



CABINET

5.30pm to 7.00pm

9 November 2011

Present: Councillors Arthur (chair), Waters (vice chair), Bremner, Brociek-Coulton, Gihawi, MacDonald and Westmacott

Also present: Councillors Stephenson and Wright

Apologies Councillor Bremner

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 – Dr Rupert Read

Dr Rupert Read said that Ed Miliband MP, leader of the Labour Party, had declared that the Occupy protests (at St Paul's and sweeping across the nation, including Norwich) are a "wake-up call" and a symptom of a wider crisis caused by Eurozone turmoil, record unemployment, rising inflation and squeezed living standards.

Miliband has criticised "irresponsible, predatory capitalism", and said that too many politicians were in touch with the wealthy elite but were "badly out of touch with the reality facing the other 99 per cent". Caroline Lucas MP, Leader of the Green Party, declared that "The 'Occupy' camps are an opportunity to explore a different kind of future; the authorities must now respect the right to peaceful protest.

The cabinet of Norwich city council and the wider council authorities now have the chance to show that they are in touch with the 99% of us who are not fabulously wealthy and that they fully respect the right to peaceful protest.

He asked; does the cabinet sympathise with these remarks by Miliband and Lucas, and what does the cabinet think that the Occupy Norwich protest adds to the cultural and intellectual life of our fine city?"

Councillor Arthur said that we understand and acknowledge the principles behind the protest and the right to peaceful protest. Norwich has indeed over centuries been a radical city standing up for the less advantaged. How people choose to do that may of course vary according to their views.

You will be aware that we have and are taking a tolerant attitude towards the protest and we are working closely with the police on the matter. We fully support the constabulary's firm, fair and friendly approach to the protest.

We have been monitoring the situation very closely to make sure business can continue to go on as normal and that residents and visitors can continue to enjoy the

city centre and all that's available to them in particular access to the sculptures and open space which Hay Hill provides. Hay Hill is after all for everybody's use.

Our homelessness officer is also visiting the camp on a regular basis to offer help and support to people there who may need it.

We are keeping an eye on general cleanliness and making sure rubbish is cleared away so the city centre remains clean and tidy.

Dr Read thanked Councillor Arthur for her response.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2011.

3. FUTURE PRIORITIES AND SHAPE OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council, introduced the report and explained that difficult decisions had to be made but that the council had done its best to listen to and incorporate the views of the people who had responded to the consultation. She said that there was still work to be done and thanked cabinet members, scrutiny members and all of the people who had participated in the process.

Councillor Stephenson said although she was aware of the need to make savings some issues had been raised at scrutiny committee. The proposal to close public toilets would potentially cause difficulty to certain groups of the community. She asked if the suspension of tree planting could be only partially suspended the planting as 51% of the consultees had been in support of it. If it was to go ahead she asked how long the suspension would last and if alternative funding could be sought.

Councillor Arthur said that alternative funding streams are looked into for all cuts that have to be made and added that whilst tree planting was not something that the council would want to have to suspend there were other higher priorities such as housing. She said that the length of the suspension of tree planting would be dependent on the length of the recession and there could be no commitment to the duration at this time. She added that the financial inclusion officer would be working to help to protect vulnerable people in the community affected by the increase to the cost of burials.

Councillor Stephenson said that scrutiny committee had identified three areas to review at future meetings which were to consider:-

1. the effects of the welfare reform on proposal number 4 within annex C
2. the effects of the welfare reform on proposal number 43 within annex D
3. the outcome of further work and targeted consultation on potential savings identified within annex G, specifically in relation to neighbourhood offices

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the five draft priorities for the council will form the basis for the new corporate plan 2012-2015 that will be proposed to Council in February 2012.

- (2) to take forward the package of savings 2012/13 (annex E) that will affect frontline services following the consultation and that preparation for implementation is undertaken.
- (3) not to take forward the savings options for 2012/13 (annex F)
- (4) to follow the approach to the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee as detailed in the report on the commissioning framework and delegate authority to the Chief executive officer in liaison with the Leader of the council to agree the final version taking into account the responses received and recent guidance.
- (5) to consider the following recommendations in the exempt part of the meeting (see *10 below):-
 - (1) the package of efficiency, back office and strategic service savings for 2012/13 (annex C) be taken forward and that staffing consultations (where appropriate) and preparation for implementation be undertaken.
 - (2) that further work be carried out on a small package of savings for 2012/13 (annex D) focused on external funding and that discussions are commenced with the potentially affected organisations in line with the commissioning framework.
 - (3) that further work be carried out on a package of specific savings (annex G) including dialogue with affected groups and further targeted consultation (where appropriate).

4. SCHOOLS CONSIDERING CONVERTING TO ACADEMY STATUS

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, presented the report.

Councillor Wright agreed with the notion of consultation but said that he believed that this should extend beyond the conversion to academy status and should be extended to include all other changes in status.

Councillor Stephenson supported the report but believed that parents were put off voting in consultations as they thought a decision had already been made. She said that proper consultations should take place but with support for parents.

Councillor Waters endorsed the comments from Councillors Wright and Stephenson. He added that Councillor Wright had raised a good point and that it could be something to be pursued and added that there is cross party concern about the future of education. People want to see education based locally and even though Norwich city council is not responsible for education there is a need to move to put forward an alternative education policy.

