



Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 November 2022
at 10 am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Cllr Steve Morpew (Chair)

Cllr Lana Hemsall (Vice Chair)

Cllr Carl Annison

Cllr Lesley Bambridge

Cllr Phillip Duigan

Cllr Barry Duffin

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr Keith Kiddie

Cllr Brian Long

Cllr Ed Maxfield

Cllr Jamie Osborn

Cllr Robert Savage (Sub for Cllr Richard Price)

Cllr Brian Watkins

Also, present (who took a part in the meeting):

General The Lord Dannatt
Cllr Graham Plant

Cllr James Bensly
Cllr Andrew Jamieson
Cllr Daniel Elmer

Grahame Bygrave
Joel Hull
Mark Ogden
Jo Middleton
Carolyn Reid
Nick Tupper
Marcus Needham
Tom McCabe
Kat Hulatt
Peter Randall
Tim Shaw

Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance
Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy and Deputy Leader of the Council
Chair of the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee
Cabinet Member for Finance
Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Chair of the Children's Services PRP
Director of Highways, Transport and Waste
Assistant Director of Waste and Water Management
Flood and Water Manager
Economic Strategy and Development Manager
Assistant Director, Growth and Development
Consultant, Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance
Head of Quality, Performance and Systems, Children's Services
Head of Paid Service
Head of Legal Services
Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Committee Officer

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Richard Price, Ms Helen Bates (Church Representative), Giles Hankinson (Parent Governor) and Mr Paul Dunning (Church Representative).

1.2 An apology was also received from Cllr Eric Vardy (Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste).

2 Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 19 October 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 Cllr Brian Long declared an “other interest” because he was a member of the King’s Lynn Internal Drainage Board.

4. Public Question Time

4.1 There were no public questions.

5. Local Member Issues/Questions

5.1 There were no local member issues/questions.

6 Call In

6.1 The Committee noted that there were no call-in items.

7 Review of Norfolk Flood Prevention Activity

7.1 The annexed report (7) was received.

7.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report that presented the progress made on flood mitigation and alleviation by the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance and by the County Council in its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority for Norfolk and as a Highways Authority.

7.3 During discussion of the report with General The Lord Dannatt (Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance), Nick Tupper (Consultant to the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance), Joel Hull (Assistant Director of Waste and Water Management), Grahame Bygrave (Director of Highways, Transport and Waste) and Mark Ogden (Flood and Water Manager), the following key points were noted:

- In the league table of areas most at risk from flooding, Norfolk was tenth out of 149, and the County had been affected by several significant rainfall events in recent years. Some of the risks were of a coastal nature and some were internal to the county with drainage systems unable to cope with heavy rainfall.
- In Norfolk there were 36 different organisations that had some level of responsibility for flood prevention.

- The partners of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance had identified 28 priority projects and established a rigorous process, including a strategy and action plans, to ensure that projects moved from concept to delivery as quickly as possible when funding was secured.
- Out of the 28 priority projects, 9 were rated green (where funding and an outline solution was found, and projects were due to be completed shortly) 11 were rated as amber (where there was an outline solution and the funding had not yet been secured) and 8 rated red (where an outline solution had not been identified and funding had not been secured). The Alliance was updated on the latest position regarding internal flooding at meetings that were held every two months.
- Each of the sites mentioned in the report had a lead agency to develop the options for a solution.
- In the first tranche of projects identified in the report, the lead authority was either the County Council or Anglian Water. In the second tranche the lead authority was sometimes an Internal Drainage Board or one of the District Councils, key partners in developing a solution.
- Cllrs raised concerns about the ability of the Alliance to secure adequate external capital funding to deal with flooding mitigation issues.
- It was pointed out the Cabinet had made a flood reserve of £1.5m for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years, with the intention to provide a further £3m over the following two financial years to 2024/25 inclusive, totalling £6m, to help deliver change and ease the flooding challenges faced across the county. The report included information about the processes to secure additional funding, including recently notable successes.
- The delivery of many of the solutions was expected to require successful funding bids to be secured from a variety of external sources.
- While it was estimated that it would take a direct funding stream to the Alliance of £80m to fund solutions to the flooding problems across Norfolk (other than at Welney which would cost an additional £50m), the County Council and other Local Authorities were unable to provide this level of funding which would need to be found by the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and other organisations in the water industry.
- The biggest success of the Alliance was that Norfolk now had a single strategic body that enabled an integrated conversation around flooding and water resource management. It was important for all the organisations to continue working together in a strategically joined up way.
- If the NSFA had more access to direct sources of funding then it would be able to get more done to tackle the issues.
- There was a single contact number, 0344 800 8013, for the public to report on flooding issues.
- It was suggested that Norfolk MPs should be asked to take up with the Government the need to review the inadequacies in the Flood and Water

