

Cabinet

17:35 to 19:20

Wednesday, 17 July 2024

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

Apologies: None

In attendance: Councillor Schmierer (on behalf of the Green Group)
Councillor Lubbock (on behalf of the Liberal Democrat)

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

2. Public Questions and Petitions

One public question had been received from Dr Sarah Eglington. Dr Eglington asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“Will the Cabinet write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ‘Call In’ the Norwich Western Link planning application and hold a planning inquiry for her determination?”

Councillor Stonard, the Leader of the Council, responded:

“Thank you for your question. I can add little to the answer I gave to Councillor Fox last night at our Council meeting which was:

‘The proposed Norwich Western Link Road, although entirely outside of our administrative area, is a very significant strategic road scheme that will have long term impacts on transport in the City and County. With the submission of the planning application, it has reached an important stage and it is important that this Council considers its response carefully.

It is intended to prepare a report to Cabinet for 11 September for this response to be agreed. Officers are engaging with staff at the County Council to ensure that flexibility in the timetable will be allowed to enable us to undertake this proper consideration.

Until Cabinet has been able to consider relevant information and reaches a decision on the proposed response to the consultation our position on the scheme remains as set out in January 2022 when it was resolved not to support either the Transport for Norwich Strategy or the Western Link project contained within it.”

In response to Dr Eglington’s supplementary question the Executive Director of Development and City Services confirmed there were ongoing discussions with Norfolk County Council about the timing of the City Council’s response to the planning application in respect of the Norwich Western Link.

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 6 March 2024.

5. Progress on Motion 12(c), approved at Council on 30 January 2024

The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich presented the report, which provided an update on the work in bringing forward a Norwich Affordable Financial Services Strategy as agreed through the above motion ‘It costs more to be poor: tackling the poverty premium in Norwich’.

The work to date was over a number of workstreams, which were gathering evidence of need, mapping the existing provision (locally and nationally), the work of other local authorities and public sector bodies; and the resources required to deliver both the feasibility study and the strategy itself.

The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich highlighted the progress that had been made against each of these workstreams, which would enable the production of a feasibility study to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration. A range of partners and evidence sources had been used to better understand both the evidence of need and existing provision within Norwich and nationally. The feasibility study would progress alongside the business planning elements of the Council’s community-led plan “We are Norwich” and would also form a major part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan, due to be considered by Cabinet in December 2024.

Councillor Schmierer thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and said the Green Group was supportive of the work and pleased to see progress on this item. He asked whether consideration had been given to the impact of poverty on the health inequalities faced in the city. The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich said that the LGA report on the programme highlighted the impact of poverty on health inequalities and other academic research also highlighted this. He confirmed that the next steps were to identify the resources required and would form part of the business planning for the community-led plan “We are Norwich” and EDI Action Plan.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Note the work undertaken so far towards the preparation of a feasibility study for the development of a Norwich Affordable Financial Services Strategy; and
- 2) agree that this feasibility study be progressed in parallel with the business planning elements of the Council's community-led plan "We are Norwich", particularly the "Fairer Norwich" priority, with the study being considered by Cabinet at a future date when the business plan had been fully developed.

6. Norwich City Council, Control of Alcohol Public Space Protection Order – Key Decision

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report and said that there had been a previous Control of Alcohol PSPO for a number of years, which covered a smaller area of the city. Following a consultation and examination of hotspot areas of antisocial behaviour, this had demonstrated that there was a need to cover the entire city. The experience of the Vehicular Antisocial Behaviour PSPO had also shown that a wider area made the PSPO easier to manage. The Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Norfolk were supportive of the PSPO. The PSPO would provide an escalation model which could lead to Fixed Penalty Notices being issued by the City Council.

The Leader of the Council commented that the PSPOs for smaller areas could lead to the issues being pushed into areas of the city which did not have a PSPO in place. Therefore, it seemed sensible for the Control of Alcohol PSPO to cover the entire city.

Councillor Lubbock highlighted the distress that alcohol related antisocial behaviour caused residents and asked what practical steps residents should take if they were subjected to or witnessed alcohol-related antisocial behaviour. The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that residents should continue to report such behaviour to Norfolk Police. The PSPO would offer Norfolk Police another tool to deal with alcohol related antisocial behaviour.

In response to Councillor Schmierer's question, the Cabinet Member for Housing said that banning super-strength alcohol would not solve the issue of alcohol-related antisocial behaviour as there was a range of factors that led to this. It formed part of a larger issue, which was determined by the lack of access to services for individuals.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

- 1) The Control of Alcohol Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) be made for the period of three years to May 2027; and
- 2) The boundary of the PSPO be extended to cover the whole Norwich City district.

