

CABINET**17:30 to 18:55****9 September 2015**

Present: Councillors Waters (chair), Harris (vice chair), Bremner, Driver, Kendrick, Stonard and Thomas (Va)

Also present: Councillors Boswell and Wright

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS / PETITIONS

Two public questions were received.

The first question was from Mr Simon Crawford:

“Over the years the cleanliness and upkeep of the communal areas of the block 6 to 12 Clifton Close, has always been a chore that both of me and my partner have been willing to do as other residents have not been interested or bothered with this area. I consider that a clean presentable entrance, stairs and landing makes it pleasant for all that live there and gives assurance that the area isn’t looking depressed. I have paid for cleaning products and spent our time, usually once every two months cleaning the block from top to bottom . However, after maintaining this job for such a long time I decided to approach the council to seek support by requesting advice on how to involve other residents in this maintenance chore.

After many calls to the council over a period of 18 months or so asking to discuss the matter and requesting that a simple and formal solution be found, for example, a general letter asking residents to keep the areas clean as it part of the agreement, the response from the council was this solution of sending a letter to residents would not be an option as the council cannot make people keep communal areas clean if they do not want to. No other solution was forthcoming about maintaining cleanliness. From this response I sent a letter to in reply, pointing out that both of us had been keeping the blocks communal area clean for the council that they might like to pay us for doing the job and we submitted a back dated invoice. This was of course ignored.

The problem is that if we don’t keep this area clean then no one else will and without a prompt from the landlord this matter isn’t going to cross anyone’s mind, even when stepping over me when I am cleaning outside a resident’s door. Since we have had no support from the Council regarding our efforts to maintain the communal areas of the block we have now decided not to continue a cleaning routine anymore, other than our area immediately outside our door to ensure that we are upholding our

leasehold agreement. Since ceasing the cleaning routine the remaining area is now dirty and unkempt.

From the above information supplied we would like to ask the Cabinet the following question: as the Council is landlord, why it is powerless or reluctant to request that the terms and conditions of tenancy and lease be upheld when it comes to communal area cleanliness, and if it is not willing to enforce the terms and conditions is it considering putting forward a solution to this cleanliness problem, for example, contracting a cleaning company to clean the communal areas bi-monthly and the cost to then passed on to the residents via rent and annual leasehold bill?"

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and well-being, gave the following reply:

"Unfortunately, Clifton Close does not benefit (or pay) for a cleaning service for the communal area.

Tenants and leaseholders are required to keep the communal area clean as part of their tenancy/lease and the council will write to the flats concerned to remind them of their responsibility.

Whilst keeping the areas clean is required as part of the tenancy – it can be subjective regarding the level of cleanliness. There must be a nuisance for the council to take enforcement action or serve notice of seek possession, which would then be subject to a decision by the Courts.

The council will continue to work with tenants and leaseholders to try and ensure the areas are safe and clean and will take action if there is a nuisance.

In addition, the council can consult with the tenants and leaseholders regarding introducing a cleaning service for the block. However, it should be noted that introducing a cleaning service will incur additional service charges for each household and the council will require formal consent/variations to leases from all parties in order to proceed."

Mr Crawford asked the following supplementary question:

"Why was I told that letters could not be sent out to residents when it had just been confirmed that they can?"

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and well-being, gave the following reply:

"I cannot comment on this, however, I can confirm that letters will be sent to residents of the block to gauge support for a cleaning service. Action will begin on this."

The second public question was from Ms Jane Watkin:

"Until recently (that is as far as we are aware) furniture other than the garden variety was never allowed to be left in Council residents gardens. Over the years, I have

been told by several housing officers that it was fly-tipping and had to be removed by the resident at their own cost. After looking at large easy chairs for several weeks that had been placed in the front gardens of two council tenanted flats I decided to call the council to ask if he had asked the tenants to remove the furniture. I was informed that a decision had been made by the Council to allow these large chairs in the tenants garden's as garden seating if the furniture was placed in a way that didn't look like the chairs had been dumped, for example in areas under front room windows, which both chairs are located.

I was then informed that the Council cannot tell residents what to put in their gardens. I was very surprised at this, not just because I was informed that this was fly -tipping and against the rules of tenancy, but because the Council had been on a mission for several months hand delivering letters to residents asking for the removal of any items from communal areas under the Council's health and safety policy and procedure. Surely old sofas and chairs which could be stuffed with fire igniting chemicals that have been placed directly under windows would be a fire hazard and a health and safety issue for the whole block if ignited through carelessness or arson?

From the above information supplied I would like to ask the Cabinet why the decision has been made to allow living room furniture i.e. easy chairs in resident's gardens when there has to be an issue of fly-tipping and health and fire safety, plus the lowering of council standards in an area (Mancroft Ward) that is classified deprived which old furniture dumped in gardens of course worsens its deprived label?"

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and well-being, gave the following reply:

"Whilst tenant's gardens are their own private space, the council aims to work with tenants regarding the maintenance and tidiness of garden space and does not wish to see unsuitable items left in gardens which could cause a nuisance. With respect to the easy chairs referred to in this enquiry, we have asked the tenants to remove them, as they are not suitable outdoor furniture. Please accept our apologies for the incorrect advice that was given."

