

Cabinet

17:30 to 18:45

Wednesday, 16 October 2024

Present: Councillors Stonard (Chair), Hampton (Vice-Chair), Giles, Jones, Kendrick, Kidman and Packer

Apologies: None

In attendance: Councillor Galvin (Leader of the Green Group)
Councillor Wright (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group)

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

2. Public Questions and Petitions

There had been no public questions or petitions received.

3. Questions to Cabinet Members

There had been no questions received.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024.

5. Scrutiny Committee Recommendations to Cabinet and response to motion 9(d) and petition

(This item was contained in the supplementary agenda).

The Leader of the Council introduced the report. Councillor Wright as Chair of Scrutiny Committee highlighted that it had been a good scrutiny session with external partners and officers who had answered members' questions. Councillor Galvin had chaired the meeting for the item on Welcoming Refugees and Asylum Seekers. She thanked the organisations that had attended for the item, the debate had focussed on the Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) report on migrant homelessness in winter. Further follow up would be needed to fully discuss the update about refugees and asylum seekers.

The Leader presented the petition and motion to council and invited the seconder of the motion, Councillor Catt, to address Cabinet.

Councillor Catt thanked NCAN for their report and the Cabinet Member for Housing and officers for their work and openness on the item, particularly during the Scrutiny Committee meeting. Cabinet was accepting several of the recommendations including the adoption of the Homelessness Link guidance which was considered best practice. He suggested that more information could be made available on the Council's website.

The Leader invited the petitioner to address Cabinet. Ms Serene Shibli thanked Cabinet for its response. She was pleased to see that the Council was prioritising a person-centred approach but there were concerns from agencies on SWEP activation and how this was communicated.

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the response. It had been decided to address the Scrutiny Committee recommendations, the motion and petition at the same time to bring these together. It had been useful to hear from the Clinical Lead of the Vulnerable Adults Service from the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Several of the actions from the Scrutiny Committee recommendations and the motion were already happening. She was clear that there was a distinct difference between the Winter Night Shelter and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). The Winter Night Shelter would continue to be an option during the activation of SWEP as a last resort. She clarified that the reference to the Care Assessments should be to the Care Act Assessments. The Council would continue to work with partners to make it clearer what was offered. The move away from a Winter Night Shelter was best practice as this improved safety both to users and staff. Several recommendations had been accepted by Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich commented that several of the partners had been invited to the Financial Inclusion Consortium and the matter had been discussed.

The Leader of the Council moved, and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to

- 1) Agree the responses to the Scrutiny Committee Recommendations, the petition and the motion; and
- 2) Appoint the Chair of the Audit Committee and the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to the Norwich City Services Limited Shareholder Panel.

6. A Parks and Green Spaces Strategy for Norwich – An Update

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich presented the report. She was pleased to bring the strategy forward for consultation as the strategy would bring benefits to residents and communities. Through the consultation process of the community-led plan "We are Norwich" residents had highlighted that parks and open spaces were a priority for them. Norwich had a number of parks and open spaces available to its residents and communities. Several smaller consultations had already taken place on the strategy, including a review by the Scrutiny Committee and an event held with a range of stakeholders. The recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee had been incorporated within the strategy. A number of parks in Norwich had been awarded Green Flag awards

and this would continue to be a measure of success for the service. There were other sites that needed improvements to go forward. The strategy chose to focus on sites that were most important to residents and created a strategic hierarchy. Introduced within the strategy was a framework for further policies to be developed. A key element was building on relationships with partners to help improvements in the parks and open spaces and seeking to develop relationships with funding partners. The consultation would take place in a number of ways to ensure that there would be a wide stakeholder engagement. She thanked volunteers and Friends groups who worked hard to maintain and protect Norwich's parks and open spaces.

The Cabinet Member for Housing commented that the city had a large amount of green space which was positive due to the health benefits these had for residents. It was clear that these needed to be kept accessible for residents and keep these to a high standard.

Councillor Galvin commented that it was good to see the strategy taken forward as it was clear that residents saw parks as a focus. She asked that more detail was provided how the consultation would take place and whether consideration had been given as to how young people would be consulted. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Responsive Norwich said that the challenges with engaging with young people were recognised and that an events based approach would be used. The Environment Services Manager (Delivery) said that the service was considering this had had engaged with the Young Commissioners to better consult with young people.

Councillor Wright commented that it was positive to see the strategy focussing on all green spaces and not just parks. He thanked officers and the Council for facilitating Park Runs in a number of parks across the city and that it was an example of work that could be undertaken to provide events and activities for residents.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich moved and the Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich seconded the recommendation as set out in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the draft strategy for wider stakeholder and public consultation.

7. Statement of Community Involvement 2024 – consultation version

The Leader of the Council presented the report. The Statement of Community Involvement set out the ways in which the Council would involve residents and communities in planning decisions. The document was updated every five years and since it had last been updated a number of changes had happened, both at a national and local level. There could be further changes to the document due to changes made by the Government these would be made as necessary.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services said that the Statement of Community Involvement was the document that guided how the Council would consult with residents and the community and any reviews of Development Management Policies would be addressed in a Regulation 10A Review of Development Management Policies. This review had been delayed until the Greater Norwich Local Plan had been adopted.

The Leader of the Council moved and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich seconded the recommendation

RESOLVED, unanimously, to authorise public consultation on the revised Statement of Community Involvement 2024.