Management Act which had not taken on all the recommendations of the Pitt Review.

- One of the biggest issues was poorly maintained riparian watercourses which required urgent routine maintenance work.
- Town and Parish Councils placed great importance on the support they received from the Alliance for dealing with issues about poorly maintained riparian ditches in their areas. Landowners needed to take up their own shared responsibilities.
- It was suggested that steps should be taken to ensure that longstanding knowledge of residents about potential flooding issues was not lost.
- The Committee discussed how sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) could help reduce the risk of flooding by slowing the flow of rainfall into the drains by using units designed to gradually release the captured water back into the environment.
- It was suggested that the Government should allow Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act to be implemented to improve the regulatory sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) framework.
- The Committee highlighted the case made to Government for national change to the planning system to improve the protections from flood risk and streamlining watercourse regulation, whilst also recognising funding issues with retrofitting of sustainable drainage schemes.
- It was noted that schemes within the 'Reclaim the Rain' project aimed to store flood water and make it available for use by agriculture, industry, communities, and the environment. The use of slow-release water butts and large water containers within local communities was being explored as part of this project. An update on this project could be provided at a future meeting.
- It was pointed out that the County Council had sought funding to offer households across Norfolk that had been flooded internally by water from rainfall, watercourses or groundwater, the opportunity to apply for a grant towards property level protection. Details were available by following the following link: [Flood protection grants - Norfolk County Council](#) It was however noted that it might take a number of months to identify whether the property was eligible as it was subject to the County Council securing external funding, and would depend on the amount of funding received.
- The report set out the role of the bodies in relation to planning applications.
- Cllr Jamieson confirmed that the sums mentioned in local levy contributions towards surface water projects which were set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report were correct.
- Cllrs spoke about combining attempts to deal with flooding with those for dealing with conditions of water retention during drought conditions.
- Cllr James Bensly, Chair of the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, explained how that Committee were looking at responsibilities for combined storm overflows and particularly where foul drains were being used to take away excess water which led to sewage ending up in coastal waters.

This was an issue which the Scrutiny Committee would also be able to take up with Anglian Water at a future meeting.

- It was pointed out that Schedule 3 of the Act referred to the removal of the right to connect properties to public sewers. This was something that the Alliance and Anglian Water were pursuing.

7.4 The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet

That Cabinet lobby directly with the Government, and through the work of the Norfolk MPs, for the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and for a direct and adequate funding stream for the work of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance.

It was also RESOLVED

- 1. That the Committee note the nature and speed of progress made with flood prevention activities in Norfolk.**
- 2. That representatives of Anglian Water and the Environment Agency be invited to discuss sewage and stormwater overflow issues with Members of the Scrutiny Committee.**
- 3. That officers be invited to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in one year's time to discuss progress with flood prevention activity.**
- 4. That the Committee place on record the Council's thanks to General The Lord Dannatt, Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance, who was due to give up the chairmanship of the flooding Alliance in January 2023.**
- 5. That the Cabinet Member be asked to implement the widest possible use of slow release water butts to store flood water and make it available for use by agriculture, industry, communities, and the environment.**

8 Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy – Impact on Market Towns

8.1 The annexed report (8) was received.

8.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report that outlined the elements of the Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy 2021-24 that related to market towns. The report set out the activity to date, since Cabinet endorsed the Strategy in December 2021, and described the broader policy context in which the Strategy was being delivered, including the changing funding landscape and role of partnership working in delivery.

8.3 During discussion of the report with Cllr Graham Plant, Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy and Deputy Leader of the Council, and the officers that were present for this item, the Committee considered the following:

- It was pointed out that the Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy 2021-24 ('NRES') was a partnership strategy, led by a steering group with public,

private and third sector representation, including the Chair of the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee.

