



Cabinet

17:30 to 18:35

16 November 2022

Present: Councillors Waters (chair), Harris (vice chair), Giles, Hampton, Jones, Kendrick and Stonard

Apologies: Councillor Oliver

Also present: Councillors Galvin, Green Group Leader, Wright, Liberal Democrat Group Leader

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public questions/ petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022.

4. Q2 22-23 Corporate Performance Assurance Report

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, explained he would present the policy and performance elements of the report and Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, the financial elements.

The report detailed areas of successful performance and areas for improvement within each council directorate. Councillor Waters, leader of the council noted that the council was operating in the shadow of Covid-19, the disruption to distribution from the Ukraine war and a tough economic climate. The report illustrated the council's resilience but it was difficult to prepare the Medium Term Financial Strategy in a context of uncertainty for local government finances.

Within the Community Services directorate he referred to the successful introduction of the Sustainable Warmth Strategy, the upgrade to the NEC housing IT system and the launch of the Norwich Health and Wellbeing partnership. In terms of challenges within the directorate there was a delay on void relet times. He noted that the

biggest concern raised by the council's voluntary sector partners was the impact of the cost of living crisis on residents.

He highlighted a case study within the directorate, the Norwich 100 Day Challenge funded from the Government's Community Renewal Fund which had held a number of successful workshops aimed at building community resilience and sustainability. Feedback from the project was positive with new partnership relationships and networks being established.

He summarised successes within the corporate and commercial directorate. The council had operated within a tight financial envelope effectively allocating resources. In the elections team he highlighted the introduction of an auto enrolment system for University of East Anglia students. He noted that the launch of an online benefit tool to apply for housing benefit and council tax reduction was supporting people through a complex benefits landscape.

In terms of directorate challenges the Elections Act introduced a requirement for voter identification, the council would work to maximise the opportunities for people to vote but it would place pressure on the service. Discretionary Housing Payment funding was being reduced which had supported many people affected by the impacts of welfare reform. Finally, the financial uncertainty faced by local government with increasing costs affected the delivery of services. He highlighted Operation London Bridge a term used to refer to the protocols in response to the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as an example of local government working at its best.

Within the development and city services directorate housing completions had been impacted by Covid-19, supply chain issues and the issue of nutrient neutrality. The council's investment portfolio was performing well, it was below target but formed a key part of the organisation's financial infrastructure. He highlighted the successful sale of the airport industrial estate which brought in £14m funding to the council.

Further success within the directorate included works at the Carrow House site being underway with New Carrow House ready to let which was an important part of the East Norwich development. Heigham Park Tennis courts had been redeveloped and had proved to be the most popular site to date in terms of usage.

Challenges within the directorate included response times for complaints, work on the nutrient neutrality issue and delays to the introduction of the Greater Norwich Local Plan. He highlighted a successful case study to be the compulsory purchase of the Kings Arms public house in Mile Cross where a long derelict site had been transformed into good quality social housing.

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources presented the financial and risk elements of the report. He detailed the forecast financial outturn for the second quarter of 2022/23 and provided an overview of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account underspends. He noted that in terms of the General Fund underspend of £1.4m, £1.3m arose from Treasury Management activity which was benefitting from current inflationary pressures. The underspend on the Housing Revenue Account of £2.1m was in part due to work ongoing to better understand the needs of the repair and maintenance budget and again due to investment performance from increased interest rates.

He highlighted that the Corporate Risk Register and financial risks associated with medium term financial planning were worsening due to inflation rising. A new risk in relation to the impact of the current economic environment on suppliers had been escalated this quarter. He noted that with the cost of living crisis affecting residents the council needed financial security and stability to respond appropriately.