7. Corporate Performance Report for 2023-24

The Leader of the Council presented the report, which measured the Council's performance against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the previous Corporate Plan. Performance from April 2024 would be measured against the community-led plan "We are Norwich", adopted in March 2024. Overall, the Council's performance was steady, and improvements had been made in several areas, which included complaints that had been responded to within the target timescales; the number of private sector homes that had been made safe and the number of affordable homes that had been built. The re-let times

of council homes, the number of new homes built within the city and the number of private homes insulated were some of the areas, which were below target and which the Council was intervening in.

The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich congratulated the Council's Benefits Team as the service continued to meet its targets for the processing of new Housing Benefit claims.

In response to Councillor Lubbock's question, the Cabinet Member for Housing said that she was closely monitoring the re-let times of council homes. This was on a positive trajectory and there were several factors that lengthened the void turnaround times, which included a number of properties, which had been occupied for a long period and previous occupants may have refused upgrades to the property, which required larger works when the property was handed back to the Council before it could be re-let. The performance was being measured monthly and the time could fluctuate depending on the properties and the scale of the works required.

Councillor Schmierer asked what improvements were being made to address the number of households living in temporary accommodation. The Cabinet Member for Housing said that in comparison to other local authorities Norwich City Council had fewer households living in temporary accommodation. There had been an increase in demand for these services due to a range of factors, which included increased presentation of homelessness and the increased speed of the asylum seeker process. It was recognised that there would always be a need for temporary accommodation as the Council needed to respond to need at the point of presentation. The current challenge was that adequate temporary accommodation was under demand from other public sector services not under the City Council's control.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to review the progress of the corporate plan priorities and key performance indicators for 2023-2024.

8. 2023-24 Provisional Outturn

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report and highlighted the underspends for both the revenue and capital funds, which had been transferred to earmarked reserves. The current reserves continued to be above the prudent minimum level, which demonstrated the careful management of the Council's finances in a challenging financial market for local authorities.

The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich commented that the staff at the Norman Centre be congratulated for increasing the number of memberships and income generated for the Centre. Some rental income had been lost as an agreement had been reached with Norfolk County Council that it would pay only the service charges for the provision of the nursery at the Centre.

The Cabinet Member for Housing responded to Councillor Schmierer's question to confirm that the programme of works in the HRA to install fire doors was ongoing and that the delays to this programme had been due to due diligence on the quality of the doors to be fitted. She wanted to be assured that the doors fitted were of the highest standard and that the contractor was using staff that had been appropriately trained to fit these doors. A programme of works had been developed and was currently being implemented.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Note the provisional £4.22m underspend on the General Fund revenue account and the £0.32m underspend on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA);
- 2) Note the provisional underspend against the General Fund and £8.09m underspend against the HRA capital programmes;
- 3) Note the consequential General Fund and HRA balances;
- 4) Note the transfers to earmarked reserves;
- 5) Delegate to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council, the approval of carry forwards of unspent 2023/24 capital budgets into the 2024/25 Capital Programme; and
- 6) Approve adjustments to the 2024/25 General Fund capital programme to enable external funding to be utilised for projects.

9. 2023-24 Quarter 4 – Risk Register

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report, which detailed the risk register as at the end of Quarter 4 2023/24. There had been no significant changes in the residual risk scores and the Council's risk continued to be high due to the economic situation and other factors.

Councillor Lubbock asked for clarification why Risk CORP27 – Failure to deliver acceptable levels of performance in the management of HMO licences, had worsened. The Executive Director of Development and City Services said that this did not reflect the Council's current performance but was from the period ending 31 March 2024. The Council had been made aware of the extent of the backlog for processing applications, and that some of this had been due to COVID. The backlog was currently being addressed and applications was being dealt with.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to note the identified risks and the direction of travel.

10. Gender Pay Gap Report 2023

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report, which was a statutory requirement for the Council to publish and provided a snapshot of the Council's gender pay gap. The report published in March 2024 showed the snapshot date of 31 March 2023, which showed no gender pay gap when measuring the median income. This measure was generally considered as the most accurate measure of the gender pay gap as it was not skewed by particularly high or low pay. There was a small gender pay gap when considering the mean pay. He highlighted that the report for the snapshot data of 31 March 2024 would also show the ethnicity and disability pay gap.

In response to Councillor Schmierer's question, the Chief Executive said she would need to confirm with the relevant officer of whether gender pay gap for ancillary companies could be identified. She also confirmed the commitment to look at measures to increase the number of leavers completing exit questionnaires.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to note:

- 1) The results outlined in Appendix 1 to the report;
- 2) The intention to report on ethnicity and disability pay gap in addition to gender pay gap from the snapshot date of 31 March 2024; and
- 3) That reporting on the Government and Council websites was completed in March 2024 to meet the statutory deadline.

11. Norwich City Council Productivity Plan

The Leader of the Council presented the report. The Council had been requested to submit a Productivity Plan by the previous Government and this report fulfilled the requirement. It was not yet clear whether the new Government would continue to require the Productivity Plan.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to endorse the Norwich City Council Productivity Plan.