8. Joining the Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd Joint Venture to provide environmental credits for nutrient neutrality mitigation – Key Decision

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report. Nutrient Neutrality had been introduced in 2022 which had highlighted the impact on waterways of a range of activities. The Council needed to balance the need to not cause further deterioration of the waterways while building homes for residents of the city. The Cabinet had previously agreed to join the Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd Joint Venture in principle subject to the completion of due diligence but had chosen not to go ahead at the time. The Council had developed its own scheme to retrofit its own stock and through this scheme had been able to produce enough mitigation to grant consent for 1000 homes. This had taken time to deliver and further mitigation was required to grant planning permission for several schemes across the city. The decision to join the Joint Venture was finely balanced but there was a need to ensure that homes could be built in Norwich and by joining the Joint Venture the City Council would be better able to influence the Joint Venture.

The Cabinet Member for Housing thanked officers for bringing this forward as there was a clear need for housing in the city. It was clear that further work would be required but this could not be done solely by Local Authorities but that other sectors would need to play their part.

In response to Councillor Wright's question the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services said that the Council would look to start grant planning permissions as soon as possible but would need to operate with a planned approach to ensure that local trades were not overwhelmed. The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services said that there would be a time delay as it would take some time for the City Council to join the Joint Venture. The Joint Venture also had a credit allocation policy so any credit allocation would be subject to this policy. Through the backlog of planning permissions there had been a clear impact on the market within Norwich and planning permissions were needed to address this.

Councillor Galvin asked why only nine schemes had been granted planning permission using the Council's own mitigation schemes and that in hindsight the Council should have considered joining. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services said that he could not comment on the decision that was made in 2022. The Council needed to be assured that concerns were addressed before joining and these had now been addressed. The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services said that the nine sites for which permission had been granted were part of the Council's priority sites for planning permission and included several individual homes that had been given planning permission.

Councillor Galvin asked what work was being undertaken to reduce the cost of interim spend. The Leader of the Council responded that there were clear issues with recruitment within the Local Government sector and significant improvements had already been made to reduce the number of interims and subsequently reduce the cost.

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services said that there was a change to the first recommendation, so that it read: “Agree to seek to join Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd (NEC Ltd) (“the Joint Venture (JV)”) (a company limited by guarantee) with other local authorities in Norfolk for the provision of environmental to address nutrient neutrality”.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services moved, and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich seconded the recommendations as amended.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Agree to seek to join Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd (NEC Ltd) (“the Joint Venture (JV)”) (a company limited by guarantee) with other local authorities in Norfolk for the provision of environmental to address nutrient neutrality.
- 2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources to determine who shall be the officer representative on the Joint Venture Directors Board for Norwich City Council.
- 3) Appoint a Councillor to become the Member Board representative for Norwich City Council.

9. Norwich City Hall Reimagined – Key Decision

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report. City Hall was a Grade II Listed building that had been the seat of Local Government since the 1930s. The building required significant maintenance and to do nothing was not an option. The Strategic Outline Case (SOC) identified a number of ways in which to bring benefits to the city using the building, including improving accessibility, providing a modern way of working and improving the environmental impact of the building. A wide range of options had been considered and the options as outlined within the SOC would be further developed within a business case. This would involve a wide stakeholder engagement as City Hall was a cherished asset to the city. The Scrutiny Committee had considered the SOC, and the Cabinet Member thanked the Scrutiny Committee for its questions.

Councillor Wright, as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee commented that the committee had had a wide ranging discussion and had come to a unanimous decision to endorse the Cabinet report.

Councillor Galvin asked for a figure of how much the Council had spent so far on consultants related to options and plans for City Hall. The Head of Property and Economic Development said that he would be able to provide this outside of the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council moved and the Cabinet Member for A Prosperous Norwich seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Endorse the Strategic Outline Case for City Hall.

- 2) Agree to progress to the next stage of development of options outlined in the report and develop a robust Outline Business Case for the project to define and increase confidence in future project delivery.
- 3) Agree the use of £750k consisting of £700k professions fees to progress to the next stage of development, and further engagement to provide a robust basis to progress the project further, with an additional £50k (7%) as a contingency, funded from the Business Change Reserve.
- 4) Delegate the award of contract for a professional team to provide the capacity and capability needed to develop the project through the RIBA stages and Five Case Model process, recommended by the HM Treasury Green Book, to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the cabinet member for an open and modern council.

10. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of items *11 to *14 (below) on the grounds that they contained exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs within Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Local Government Act 1972.

***11. Joining the Norfolk Environmental Credits Ltd Joint Venture to provide environmental credits for nutrient neutrality mitigation – Exempt appendices (Para 3)**

This item was noted under item 7 above.

***12. Norwich City Hall Reimagined – Exempt Appendix (Para 3)**

This item was noted under item 9 above.

***13. Asset Compliance Remediation Works (Paras 3 and 5) – Key Decision**

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report. He highlighted that the Council had a duty for the remediation works.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin the Head of Property and Economic Development said that several things had changed, including the requirements on the Council in terms of building safety to ensure that works were completed to the appropriate standard.

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council moved, and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Recommend to Council the adjustments to the 2024/25 and 2025/26 capital programme to fund design, legal and construction costs to deliver the remediation of works required to the property.

- 2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council to award a contract for remediation works at the property up to a value of £1.1million.

***14. Disposal of Assets (Housing) (Para 3)**

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report. The property detailed within the report was not a viable property to remain within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The proceeds of the sale would be reinvested in other stock within the HRA.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the sale of the freehold interest in the property asset listed in the report via an open market auction.

CHAIR