Ms Watkin asked the following supplementary question:

As we have many issues with items in resident's gardens, I am not happy that I am being given conflicting information from the council on what they are able to do about removing these. Could this be looked into?"

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and well-being, gave the following reply:

"I will speak to the head of housing to ensure that all housing officers are giving residents consistent information."

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 8 July 2015 and 5 August 2015.

4. QUARTER 1 2015-16 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The leader of the council presented the report. He said that it showed a mixed picture for this quarter. However, there were some strong green indicators.

In response to a member's question, the executive head of strategy, people and housing said that the drop in carbon dioxide emissions was due to various factors including improved electrical works and lighting. He also confirmed that the council is working with the police and Norfolk County Council around motorbike safety.

RESOLVED to note the quarter 1 2015 – 2016 performance report.

5. ECONOMIC STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2015-16

The leader of the council presented the report. He highlighted that research into the impact of zero hours contracts and insecure employment had been commissioned as there was a need to use this information to map the current landscape around these issues.

The economic development manager said that 'green' government funding was very complicated with many streams available to bid for. Growth advisors, who were all from business industry backgrounds, were available to help small businesses with advice. She added that the digital sector was very exciting with high levels of employment, but these vacancies were hard to fill as the city was not producing enough people with the skills to do so.

RESOLVED to approve the Economic strategy action plan 2015-16

6. NORFOLK NON STATUTORY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK – UPDATE REPORT

The cabinet member for environment and sustainable development presented the report.

In response to a member's question, the head of planning services said that climate change would be an outcome of the working groups rather than being a topic included in the spatial vision. The scope of the infrastructure task group would be reviewed periodically. The cabinet member for resources and income generation added that environmental improvements were most effective when they were embedded in work rather than as standalone structures.

RESOLVED to note the update on the Non-statutory strategic framework and to approve continued city council participation

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT FULL YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2015-2015

The cabinet member for resources and generation income presented the report. He said that differences in the figures were usually due to project delays by third parties.

RESOLVED to note the report and the treasury activity for the year to 31 March 2015

8. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2015-16 – PERIODS 3 AND 4

The cabinet member for resources and generation income presented the report.

RESOLVED to note the financial position as at 30 June 2015 and the forecast outturn 2015-16

9. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2015-16 – QUARTER 1

The cabinet member for resources and generation income presented the report. The chief finance officer said that section 106 money was tied down to specific areas and therefore was sometimes carried forward.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the carry-forward of underspent 2014-15 budgets into 2015-16;
- 2) note the position of the housing and non-housing capital programmes as at 30 June 2015;
- 3) note the capital budget virements approved by Corporate Leadership Team members, set out in paragraphs 10-12 and 23-24;
- 4) approve the proposed capital budget virements set out in paragraphs 10 and 13;and
- 5) approve the addition to the capital programme of spend funded by external ring-fenced monies as set out in paragraph 14.

10. WRITE OFF OF NON-RECOVERABLE NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE DEBT

The cabinet member for resources and generation income presented the report. He said that officers had made every effort to recover as much money as possible. However, some debts were irrecoverable. Officers were working closely with nplaw to pursue all avenues for debts to be recovered and had tightened procedures when business rates accounts were in arrears to recover money as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED to approve the proposed write off of £537k of non –recoverable national non domestic rate debt.

11. INSTALLATION OF 100 THERMODYNAMIC PANELS TO SOCIAL HOUSING PROPERTIES

The cabinet member for housing and well-being presented the report.

The executive head of strategy, people and housing said that the government rent cap would affect a whole range of upgrade and improvement plans, therefore all options would need to be considered going forward with any project.

RESOLVED to award the contract for the installation of thermodynamic hot water systems to 100 council owned homes to Impact Renewable Energy Ltd.

12. PROCUREMENT OF WORKS – VARIOUS KEY DECISIONS FOR EXPENDITURE ON HOUSING REPAIRS AND UPGRADES CONTRACTS.

The cabinet member for housing and well-being presented the report.

RESOLVED to approve:

- 1) the variations to the Eastern Procurement Ltd framework contracts as described in appendix one; and,
- 2) the variations to the Norwich Norse Building Ltd contracts as described in appendix one.

13. PROCUREMENT OF WORKS FOR STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT – STRUCTURAL REPAIRS AT HEATHGATE PHASE 2

The cabinet member for housing and well-being presented the report.

RESOLVED to award the contract of a structural repair and improvement contract to JB Specialist Repairs Ltd for works at Heathgate phase 2.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration items *15 to *16 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***15. REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE PROVISION – KEY DECISION (PARAGRAPH 4)**

The cabinet member for fairness and equality presented the report.

The executive head of business relationship management and democracy answered member's questions.

RESOLVED to not enter into a joint committee for revenues and benefits and to continue to explore other options as detailed in the report.

***16. MANAGING ASSETS – KEY DECISION (PARAGRAPH 3)**

The cabinet member for resources and generation income presented the report.

In response to a member's question regarding the first asset in the report, the monitoring officer confirmed that he was satisfied that the process for considering the disposal had been appropriate.

RESOLVED to approve the disposal of the land and property as described within this report.

CHAIR