12. Scrutiny Committee Recommendations to Cabinet

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council introduced the report.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich provided responses to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations as both topics were in her portfolio.

The review of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy recommendations would be addressed and incorporated into the Strategy when it was brought back to Cabinet. This area was a priority for residents as had been highlighted through consultations as part of the community-led plan "We are Norwich" and she was pleased to confirm that Kett's Heights, Jenny Lind Park, Heigham Park, Mousehold Heath, Waterloo Park and Eaton Park had received the Green Flag award.

The Scrutiny Committee had considered fly tipping within Norwich a number of times, which included a review of the Love Norwich programme. Progress had been made in a number of areas, which included the increased use of enforcement around fly tipping but there was more work that could be done.

She addressed each of the recommendations in turn and a detailed response to each recommendation is available on the Council's website [here](#). Cabinet was happy to adopt the recommendations, in principle, but a number of recommendations were being addressed through other means.

In response to a request by Councillor Schmierer, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for A Climate Responsive Norwich confirmed that a detailed written response would be provided to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

- 1) Ward Councillors be consulted in future on the locations of CCTV cameras used in their wards;

- 2) A Clean Streets dashboard be provided to members to allow them to monitor performance in relation to environmental services;
- 3) Ways in which residents could be consulted at an earlier stage where the installation of new bins were required, be explored;
- 4) Officers continue to explore ways to combat litter by working with local businesses to provide litter picking in areas where litter was generated by that business;
- 5) Officers continue to explore best practice for waste management and recycling in the UK and explore how learnings from abroad could be incorporated;
- 6) The results of community organisation led waste amnesties continue to be supported and investigated with a view to exploring whether a Council-run pilot could be considered while ensuring it offered value for money;
- 7) Cabinet note that evidence had been provided to the Scrutiny Committee during the meeting on how target locations had been selected
- 8) Cabinet note the report to the Scrutiny Committee had provided a breakdown of the £100,000 Love Norwich Scheme funding;
- 9) Cabinet note that the Clean Streets dashboard would provide information as to how well the Council had performed against its targets;
- 10) Cabinet note that a wider piece of work would explore ways in which the Council communicated with residents in creative ways; and
- 11) Officers continue to liaise with the Community Pay Back Scheme to arrange clean ups in areas that required it regularly but were more difficult to reach.

13. Complaints Performance and Service Improvement

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report, which covered two reports that the Council was required to publish in line with new requirements. The Tenant Satisfaction Measures were a new regulatory requirement under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report was a statutory requirement under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Norwich City Council had published both results by the deadline of 30 June 2024, but due to the General Election and the associated rules around the pre-election period had not been able to provide a response from Cabinet. The requirements for both had been provided late, which had made it challenging to produce and publish the reports. She highlighted that a lot of work was ongoing to understand the results within both reports as it provided information that would help guide an improvement plan for services. In comparison to other local authorities that had a similar level of housing stock a number had not published their results on time or only published part of their results.

The report highlighted the improvements that had been made regarding dealing with compliance of health and safety checks in Council homes and tenants' perception of the safety of Norwich City Council homes but highlighted other areas for improvement, which included handling of complaints. The reports would be published on an annual basis.

A number of areas were already on an improvement pathway. The Council, when it had published the report, was compliant in 63 out of 72 areas and following the meeting would become compliant in another two areas bringing the compliance rate to 90%. The data measured provided a better understanding of tenants' experiences; how to address areas for improvement and aided the Council's transparency as a landlord.

In response to Councillor Schmierer's question, the Cabinet Member for Housing addressed a number of areas where the Council had low scores of tenant satisfaction. This included the cleanliness of communal areas where the Council was trialling approaches and looking at the responses from residents. In terms of dealing with antisocial behaviour she considered that the Council had improved significantly but it was likely that some of the issues reported were being treated as antisocial behaviour but did not meet the criteria of antisocial behaviour and therefore no further action was taken. Improvements were needed to better communicate this with residents. She acknowledged that the Tenant Engagement Panel was not fully representative of tenants and creative ways were being explored to engage with residents in new ways to work with them. Councillor Lubbock commented that she welcomed the steps the Council was taking to address areas of improvement.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Note the results of the first set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures;
- 2) Note the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report; and
- 3) Respond to the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report.

14. Norwich Unity Hub, Carrow House – Key Decision

(This item was contained in the second supplementary agenda)

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report and said that this was an innovative use of one of the Council's assets to deliver for the residents of Norwich. Carrow House had been purchased by the City Council as part of the wider East Norwich redevelopment, which would take time to be fully realised and this provided a short-term use of the asset. Norwich Unity Hub was a charity that had members from the voluntary, community and cultural sectors in Norwich. This created a space for these charities and the estimated social value of providing this space was £2.3m. The creation of this space was an example of the Council working in partnership with other organisations to use assets in beneficial ways.

The Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich commented that this delivered against the "A Fairer Norwich" corporate aim within the community-led plan "We are Norwich". It would boost residents' well-being where they belonged to a range of groups as it provided improved access to residents to services. Norwich Unity Hub was committed to annual monitoring, which would be reported to Norwich City Council and the social value of the site would form the basis for measuring the performance. Data would also be collected on where residents who accessed the services were located. The terms within the lease were restricted on who would be eligible for the subsidised rate and this was based on both the organisation's turnover and that the services provided must primarily be to Norwich Residents. An application for Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) had been made to help fund a project manager to enable delivery and capital works to Carrow

House. The NCIL Board had recommended that NCIL was awarded, and the bid had scored 90.6% against its criteria. The Cabinet Member for A Prosperous Norwich commented that the project also provided the additional benefit of co-location for the organisations involved, which could enable skill sharing.

Councillor Lubbock and Councillor Schmierer added their support to the initiative.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Approve the grant of a lease of Carrow House, King Street, Norwich as per the terms outlined in the exempt appendix; and
- 2) Approve the NCIL funding to be awarded to Norwich Unity Hub to deliver this project.

15. Potential Acquisition of Land – Anglia Square – Key Decision

(This item was contained in the first supplementary agenda).

The Leader of the Council presented the report and highlighted that Anglia Square was the most significant redevelopment project in Norwich and that, as yet, redevelopment of the site had not come forward due to a number of reasons, which included the cost of demolition of the existing buildings. There had been a cross-party motion passed unanimously by Full Council the previous evening (16 July 2024), which set out the Council's vision for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site, which kept the existing community as a key stakeholder. There was a need for homes and jobs within the area and the loss of the scheme approved in July 2023 had meant a significant loss of homes. The concern was with the sale of the site by the landowner that this would be sold and parcelled up by a developer for use as car parking. The Council was working with partners on strategic ways to redevelop the site. The options available to the Council had been considered and it was deemed that the option that would most likely secure the necessary redevelopment of the site then purchase of the site was the preferred option. The cost of purchasing the site and redeveloping would require significant Government funding and the Council was positively engaged in discussions with Homes England. The Council was engaging with the landowner to pause the sale to allow the Council to conduct the necessary due diligence before making an expression of interest. He highlighted that the decision taken was not a commitment to purchase the site.

In response to Councillor Schmierer's question, the Interim Executive Director of Major Projects highlighted his experience of delivering large development projects for public sector bodies such as the redevelopment of Wembley Stadium and working in areas in East London. The Council was working with partners to facilitate the developments as there was recognition that expertise in this area was needed, this included local partners who were able to provide the local context to these sites. The Interim Executive Director of Major Projects highlighted that it was important to protect the Council's interests while ensuring that development was done in the right way for Norwich.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Note the work to date on the project detailed in the report and endorse the work activities identified to take the project forward; and

- 2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director with responsibility for non-housing assets, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council, to enter into discussions and negotiation with the landowner with a view to make an expression of interest for the potential acquisition of the site, subject to due diligence and full business case approval.

16. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of items *17 to *20 (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.

***17. 2023-24 Quarter 4 – Risk Register – Exempt Appendix (Para 3)**

This item was noted under item 9 above.

***18. Norwich Unity Hub, Carrow House – Exempt Appendix (Para 3)**

This item was noted under item 14 above.

***19. Potential Acquisition of land – Key Decision (Para 3)**

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council presented the report and highlighted the complex history of the site. The Interim Executive Director of Major Projects highlighted that the Council faced significant liabilities on the existing site. It was positively engaged with a range of stakeholders and alternative sites were being pursued and the appropriate due diligence on each of these sites would be taken. The Council was also engaging with the Members of Parliament for the Norfolk constituencies to ensure that if a Private Bill was brought forward, subject to Full Council agreement, it could demonstrate support from the local MPs.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

- 1) Note the work to date on the project detailed in the report and endorse the work activities identified to take the project forward;
- 2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director with responsibility for non-housing assets, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council, to enter into negotiation with the Developer of the existing site, with a view to agreeing a premium, as detailed in paragraph 22 of the report, for the Council obtaining vacant possession; and
- 3) Delegate authority to the Executive Director with responsibility for non-housing assets, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council, to enter into negotiation with the landowner with a view to making a conditional offer for the acquisition of the land up to £5m, subject to the conditions outlined in paragraph 21 of the report.

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

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report and highlighted that the properties listed within the report were not a realistic prospect for these to remain in the HRA due to the significant works required. The proceeds of the sales would be reinvested in other stock within the HRA.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the disposal of the freehold interest in the property assets of the two properties referred to in the report.

CHAIR