



**Cabinet**

**16:30 to 18:45**

**8 March 2023**

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

Also present: Councillor Galvin, Green group leader and Councillor Wright, Liberal Democrat group leader

**1. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, declared an other interest in item 6 below, Culture Action Plan, as the chair of the National Centre for Writing.

**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 8 February 2023.

**4. LGA Corporate Peer Review of Norwich City Council – review findings, council response and next steps**

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, introduced the report. There had been engagement with over 100 partners, staff and Councillors and was delighted with the positive review received.

The Chief Executive presented the report. It was important to note that the review was focussed on corporate organisations themes rather than specific services. The council was on a positive journey of change with strong relationships with statutory partners. The work of the senior management team was closely connected with the Norwich 2040 Vision and the corporate priorities. The senior political leadership was respected across all parties, with cross-party working a clear strength of the organisation.

Overall, the feedback was excellent with helpful recommendations to take forward. These would all be actioned, incorporated into the Corporate Plan and progress overseen by the Corporate Leadership Team and reported to cabinet.

Councillor Galvin asked what plans there were for two-way engagement with residents. The Chief Executive replied that this was a work in progress, with improvements being made to online platforms. It was recognised that an online approach was not suitable for all residents so face to face workshops had also been utilised. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic had slowed work in this area, but this was progressing. Councillor Waters, leader of the council, said that there would be a piece of work to carry out an audit of what the council would do in this area over a twelve month period, to be used as a benchmark going forward.

Councillor Wright asked what mechanisms would be put in place to ensure that the recommendations were taken forward. The Chief Executive said that the key document was the Corporate Plan which was backed up by deliverables and performance measures. The actions from the Peer Review should be included within the deliverables and would be reported back to cabinet.

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, thanked the chief executive on behalf of the cabinet for his leadership over the last three years.

**RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Review and the council's response.
- 2) Agree that actions in response to the recommendations and other key points from the review are mainstreamed into the council's work programme via the refreshed Corporate Plan and deliverables for 2023/24; the Future Shape Norwich transformation programme; and the annual budget and business planning process, with progress monitored via the senior leadership team; and
- 3) Note that the council welcomes members of the review team back to the council to conduct a short progress update in the autumn when the new political leadership and new CEO are in post.

## **5. Town Deal Fund programme update**

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the report. The council had been successful in receiving £25m in funding for specific projects and urban regeneration. The digital hub project was crucial in moving forward with good business paces in the city. He highlighted the tables within the report showing the overview of funding strands and said that the council had a well-motivated team to deliver the projects.

The Executive director of development and city services added that this was the second annual update on the Towns Deal fund programme and showed that the pressures in the programme were due to build costs and supply chain issues. There was sufficient headroom within the wider project to deal with this pressure and deliver a meaningful set of projects, despite the challenges.

Councillor Wright asked if there was any risk with the Towns Deal funding as remedial work needed to The Halls had been uncovered. Councillor Waters, leader of the council, replied that the council did not want to close The Halls for longer than

necessary, but the council was obligated to maintain its assets. The Executive director of development and city services added that there was a small risk to the Towns Deal funding, but this was managed in the proposed capital amendment. There was also the benefit of timing as both sets of works would be able to be carried out at the same time.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin on the removal of the sculptural pieces on Hay Hill, Councillor Water, leader of the council, said that the sculptures were only to be put away for a period of time and the council would engage with stakeholders around their relocation.

**RESOLVED** to

- 1) note the current position regarding delivery of the Towns' Fund programme; and
- 2) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Development and City Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder for sustainable and inclusive growth, to award the contract for refurbishment of Townshend House and operation of the Digital Hub, subject to approval of the PAR request and the budget limits as set out in para 47 of the report

## **6. Culture Action Plan**

(Councillor Waters had declared an other interest in this item).

Councillor Waters, leader of the council presented the report. There were two elements to the action plan – deliverables and actions – and these would be the building blocks for a Cultural Strategy which was in development. The action plan was ambitious and tied in with the five key elements of the Norwich 2040 Vision.

