



Cabinet

16:30 to 18:20

9 September 2020

Present: Councillors Waters (chair), Harris (vice chair), Jones, Kendrick, Maguire, Packer and Stonard.

Apologies Councillors Davis and Wright

Also present: Councillor Bogelein

1. Public Questions/Petitions

One public question had been received.

Abigail Murray and Fiona Leggo asked the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment the following question:

“As a resident of Rosary Road we have for some years suffered anti social behaviour from the street prostitutes. Even during these times of Covid we are still experiencing regular disturbances. We are frequently woken up by shouting and screaming all night long. Neighbours and friends are harassed on the street and while parking their cars by the prostitutes soliciting them. We often find used condoms and needles in the area. We have also reported human faeces in Old Library Wood and in our back alley.

These local problems are documented in emails to councillors and the police and have been raised at SNAP meetings as well as by this council’s scrutiny committee, which previously referred the matter to the cabinet. I have also reported them via the city council website and to the police.

We are aware that a PSPO renewal is required in autumn 2020 and that this renewal offers a good opportunity for the area covered by a PSPO to be extended and for additional types of anti-social behaviour to be covered. We would like the areas around Rosary Road, Old Library Wood, King Street and Mousehold Street to be covered by PSPOs focusing on street prostitution and kerb crawlers. We know that this PSPO extension is supported by the Thorpe Hamlet ward councillors - and we thank them for their help so far. Other councillors who have attended SNAP meetings at which a PSPO extension has been discussed will also be aware of the strength of feeling from residents on this subject. The police also appear to have shown some support for the idea.

Recommendations from the scrutiny committee were discussed at the cabinet meeting on 11 March 2020 where senior officers said that PSPOs could be ‘useful’ and ‘effective’. We were disappointed not to receive further support at that time.

We are sure that cabinet members must be just as keen as we are to eliminate this type of anti- social behaviour, and, therefore, we ask for a commitment to supporting PSPOs in the east of Norwich to help combat these activities which make life so difficult for residents.”

Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment, gave the following reply:

“Thank you for your question Ms Murray and Ms Leggo. This comes at a most apposite time when everyone of us is reviewing our safety in the climate of the pandemic.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to advise and explain the action which the council has taken and the proposals to renewal of the existing PSPOs which are currently being reviewed.

The public space protection orders which are currently being reviewed are for the management of dog fouling across the city and the management of alcohol and associated anti-social behaviour in the city centre.

The council has been working with the police to address the matters which you raise and part of this is using the existing legal powers available to the police and the council to address and prevent anti-social behaviour.

The supporting evidence provided by the police for the management of alcohol and associated anti-social behaviour is being reviewed together with any other areas that should be considered. Any designation of a PSPO requires a clear pattern of evidence and for it to be seen to be proportionate for the issue it is setting out to resolve.

The issue of street sex working is complex and any additional enforcement powers deployed does require a response to help support those street sex workers out of the business otherwise it risks displacing the issue rather than resolving it through an enforcement approach alone. The reference to a PSPO targeting kerb crawlers would I believe create the same issue and my understanding is that this has been used in the London Borough of Redbridge, and officers are keeping an eye on what it is achieving.

Most of what I believe is undertaken in Redbridge is to engage with kerb crawlers to explain why they are there and what the consequence of engaging with prostitutes will be, issuing fixed penalty notices, and engaging the women involved in prostitution to encourage exit.

Redbridge does appear to have an outreach support service which is not available in Norwich, which in Norfolk would be a service commissioned by Norfolk county council as a public health function.

Discussions with the constabulary at a senior level is that any further enforcement requires at the same time, a solution focussed on supporting the women. At this time they do not support a PSPO focussing on street sex working.

It is important to note that the police already have a variety of powers to deal with kerb crawling as a criminal matter and adding a PSPO for tackling kerb crawling I don't believe adds anything to resolve the problems in itself.