In response to Councillor Wright's question, the interim head of finance, audit and risk, noted that greater information in relation to the council's debt and debt profile would be included in future reports.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question, the interim head of finance, audit and risk explained that housing delivery had in part been impacted by the issue of nutrient neutrality. The interim head of asset management noted in terms of the whole house repairs budget being underspent this was not only due to non-delivery of works but savings which had been made on procured works. The chief executive advised that it was not uncommon for capital programmes to change their financial profile. He highlighted that housing infrastructure delivery had been impacted by inflation, supply chain pressures and that this was a sector wide problem. Councillor Harris, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing noted that money had not been lost but reprofiled and often reflected the council getting best value on procurement.

With no members indicating that they wished to discuss the exempt appendix accompanying the report, it was:-

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Review progress on the key performance indicators for this quarter and the corporate risk register;
- 2) Note the financial position for quarter 2 2022/23 for the general fund, HRA and capital programme;
- 3) Note the re-profiling of 2022/23 capital budgets as approved under delegation by the executive director of corporate and commercial services resulting in the revised capital programme set out in Annex 1;
- 4) Note the capital budget virement approved by CLT detailed in Annex 1 (para A1.1).
- 5) Approve the additions to the 2022/23 capital programme set out in Annex 1 (para A1.2).
- 6) Recommend to Council, the removal of budgets from the 2022/23 capital programme as set out in Annex 1 (General Fund para A1.3, HRA – para A1.4); and
- 7) Note the exempt appendix to the report in relation to risk.

5. Biodiversity Strategy 2022 -2023 and the Biodiversity Development Plan 2022-2025

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community wellbeing, presented the report. He noted that it was an ambitious strategy which sought to halt species decline and increase species abundance by 2030. He highlighted that this went further than the government's strategy which only sought to halt decline.

An engagement event, 'The Big Biodiversity Conversation' had been held initially with a draft strategy going out to consultation over the summer. This had resulted in the amended strategy with the development plan sitting beneath it. This strategy had also been subject to scrutiny by the Climate and Environment Emergency Executive panel.

The main objective of the strategy was the development of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) comprising existing and new nature cores, nature corridors, stepping stones and the restoration of areas where biodiversity could be restored. The aim was to have this work largely completed by 2030.

The strategy integrated with the national NRN for which the county council was the lead authority but would not be restrained by it. The work of the strategy was to be funded through the intelligent management of existing council budgets, government grants, revenue from Community Infrastructure Levy and Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy payments, funds leveraged from strategic partners and crucially the new 10% biodiversity net gain policy in the Greater Norwich Local Plan which would result in significant revenue in offsite payments.

A new biodiversity working group had been formed with officers from relevant council teams which aimed to breakdown any silo working. The working group would lead on the delivery of the development plan reporting actions back to cabinet. A biodiversity baseline measurement had been commissioned from Norfolk County Council which would be used to monitor progress against the aims of the strategy.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question, Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing, noted the biodiversity working group would be the means by which the strategy would be delivered. The income derived from the new 10% biodiversity net gain policy included in the Greater Norwich Local Plan would provide funding to deliver actions.

In response to Councillor Wright's question, Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing noted that an example of driving resident engagement in the strategy was the purchasing of 200 Swift boxes to be sent out to those on a low income. The head of strategy, engagement and culture highlighted that the first stage of the development plan was the communication and engagement stage of the strategy.

RESOLVED to approve the Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2023 and the Biodiversity Development Plan 2022-2025 for adoption.

6. Scrutiny Committee Recommendations on Review of Fly Tipping

Councillor Waters, leader of the council presented the report in the absence of Councillor Oliver, cabinet member for environmental services. He thanked the scrutiny committee for its work and the public who had responded to the consultation on fly tipping in large numbers. This helped to ascertain fly tipping hotspots and efforts were directed accordingly.

He referred to the recommendations in the report and highlighted that recommendations a) and g) had costs associated with them. In terms of recommendation a), a review of waste amnesty collections, a bid had been submitted to the Shared Prosperity Fund for capital and revenue funding to target hotspots. However, rubbish would not be simply removed but working in association with local charities would be reused or recycled where possible. Staff would be on hand to engage with residents and emphasis alternatives to disposing of items.