- It was also pointed out that the Strategy Steering Group regularly invited project leads relevant to delivery in market towns and officers to assist in informing bids, bringing interested parties together and strengthening cooperation between the County Council and rural stakeholders.
- Projects identified on the Project Pipeline linked to the Market Town delivery theme included the development of a fund to finance business diversification and adaptation (replacing LEADER and DRIVE).
- An example of joint working with the District Councils that was referred to by Members was the way in which Cllr Plant and officers of the Strategy Steering Group worked with Breckland District Council to support the development of the “Future Breckland” prospectus.
- Similar initiatives to this were being put in place elsewhere in the county and a shared post was in place for joint working in the Greater Thetford area.
- In reply to questions about work to implement the market towns delivery theme in the Dereham area, Cllr Plant said that he recognised the changing demographics and changing use of market towns and the need to reskill the local workforce.
- Cllrs spoke about the importance of the availability of cash to those living in rural areas. The County Council was working with the Cash Action Group to review and improve the situation in Holt where a Bank Hub had been set up and to see what further opportunities were available for elsewhere in the county.
- It was pointed out that mapping the use of new buses in rural areas and the training of bus drivers on the use of those buses would be taken up with the Passenger Transport Unit. The Passenger Transport Unit would be asked what lessons could be learnt from a pilot scheme that had been introduced in the Swaffham area. This was however more of an issue for the Council’s transport strategy than it was for the rural economic strategy.
- The success of the rural economic strategy was shown in the overall amount of funding secured for the rural economy. Success was also shown by how far the rural agenda was embedded into all aspects of the County Council’s work.
- A new series of matrixes were being put in place to measure and monitor progress of the Norfolk Investment Framework over the longer term.
- Opportunities for supporting retrofitting was being taken up through the work of the District Councils and the industry.
- Members spoke about how the development of small-scale manufacturing within the rural economy was limited by the supply of electricity.
- It was important for Norfolk to be able to retain more of the electricity that came into the county from offshore electricity generation. This was currently the subject of discussions with appropriate parties within the industry and an

issue within the forward work plan for the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee.

- The County Council worked closely with its neighbours and in partnership through the work of the LEP, the Norfolk and Suffolk economic strategy and the Norfolk Investment Framework.
- Cllrs spoke about the need for a clear definition of what was meant by the term primary villages. In this context market towns and primary villages is taken to include larger villages and other service centres in rural areas which have a key role as service delivery locations for retail, health, education, or other services.
- It was pointed out that should Norfolk enter a County Deal that this would potentially allow for more flexible use of pots of money to support the rural economy..

8.4 RESOLVED

That the Committee note the market towns element of the Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy.

9 Quarterly update on Children's Services Performance Review Panel

9.1 The annexed report (9) was received.

9.2 The Committee received an update on recent work undertaken, key actions, updates on actions from scrutiny, and an overview of the forward programmes of work for the Children's Services Performance Review Panel.

9.3 The Committee discussed with Cllr Daniel Elmer (Chair of the Children's Services PRP) the work of the Panel, received answers to questions and considered the following:

- Cllr Daniel Elmer gave an update on the discussions that had taken place at the PRP about meeting the targets for Education Health and Care Plans since the last update to the Scrutiny Committee.
- The impact on consistency, quality assurance and management of risk policies had been examined by the PRP.
- Measures had been put in place to reduce front line pressures and waiting times.
- The Chair suggested that the PRP might like to consider producing an annual report for those Members who did not serve on the Scrutiny Committee who were unfamiliar with its work.
- The Cabinet Member said that when the outcome of the OFSED report was known then he would like to see a plan put in place to show how the PRP could help move matters forward to the next stage through a series of benchmarks and indicators.

9.4 RESOLVED

That the Committee note the progress and activity of the Children's Services Performance Review Panel.

10 Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

10.1 The annexed report (10) was received.

10.2 There were a number of additions and changes to the work programme that were shown in the appendix to the report.

10.3 RESOLVED

That the Committee:

Note the current forward work programme as set out in the appendix to the report

The meeting concluded at 2.30 pm

Chair