This year officers have discussed in detail the scope of a new PSPO and the addition of extra powers which may assist the police in managing anti-social behaviour.

It is important though, that the solutions include the necessary encouragement and support to change the sex workers lifestyle, and although this work takes time it has been shown to have been successful in addressing the problems that arise.

Dealing with the issue does require a multi-agency response covering drug and alcohol services, housing, probation, and policing. I have, therefore, asked officers to take forward conversations with partners to seek a solution or solutions to the issues you are experiencing which are a result of street sex working."

By way of a supplementary question, Abigail Murray asked whether with the behaviour of a small number of individuals having such a detrimental effect on people's lives, would the cabinet member agree that a PSPO would be a proportionate measure to tackle the problem and what additional help could the council give to residents.

Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment said that the council would be guided by evidence, the police and other partners around the issue. The activities were criminal activities and the police had additional powers around this which were used and the council would work with them. Local government had around a forty percent funding cut over the last ten years. The city council had statutory responsibilities but did more than just these as it was driven by public safety. The question should also be posed to a number of agencies of which the city council was only one.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020.

4. Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-25

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing presented the report.

The council had always worked hard on prevention of homelessness and this work had started in 2018 with the creation of the Greater Norwich Homelessness Forum, which worked with a variety of stakeholders. For a number of years, the council had produced a Rough Sleeping Strategy to give ownership of the work around this in the city. Agencies working together to support people could help residents to take control of their circumstances.

She highlighted the four priorities in the strategy along with the detailed actions which sat under each of them. The strategy predicted a likely increase in homelessness due to a wide range of factors and it was important that the document stayed relevant. The strategy would be reviewed annually by each of the Greater Norwich councils and would be published online.

Members thanks the officers involved for their work on the strategy.

The head of neighbourhood housing said that the list of partners showed the amount of work being done to produce the outcomes needed. He invited members to see the preventative work being undertaken by officers.

Councillor Bogelein asked if the council had volunteered to be part of a random control trial by the University of Cardiff and the Centre for Homelessness Impact. The head of neighbourhood housing said that he was not aware that the council had volunteered but he would look into it and see if it was something the council would want to do.

RESOLVED to approve the new Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-25

5. Non-commercial debt policy

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. He said that the council had a duty to be considerate to those residents in financial difficulties.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, highlighted the work of the council's money advisors who made a real difference to council tenants. The sixty day 'breathing space' was welcomed as well as the section in the policy on vulnerable people. She said that when officers were looking at debts, they worked across the council to ensure a consistent and fair approach.

The financial inclusion officer thanked colleague from across the council for their involvement in shaping the policy and highlighted the inclusion of the standard financial statement, the section on vulnerable residents and the 'breathing space'.

Councillor Bogelein said that the scrutiny committee had asked for an easy read sheet to be included in letters to those in debt to improve communication, and asked what progress had been made on this. The financial inclusion officer said that work was being undertaken around rent statements to simplify the information and the communications team had been involved in work on letters from the revenue and benefits teams to simplify these. The director of strategy, communications and culture added that work had been done with the UEA on the phrasing of corporate letters.

RESOLVED to approve the revised non-commercial debt policy.

6. Quarter one Corporate Performance Report for 2020-21

Councillor Waters, leader of the council presented the report. The new dashboard showed council performance against the three corporate priorities. He highlighted the new format for the data which could be accessed online by both councillors and

members of the public. He gave an overview of the measures within the report and reminded members that some of the work around these measures had been impacted by the covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Maguire referred to the residual waste and recycling collections measure and said that partners had been fantastic in keeping service levels up during the lockdown period. There would need to be work on individual behaviours in order to have a positive impact on those measures.

The senior strategy officer said that the new dashboard should be more interactive and encouraged feedback on the new format. Some older data was still being loaded into the software so it was still in the process of being updated.

