



Cabinet

17:30 to 17:45

14 September 2022

Present: Councillors Waters (chair), Harris (vice chair), Giles, Hampton, Jones, Kendrick, Oliver and Stonard

Also present: Councillor Wright, Liberal Democrat Group Leader

1. Her Majesty the Queen

The chair said that this cabinet meeting took place during a period of national mourning, and, on behalf of all the members and officers present, he offered profound condolences to the family of the Queen. Members of the public would have the opportunity to sign the council's book of condolence which would be available in the Mancroft room of City Hall between 9am and 4pm on Thursday and Friday (15 and 16 September) and Tuesday 20 September; and on Monday 19 September, the day of the funeral, between 1pm and 4pm.

A minute's silence was held.

The chair said that only essential business relating to key decisions or urgent items should be taken during this period. Items that did not require a decision at this meeting would be deferred to the October meeting.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest

3. Public questions/ petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 6 July 2022.

5. Q1 22-23 Corporate Performance Assurance Report

RESOLVED to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

6. Treasury Management Review 2021-22

RESOLVED to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

7. An Update on Health, Safety and Compliance in Council Homes and Buildings

RESOLVED to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

8. Green Waste Disposal Contract – Key Decision

Councillor Oliver, cabinet member for environmental services, presented the report. She explained that the decision to approve a new contract for the disposal of green waste collected from those households who sign up for a garden waste bin, and a nominal amount of green waste created by NCSL (Norwich City Services Limited) grounds maintenance activities, needed to be made because the end of the current contract was imminent. The new contract had been jointly procured with Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council and Breckland Council and it was noted that the partner councils had already approved the award of the contract.

With no members indicating that they wished to discuss the exempt appendix, it was:

RESOLVED to award the contract for the disposal of green waste to TMA Bark Ltd.

9. Utilities Contracts – Key Decision

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report, which called on the cabinet to enter into an agreement for the council's gas supply. He expressed his deep regret at the sad passing of the Queen last week and in deference said that he did not want to overstate his concern that the government's announcements to the cost of living crisis, and particularly its plans to tackle rising energy prices, had been overlooked. The government had not provided details on how it would support businesses or local government through the current crisis and had provided only negligible details on its proposals to support households. He then referred to the report and said that it was the duty of the council to ensure that there was a supply of utilities to its operational sites, such as City Hall and the Halls, and its sheltered housing schemes, district housing schemes and communal areas. Advice had been sought from Cornwall Insight, not only one of the leading advisors in the country but an example of a successful Norwich business, whose report is included as an exempt appendix. To give the authority the greatest level of certainty, the recommendation in this report was to seek to enter a one year fixed term contract, whilst continuing to explore longer term options for gas and electricity. In July, the cabinet had the foresight to ensure that the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update included provision for rising energy costs, and therefore the general fund was expected to accommodate the additional cost.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for housing, seconded the recommendations and said that this was one of the most depressing reports that ever been considered at cabinet. The council's contracts had cushioned it from the energy crisis so far but the council could no longer continue to escape the impact as energy prices continued to fluctuate rapidly because of worldwide events. The report set out the financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Much of these costs were recharged to residents through service charges that the council was obliged to set. At this stage she could not say what impact that the impact would have on residents as it would depend on the prices paid by the council and the individual schemes. She could give assurance the council would do what it could to support residents in financial difficulties. The report set out some of the measures that were already being taken by the council as the cost of living crisis continued, which included lobbying and putting pressure on the government to ensure that it does everything to support individuals throughout this crisis.

Councillor Wright said that as chair of scrutiny committee he had been briefed on this report by the strategic procurement manager and the interim head of finance, audit and risk and considered that a single year agreement was prudent. He referred to the prediction by a Goldman Sachs analyst that there would be a sharp fall in the price of gas and asked if there was an opportunity to renegotiate the contract if awarded in the next day or so if this was the case. The interim head of finance, audit and risk said that although the contract was binding, the prices that the council would pay were based on forward contracts and there would be opportunities to take advantage of falling rates.

With no members indicating that they wished to discuss the exempt appendix, it was:

RESOLVED to:

- (1) agree to enter a single year agreement with Crown Commercial Services for the procurement of gas from 1 April 2023 on a fixed term basis; and
- (2) ask officers to continue to explore the future options for the procurement of electricity from October 2023 and longer-term options regarding gas procurement.

10. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items 11* (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***11 Managing Assets (Non Housing)(paragraph 3)**

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing, said that she had been briefed on this proposal and supported it.

RESOLVED to approve the disposal of the land identified in the report.

CHAIR