Councillor Galvin commented that she would like to see more information on the council's website around links to platforms, such as LUMi so residents could access what was on offer.

The leisure and sports development manager said that the document would sit alongside the Norwich 2040 Vision and stakeholder engagement would continue.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Action Plan for Culture.

## **7. The Tenant Engagement, Housing Management and Safer Norwich Strategies**

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, presented the report. The Grenfell Tower tragedy was the catalyst for work across the sector and legislation had been put into place to continue this work. There was a need for meaningful tenant engagement, that suited a wide range of people, to ensure that tenant's voices were heard.

Councillor Jones, cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods added that the work of the partnership boards was key, as none of the issues existed in isolation. These would be a more preventative model, showing that safety of tenants was being taken seriously and that enforcement action would be taken when needed. There had been over 100 respondents to the consultation with 93% agreeing with the proposals.

In response to a question from Councillor Wright, the Interim head of housing and community safety said that the initial responses had given officers a good data set to input into the drafting of the strategies.

Councillor Galvin asked if it would be possible to have difference version of the strategies available for different audiences. The interim head of housing and community safety replied that once the strategies were approved, they would be reviewed by the communications team and easy to read versions produced.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Tenant Engagement, Housing Management and Safer Norwich strategies.

## **8. Procurement Strategy update**

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. It was recognised that using local companies would have a positive effect on the local economy. Lower value contracts had been streamlined to encourage small companies to bid for contracts. Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community and wellbeing added that around 65% of suppliers were within the city boundary which was pleasing to see.

In response to a question from Councillor Galvin on holding pre-tender meetings, the head of legal and procurement replied that there were ways to encourage soft market testing but the council also had to ensure it was meeting its legal requirements.

**RESOLVED** to note the progress achieved in delivering the Procurement Strategy.

## **9. Pay Policy Statement 2023-24**

Councillor Waters, leader of the council presented the report. The Pay Policy Statement was a statutory report which was required under the Localism Act 2011. He highlighted key areas including the ratio of the highest to the lowest paid employees which was lower than other organisations outside of the authority. The pay for agency workers was consistent with directly employed officers and there was no gender pay gap.

Councillor Galvin asked if a policy was being considered on reaching pay ratios. Councillor Waters, leader of the council replied that the cabinet was happy with the ratios and pattern of improvements seen.

**RESOLVED** to note and recommend to full Council the pay policy statement for 2023-24.

## **10. Adjustment to general fund capital budget – The Halls**

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community and wellbeing presented the report. A condition survey on The Halls had been carried out as part of the Towns Fund Deal work which showed the need for critical repairs and structural maintenance. The costs set out in the report included a 23% contingency fund for inflation. The completion of the works alongside the Towns Fund works meant that the Halls would need to close for a much shorter time in order to complete the works. Permanent closure had not been considered and that The Halls remained a safe venue for staff and public to use.

The Head of property and economic development added that an asset management framework had been produced and assets were being reviewed against this, showing proactive work being undertaken on the council's assets.

Councillor Wright asked how long it would be until the next major issue was identified with the building. The Head of property and economic development replied that the condition works would cover the building for the next five years but the Halls were an historic asset and would need money to be spent on them through a rolling programme of asset surveys.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question on condition monitoring, the head of property and economic development said that there was a rolling programme of condition surveys in place. Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community and wellbeing added that motion sensors had been reactivated on a retaining wall for proactive monitoring and officers were in regular contact with those people with bookings for events in The Halls.

### **RESOLVED to**

- 1) recommend to Council to increase the general fund capital programme by £1.848m (£0.450m in 2023/24 and £1.398m in 2024/25) to enable pressing major repair and upgrade works to The Halls.
- 2) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Development and City Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Community and Wellbeing, to award the construction contract for The Halls Towns' Deal and condition survey project.

## **11. The award of contract for a decoration allowance scheme for new housing tenants**

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, presented the report. She clarified that paragraph 3(d) should read that under the current contract, disabled tenants would receive a maximum of £75 per room and confirmed that under the new contract, this would be increased to £80 per room for disabled tenants.