The chief executive said that the new way of presenting the data was much clearer. He gave assurances to members that there was a focus on performance measures at officer level and he wanted to drill down into some of these. Service reviews were being undertaken and performance data would form part of these reviews.

Councillor Bogelein referred to the Green Homes Grant and asked if the council would promote this or benefit from the delivery scheme. Councillor Waters, leader of the council, agreed to find out the information and forward this to Councillor Bogelein.

RESOLVED to note the quarter one corporate performance report for 2020-21

7. Quarter one revenue and capital budget monitoring 2020-21

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources presented the report. He said that an overspend of £1.3 million was forecast due to the financial pressures of the covid-19 pandemic and these financial pressures would remain as the pandemic continued. A review of the capital programme would be undertaken to assess the impact of covid-19 on individual projects.

Councillor Bogelein asked what work was being undertaken to assess the viability of commercial investments, including the airport industrial estate. The interim chief finance and section 151 officer said that there was a lot of work on active management of the council's portfolio and the council was being proactive in communicating with tenants to understand their position.

The chief executive said that there was a huge amount of work being done with commercial tenants. When the council invested in a commercial asset, a contingency was set aside to guard against risk.

The director of place said that a wider review of the council's Commercial Property Investment Strategy was planned as part of the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. Regarding the airport industrial estate, work had started with colleagues at Norfolk County Council to consider the asset.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the forecast outturn for 2020-21 for the General Fund, HRA and capital programme; and

- 2) note the consequential balance of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account balances.

8. Treasury management full year review 2019-20

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

Councillor Bogelein asked what impact covid-19 would have on the affordability ratio going forward, in particular for the HRA. The interim chief finance and section 151 officer said whilst there might be a short term drop in income, the HRA was assessed through the 60 year business plan and over those timescales there would not be an impact on the affordability of the borrowing it held.

RESOLVED to -:

- 1) Approve the treasury management policy statement; and
- 2) Recommend that council note the report and the treasury activity for the year to 31 March 2020.

9. Write off of non-recoverable national non-domestic rate debts.

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. The council worked to recover debts but it was not always possible.

RESOLVED to approve the write off of £86,488.87 of non-recoverable national non-domestic rate debt which is now believed to be irrecoverable and is covered within the bad debt provision for 2020-21.

10. The award of contract for the IDOX (uniform system) – Key Decision

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources presented the report. The system would be reviewed under a wider review of IT systems.

RESOLVED to award a 3 year contract to enable uninterrupted services for planning, licensing, environmental health and the Norwich Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG).

11. To award a contract for gas servicing and repairs to housing heating systems

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing presented the report. She highlighted the cost implications and it was noted that this would include a saving on current rates. The award of the contract would go to a Norwich based firm and would ensure continuity in the delivery of the service.

RESOLVED to award the contract for the housing heating systems servicing and repairs to Gasway Services Ltd.

12. City council leisure provision – Key decision

Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing presented the report. Residents had been accessing parks for health benefits during the lockdown but had missed using the leisure centre. The centre offered health and wellbeing benefits and also employed around seventy staff.

The director of strategy, communications and culture said that other councils around the country were in a similar position and Norwich City Council had been liaising with these authorities.

RESOLVED to pay Places Leisure negotiated costs associated with the enforced closure of Riverside Leisure Centre and estimated recovery costs in this financial year, subject to an open book reconciliation.

13. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items *14 to *16 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***14. City council leisure provision – exempt appendix – Key decision (para 3)**

RESOLVED to note the exempt appendix.

***15. Norwich provision market – Key decision (para 3)**

Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing presented the report. Officers and the local MP had been in regular contact with the market traders. The option outlined in the report was the most appropriate for the current situation.

RESOLVED to approve the financial support to traders at Norwich Market as outlined in the report.

***16. Senior management structure (para 4)**

(The council's corporate leadership team and the monitoring officer left the meeting for this item).

Councillor Waters, leader of the council presented the report.

Following discussion it was:-

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations as set out in the report.

.CHAIR