committee's website pages](#) .

10.2 In response to questions asked the committee discussed and noted the following:

- Although profit and rebates from Norse Group were very low in comparison to turnover this was due to the fact that Norse entered in to joint venture partnership working with other local government organisations and any resulting profit was split 50:50 with partners. In addition, many of Norse's activities were in sectors of narrow margins such as facilities management.
- Repton Property Developments added value to the land purchased from County Farms by engaging the process of farmland to residential house sales which often took a number of years to complete.
- It was suggested that the Council's target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030 could be helped by Repton Property Services to build houses that meet the highest energy efficient levels.
- It was suggested that Repton Property Services could look to the retro fit of energy efficiencies in housing to meet growing need both in social housing and the private sector.
- The need to drive a profit from Council owned companies such as Repton was paramount and that caution needed to be applied to ensure tax payers money was not being invested in risky endeavours.
- It was noted that Norwich City Council had lost money on some previous house building projects and this highlighted the risk involved.
- Norfolk Futures Limited ceased trading as it had lost money. It had installed and managed wind turbines located on County Farms land. It was considered at the time of closure that the council did not have the expertise to manage such an activity.

10.3 Cllr Price tabled a motion which was seconded by Cllr Colman. The following motion was **agreed** by the committee:

Corporate Select Committee ask the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, together with the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Assets and the Chairman of the Select Committee to explore the viability and feasibility of the below proposals and bring a report back to the committee.

- Consider investment in renewable energy technologies that can generate a financial return for the council either / or in partnership with community energy groups like Norwich Community Solar, this would also benefit the local economy.
- Repton Property Services Ltd to consider the benefits of entering the retrofit market and consider providing renewal energy source for new building.
- Packaging up the decarbonisation requirements for the county into a prospectus for investors. (This may take some of the financial burden off the council. Bristol City Council have done this through their City Leap programme.)
- Leveraging procurement spend to deliver social value and environmental improvements, eg using PPN06/20 and PPN06/21. (This is in line with the aim of smarter working as it uses existing council resources to deliver better value and support the council's corporate aims)
- Raise capital for investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects through Community Municipal Investment Bonds (investment-based crowdfunding). This can help benefit the local economy.

11. Internal Carbon Price Guidance

- 11.1 The annexed report (11) by the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial Services was received. The report appends guidance on how to apply an internal carbon price in the assessment of option appraisals and included an update to the financial framework to reflect the guidance.
- 11.2 Ailis Wood, Policy Officer presented the report and advised that by using a carbon pricing mechanism in to the decision making process, carbon emissions can be determined to help achieve low carbon investment, In addition, investment decisions using carbon pricing can help the Council protect itself against rising energy prices and off setting costs as well as reducing the liability to possible future taxation on carbon emissions. If renewable investments are promoted carbon pricing could help reduce the Council's dependency on fossil fuels as well.
- 11.3 In response to questions from members the following points were discussed and noted:
- The figures used to value carbon as £248 per tonne of CO2 in 2022 rising to £378 per tonne of CO2 in 2050 are taken from the Government's own Green Book figures and are considered to be the most reliable data available.
 - Norfolk County Council is one of the first local authorities to adopt carbon pricing guidance in its decision making processes.
 - It is hoped that the pricing mechanism will be embedded in all decisions so officers don't consider this a standalone exercise. It was acknowledged that there might be much to learn as the process develops over the coming months and years.
 - The guidance does not apply to transport projects as the Department for Transport (DfT) has its own guidance which is accepted to be the lead data in the sector as most of the projects undertaken are funded partly or completely by the DfT.
 - It was thought that clarity of communication for both members and the wider general public was required to ensure that the carbon pricing and its reasoning in decision making was understood to as many people as possible.
- 11.4 The committee **agreed** to:
1. Endorse the appended guidance from the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services on using an internal carbon price.
 2. Recommend to Full Council the insertion in the Financial Regulations (section 2.9.4) of a requirement that Executive Directors must ensure that proposals are prepared in accordance with the carbon pricing guidance published by the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial services when making revenue and capital investment decisions.¹
 3. Note the Capital bids scoring mechanism will be updated to include ecological priorities, including providing a higher weighting to bids that deliver a carbon reduction for Norfolk, which will be included within the proposed Capital Strategy taken to Full Council in February 2023.

12 Forward Work Programme 2022/23

- 12.1 The annexed note (12) by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation was received.
- 12.2 The committee **resolved to agree** the forward work programme. The Commercialisation item as agreed in item 10 will be placed on the programme once discussion with the relevant Executive Directors and Cabinet Member had taken place.

Meeting concluded at 3.52 pm