Councillor Waters referred to the launch of the 'Love Norwich Play Your Part' campaign which had gone live, the campaign recognised the demand for enforcement action against those committing the crime of environmental antisocial behaviour. Where residents found it hard to do the right thing, help would be provided but where there was a deliberate choice to commit environmental crime enforcement action would be taken.

Councillor Wright, in his role as chair of the scrutiny committee, commented that it had been rewarding to take part in the work on the review of fly tipping, meeting residents on the ground and was an example of scrutiny at its best. Councillor Galvin noted that the report highlighted what actions would be taken forward but lacked a timeline and asked if a clear action plan with timelines associated with it could be drafted. The head of environment services noted that the recommendations detailed in the report at paragraph 3 had all been progressed. The chief executive officer considered a timeline and action plan was reasonable to expect and noted that the action plan could be incorporated as a Key Performance Indicator into the annual refresh of the corporate plan.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the proposals arising from the report to the Scrutiny Committee on the 14 July 2022 as outlined in the report;
- 2) Agree that Environment Services will continue to develop its operational response to the suggestions listed in paragraph 3 a. – k. within the report;
- 3) Agree that officers work with partners and local businesses on dealing with waste that arises from their products or services being used and promoting any existing services; and
- 4) Agree a timeline is set to an action plan with Key Performance Indicators being considered at the annual refresh of the corporate plan.

7. Contract Award, Capital Works at St Andrews Car Park

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth, presented the report. St Andrews car park was built in 2004 and had six levels but unfortunately did not meet modern safety standards. The council had consulted with its partners on the most appropriate method to bring the car park up to standard with a number of options being assessed. These were detailed in the report at paragraph 7, the preferred option was to carry out edge protection works to all levels.

Three tenders for the works had been received and during the process it was realised the initial budget allocated would not cover costs. These had increased due to the unanticipated costs of scaffolding to carry out works and material cost inflation since the original estimate was prepared.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question, the executive director of development and city services agreed that the council were looking to reduce car park spaces. However, he emphasised that multi storey car parks offered a better customer experience and were easier to manage than small surface car parks. There was also a strong business case in terms of the level of income the car park generated. Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth noted that decommissioned surface car parks could provide brown field development sites for housing.

With no members indicating that they wished to discuss the exempt appendix accompanying the report, it was:-

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Award the contract for the edge protection works at St Andrews Multi Storey Car Park to Bawburgh Installations Ltd, subject to the details in the exempt appendix to this report;
- 2) Delegate all matters incidental to the works to the executive director of development and city services, in consultation with the executive director of corporate and commercial services, and the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth;
- 3) Recommend to Council to approve an increase to the 2022/23 general fund capital programme of £0.998m to fund the proposed edge protection works, to be funded from Capital receipts; and
- 4) Note the exempt appendix to the report.

8. Managing Assets (Non-Housing)

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources presented the report.

With no members indicating that they wished to discuss the exempt appendix accompanying the report, it was:-

RESOLVED to:

- 1) approve the disposal of 4a Guildhall, Norwich.
- 2) delegate authority to dispose of 4b Guildhall, Norwich to the Executive Director of Development and City Services if the prospect of a let as an investment does not progress in a timely manner;
- 3) delegate acceptance of the most advantageous offer for recommendations 1 and 2 above to the Executive Director of Development and City Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for resources; and
- 4) note the exempt appendix to the report.

***9 Q2 22-23 Corporate Performance Assurance Report – exempt appendix (para 3)**

This item was noted under item 4 above.

***10 Contract Award, Capital Works at St Andrews Car Park – exempt appendix (para 3)**

This item was noted under item 7 above.

***11 Managing Assets (Non-Housing) – exempt appendix (para 3)**

This item was noted under item 8 above.

CHAIR