RESOLVED to ask Councillor Waters to write to all governing bodies of local authority schools within the administrative boundaries of the city council area

requesting that if any school is considering converting to Academy status that it carries out a full, transparent and balanced consultation, followed by a secret ballot of parents, staff and students, to determine whether a school remains with the local authority (Norfolk County Council) or converts to an Academy and becomes (through a 'Funding Agreement') directly administered by the Secretary of State and Department of Education in London.

5. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report.

Councillor Stephenson asked how the difference between an underspend and a saving could be recognised and highlighted the repairs and maintenance position. She said that it would be better to do the repairs when they are needed to protect the housing stock. The finance control officer explained that the official receiver and the current contractor were working on a settlement and once resolved the money would be spent. There is a forecast for a small underspend once all of the issues have been resolved. The chief executive officer agreed that timely repairs are necessary but although they were being done later than usual because of the contract issues they will be brought back on track. The aim is to spend as much as is necessary to maintain the housing stock and there are plans in place for work over a 30 year period.

RESOLVED to note the financial position on the revenue account for the period April 2011 to August 2011.

6. EQUALITY POLICY FOR NORWICH CITY COUNCIL

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council, introduced the report and thanked the officers who had produced it.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) approve the equality policy for Norwich City Council.
- (2) formally comply with the socio economic duty originally passed into law in the Equalities Act 2010 but not implemented by the current government.

7. AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA DECLARATION

Councillor Waters introduced the report on behalf of the cabinet member for planning and transport.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for the city centre area of Norwich as shown in appendix 1; incorporating the existing St Augustines, Castle, Grapes Hill and Riverside AQMAs; including sites on King Street and Bull Close Road that would otherwise have needed to be declared as site specific AQMAs;

- (2) note that air quality at the existing Grapes Hill AQMA now better limit values and in the absence of an area wide declaration it could be revoked.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items 18-21 below on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***10. FUTURE PRIORITIES AND SHAPE OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council, introduced the report and thanked UNISON members for their support.

The Chair of the Norwich branch of UNISON raised concerns over the use of the term “back office” in the report. Councillor Arthur agreed that this term did not represent the value of the staff in these roles and said it would be preferable to refer to “support services” in future.

The Chair of the Norwich branch of UNISON said that the proposals could have been a lot worse and UNISON were pleased to see that the many potential redundancies would be mitigated by cutting vacant posts and he thanked members for inviting UNISON to make comments.

Councillor Arthur said that the following recommendations had been made by scrutiny committee:-

- (a) due to the high value of the saving, plenty of attention should be provided to proposal number seven within annex C;
- (b) consideration to be given to the safety implications of proposal number two within annex C;
- (c) that any staffing savings identified as a result of the lean process review outlined at proposal forty within annex C, be carefully monitored in light of changes to national policy

in response to item b Councillor Arthur explained that a risk assessment had been carried out and any risks would be mitigated and she asked for clarification of item c. Councillor Stephenson said that lean reviews always seemed to be about staff reductions and the word lean was a concern to people and when linked with the words back office was unhelpful.

Councillor Arthur clarified that lean reviews were not about reducing staff numbers but they were intended to make processes and systems better. The chief executive officer said that lean was a sophisticated system used to track and analyse systems and had been very successful in reducing costs, increasing customer service and improving staff morale.

RESOLVED to

- (1) take forward the package of efficiency, back office and strategic service savings for 2012/13 (annex C) and that staffing consultations (where appropriate) and preparation for implementation be undertaken.
- (2) ask for further work to be carried out on a small package of savings for 2012/13 (annex D) focused on external funding and that discussions are commenced with the potentially affected organisations in line with the commissioning framework.
- (3) ask for further work to be carried out on a package of specific savings (annex G) including dialogue with affected groups and further targeted consultation (where appropriate).

***11. DELIVERING JOBS AND HOMES – REGENERATION OF TWO SITES IN THE CITY**

The head of city development services presented the report and commended officers for bringing the Mile Cross depot back into active use.

RESOLVED to agree the principle of disposal of the site as detailed in paragraph 2 of the report so that the necessary consultation can begin in order to provide suitable alternative accommodation at the site as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

***12. AWARD OF CONTRACT TO CONSTRUCT A TENNIS CENTRE AT EATON PARK**

The head of citywide services introduced the report and answered questions from councillors and the leader of the council commended the officers who had secured the funding to enable the facility to be provided.

Councillor Stephenson raised some concerns about the provision of a tennis facility after the discussions earlier about reducing frontline services and questioned whether this should be a priority at this time.

The head of communications and cultural services explained that this was being funded through partnership funding and capital money put aside for parks and to enable sport to be available and accessible to all.

Councillor Victoria Macdonald cabinet member for housing said as a children's champion she commended this initiative which would enable inter-generational tennis and added that communities are in need of activities and the ability to engage children in sport.

The head of communications and culture explained that there would be complete support provided to encourage and engage people.

RESOLVED to approve the award of the contract to construct a tennis centre at Eaton Park to AMB Sports Ltd

***13. AWARD OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE DISPOSAL OF GREEN WASTE**

Councillor Julie Westmacott cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods introduced the report.

RESOLVED to approve the award of the contract for disposal of green waste to NEWS Ltd

***13 REDUNDANCY/EARLY RETIREMENT COSTS**

(The Chair agreed that this item was of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration because of the need to make decisions to reflect on off funding.)

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to approve the payments relating to the voluntary redundancy/early retirement.

CHAIR