



Cabinet

17:30 to 18:35

17 January 2024

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Jones (vice-chair), Fulton-McAlister, Giles, Hampton, Kendrick, Kidman and Packer.

Also Present: Councillor Galvin (leader of the Green group)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public questions/ petitions

There were no public questions.

3. Questions to cabinet members

There were no questions to cabinet members from members of the council.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023.

5. Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

Councillor Stonard invited Councillor Galvin to introduce the report as a member of the scrutiny committee.

Councillor Galvin emphasised that effective scrutiny was critical within the leader cabinet model of governance and that the recommendation to introduce a protocol between the cabinet and scrutiny committee would support that. In response to her question as to whether cabinet would support the idea of joint training with scrutiny committee members, the leader of the council advised that he supported the idea in principle but that he did not want to pre-empt the outcome of the protocol.

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion referred to the recommendations in relation to the Equality Information Report 2024. In terms of information on Reducing Inequalities Target Areas (RITAs) data would be provided as fully as possible in the emerging corporate plan. In relation to the potential to measure the number of customer contacts resolved at the first point of contact. The service area would add a question into the customer survey which would provide some data on whether issues were resolved at first contact. Finally, on the question

of accessibility in parks and open spaces as part of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy an audit was to be conducted on value, and accessibility could be considered as part of this.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Support the proposal to adopt a scrutiny-executive protocol;
- 2) Include information on the performance of the RITAs against outcomes in the next EIR report;
- 3) Explore the potential of reporting the volume of customer contact resolved at the first point of contact; and
- 4) Investigate a process for evaluating the equality compliance of parks and outdoor spaces.

6. Equality Information Report 2024

(An [amendment](#) to the report, agenda page 50 was circulated before the meeting.)

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion gave a presentation, available [here](#).

Councillor Galvin referred to the diversity of the council's workforce and the significant work which had been done to increase diversity within the workforce. She noted that there had been a drop in figures recently and asked what this was due to and what had been done to investigate the decline. Councillor Giles agreed that this was an issue that should be explored and one that had been raised at scrutiny committee too. He advised that the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development had committed to respond to the question and a response would be circulated outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED to approve the publication of the annual Equality Information Report for 2024.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024/27

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion presented the report. As part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and the EDI Policy an EDI Action Plan would be developed and would set out how the council would achieve its ambitions in relation to EDI.

The leader of the council commended the EDI Strategy's excellent aspirations, noting that it was a high level document and that the action plan would show how objectives would be achieved.

Councillor Fulton-McAlister, cabinet member for regulatory services, proposed an amendment to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, to insert on agenda page 90 the second paragraph as follows:

"As well as our firm commitment to deliver our legal duty under the Act regarding these characteristics, our aspirations go further to include...and the socio-economic and health inequalities resulting from deprivation.

Norwich City Council is committed to ending the class ceiling which creates structural injustices, socio-economic barriers to ambitions, and disrespect for the value, dignity and voice of all, regardless of background and/or occupation.

All these factors can cause disadvantage around poverty, educational attainment, access to good quality jobs, health and life expectancy.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety and following a vote it was agreed.

Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety commented that EDI had to be objectives owned by all teams and she looked forward to the development of the action plan. The council were on a journey and it was acknowledged that there was work still to do.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin, Councillor Giles advised that engagement would be critical to the development of the EDI action plan and that those with lived experience would be engaged via the existing Financial Inclusion Consortium.

RESOLVED to agree the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024/27 as amended.

8. Greater Norwich Draft Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2024-2029.

Councillor Stonard, leader of the council presented the report. He advised that the recommendations related to an alteration to the way the project team were to be funded, the signing of a deed of variation to progress the establishment of the City Deal Borrowing Loans and the approval of the draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan (5YIIP) 2024-29.

He was pleased to highlight that the draft 5YIIP included funding for improvements at Sloughbottom and Eaton Parks. The proposed works at Sloughbottom Park included the provision of a 3G football pitch achieved via matching funding from the Levelling Up Fund. Upgrades to the play park, BMX track and improvements to the pavilion and infrastructure such as car park and signage. At Eaton Park the changing rooms were to be renovated, new environmental technologies introduced to drive the energy efficiency of buildings and improvements to signage and cycle storage.

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion thanked the friends of Eaton Park and the Eaton Park Community Association for their contributions.

Councillor Galvin highlighted that within the city walls there was a shortage of green spaces and those that existed were under pressure and asked if cabinet would support the allocation of spaces such as surface car parks to create green spaces. Councillor Giles referred to the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and advised that as part of that an audit of the quality of, quantity and location of parks and open spaces would be conducted and this would steer planning in relation to such matters.

RESOLVED to agree:

- (i) The approval of a new programme management fee within the draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan, to be funded from the Infrastructure Investment Fund (pooled community infrastructure levy). This will supplement the cost of the Greater Norwich Project Team who are instrumental in driving forward the provision of infrastructure across the full Greater Norwich area. The fee for 24/25 will be in the region of £115,000 and the amount for future years will be confirmed within each subsequent version of this Plan. (More details within paragraphs 10-21 of this report).
- (ii) The signing of a deed of variation to the agreement entitled 'Partner Draw down and Borrowing Authorisations' that was originally signed by all partners on 21 October 2015. This is required to progress the establishment of the already agreed City Deal Borrowing Loans Fund. (More details within paragraphs 22-32 and Appendix A of this report).

Subject to agreement of (i) and (ii)

- (iii) The approval of the draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2024-29 (see appendix B) which includes the proposed 2024/25 Annual Growth Programme (AGP) and note that approval to allocate funding for the Eaton Park project (in the 2024/25 AGP) and Sloughbottom Park (in the 2023/24 AGP) is subject to the approval of the Council's capital programme in the February budget papers. (More details within paragraphs 33-40 of this report).

9. An update on Health, Safety and Compliance in Council Homes and Buildings

(This report is contained in the supplementary agenda pack.)

Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety presented the report. The report was the culmination of a two year journey to get to this point where the council had been informed by the Regulator of Social Housing that their voluntary undertaking was being discharged. The report detailed the new internal governance arrangements which had been put in place and Councillor Jones emphasised the importance of embedding ongoing scrutiny of compliance as business as usual. The reported noted progress to date and the areas the council continued to work on.

Council Jones thanked officers for their hard work, Councillor Stonard the leader of the council echoed this sentiment and noted the good progress which had been made to date.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin the Head of Legal and Procurement advised that no resident or other party had taken legal action against the council in relation to the compliance issues.

RESOLVED to note the new internal governance arrangements set out in Section 8 following the removal of the Regulatory Notice on the 13 of December 2023.

10. Utilities Contract (key decision)

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, introduced the report. He noted with events such as the war in Ukraine, the problems in the middle east and issues with shipping in the Red Sea impacting on energy costs this contract was more important than ever. Councillor Hampton, cabinet member for climate change highlighted the climate implications of the contract, continuing to procure green energy was essential if the council were to achieve its targets in relation to carbon emissions. If the council did not procure green energy it would increase its emissions by 45%.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin the Head of Property and Economic Development confirmed the £70,000 in paragraph 23 of the report was the additional cost to the council to procure green electricity.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Agree to enter an agreement with Crown Commercial Services to enable the Council to access their framework for utilities;
- 2) To call off from the framework referred to in 1, to procure electricity from October 2024 by entering an interim contract for the period October 2024 for 6 months to March 25; and then a fixed annual contract from April 2025;
- 3) To call off from the framework referred to in 1, to procure gas and to align both electricity and gas contracts to run for a fixed 12 month term from April 2025 to March 2026; and
- 4) Agree to continue procuring green electricity as part of the above arrangement.

11. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review Report 2023/24

(This report is contained in the supplementary agenda pack.)

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. He advised that the report highlighted that the council were adhering to its Treasury Management Strategy and Policy and that the report had been endorsed by Treasury Management Committee on [20 November 2023](#).

He advised that the council operated within the new CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. These Codes placed a responsibility on members to review and scrutinise treasury management policy and activity against prudential indicators. The report set out a range of indicators and highlighted that there were no breaches to alert members to.

He noted that since the start of 2023 The Bank of England had raised the base interest rate from 4% to 5.25%. The base rate of 5.25% had now been held since early August. However, whilst the headline inflation rate continued to fall it was still double the 2% Bank of England target rate.

The council remained significantly internally borrowed and cash balances available for investment would continue to enable the council to maximise its returns in the current high interest rate environment. As set out in the treasury management strategy, priorities for the investment of the council's day to day cash balances were to safeguard security, ensure that liquidity was maintained and then to achieve yield.

The council's Treasury Management activity continued to be monitored against the wider economic backdrop in accordance with Link Asset Services and the council's Treasury Management Strategy.

He was pleased to commend the recommendations to members for approval at council.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin the Interim Chief Finance Officer advised that most of the treasury management investments were short term and therefore net present value did not apply. He was not aware of a carbon measure but as most investments were in cash day to day they did not have an impact. The only exception to this was money market funds which had a clear Environmental, Social and Governance framework applied to them.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the contents of the report and in particular the treasury management activity undertaken in the first six months of the 2023/24 financial year;
- 2) propose that this report be considered and agreed by Council.

12. Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Change 2023-24

(This report is contained in the supplementary agenda pack.)

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. He advised that the report detailed the proposed change to the council's approach to charging a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) in accordance with statutory guidance which was designed to ensure that resources were available to meet the repayment of borrowing.

The report had been endorsed by Treasury Management Committee on [20 November 2023](#).

The council's Treasury Management advisors had completed a review of the MRP Policy, considered technical and regulatory guidance and identified prudent policy charges to adopt to meet the requirement to charge a MRP and reduce the financial impact on the medium-term financial plan. He commended the revised policy for endorsement and recommendation to council for adoption.

RESOLVED to recommend to council for adoption the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Change 2023-24 as detailed in the report.

13. Draft Treasury Management Strategy

The chair advised that this item would now be considered at the cabinet meeting on 7 February 2024 as part of the budget papers.

RESOLVED to defer consideration of the draft Treasury Management Strategy to the cabinet meeting on 7 February 2024.

14. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of item *15 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

15. Managing Assets (Housing) (Key Decision) (Para 3)

Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety presented the report. She advised that a number of sites were considered in order to identify those which were most appropriate and that ward councillors had been consulted in relation to sites detailed in the report. She considered it was a priority for the council to use its right to buy receipts to get new homes built and commended the recommendation for approval.

RESOLVED to approve the disposal of the named sites to the housing associations identified, in order to enable new affordable housing for the city.

CHAIR