In response to Councillor Wright's question regarding R.E Thorns Ltd sitting outside of the main contract, the Interim had of asset management said that it was important that a local supplier was able to be used as part of the scheme, alongside the larger suppliers.

Councillor Galvin asked why there was an underspend on the budget. The Interim head of asset management replied that there was not an underspend but instead, the money was available to meet need.

**RESOLVED** to delegate approval to the Executive director of community services in consultation with the cabinet member for social housing, to award the contract for a decoration allowance scheme for new housing tenants.

## **12. The award of four contracts for Asbestos Surveys, Asbestos Removals and Fire Risk Assessments (Compliance Improvement)**

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, presented the report. She highlighted that the second paragraph on the purpose of the report was redundant and should be disregarded.

The report set out the key activities demonstrating the high levels of compliance with building safety. The necessary due diligence had been carried out and contractors had indicated that they had the capacity to undertake the work. She emphasised that all contracts were pending satisfactory supplier performance.

**RESOLVED** to award four contracts as part of the Compliance Improvement Plan at a contact value of £6,791,090 as follows:

1. Asbestos Surveying and analytical works as two contracts to separate suppliers at a contract value of £2,108,590 to be split as:
  - a) 70% to Pennington Choices Limited at a contract value of £1,478,400 and
  - b) 30% to Environtec Limited at a contract value of £632,577, initially for a four-year term, subject to annual budget setting and satisfactory performance being met.
2. Asbestos Removals to a single supplier, DuctClean UK Limited at a contract value of £1,418,500 initially for a four-year term subject to annual budget setting and satisfactory performance being met.
3. Fire Risk Assessments to a single supplier, Tersus Consultancy Limited at a contract value of £3,264,000 initially for a four-year term, subject to annual budget setting and satisfactory performance being met.

## **13. Housing Revenue Account contracts 2023-24 for housing maintenance and upgrades**

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, presented the report. There was an ongoing stock survey taking place, therefore the contracts were being awarded for short periods of time. The suppliers were advised that the contract award would be pending satisfactory performance.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question on the completion date of the stock survey, the Interim head of asset management replied that the survey would be completed by the end of March with individual surveys being completed by December 2024.

**RESOLVED** to award the following Housing Revenue Account contracts 2023-24 for housing maintenance works at a total cost of £6,150,000.00, subject to satisfactory performance and quality being met for the period of one year from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024:

- 1) Window Upgrades to a single supplier, Anglian Building Products (T/A Anglia Windows Limited) at a contract value of £800,000.00
- 2) Domestic Heating Upgrades to a single supplier, Dodd Group PLC at a contract value of £1,000,000.00
- 3) Domestic Electrical Inspections, Upgrades and Rewires to two suppliers, to be split as follows:
  - a) Domestic Electrical Inspections to Gasway Services Limited, at a contract value of £450,000.00
  - b) Domestic Upgrades and Rewires to be split 50/50 between Gasway Services Limited and Foster Property Maintenance Limited at a contract value of £2,450,000.00 (£1,225,000.00 per supplier)
- 4) Communal Estate Improvements to a single supplier, Breyer Group PLC at a contract value of £750,000.00; and
- 5) External Decorations to a single supplier, Mitie Property Services (UK) Limited at a contract value of £700,000.00

#### **14. Write-off of irrecoverable debt**

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. All avenues for recovering the debts had been exhausted and writing these off was the only option. The council had budgetary provisions for this.

**RESOLVED** to approve:

- 1) write offs totalling £162,009.80 of non-recoverable national non-domestic rate (NNDR) debt which is 100% covered within the NNDR bad debt provision; and
- 2) a write off totalling £56,922.86 of non-recoverable sundry debt which is 100% covered within the sundry bad debt provision.

## **15. Establishing a Joint Venture with Anglian Water and Norfolk Authorities to provide environmental credits**

(This report was contained within the supplementary agenda)

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth, presented the report. The proposed Joint Venture would include Anglian Water and other affected local authorities, and if agreed, governance arrangements would be worked on with these partners. If the Joint Venture could no longer be supported by the council, it could leave without being bound by a non-compete clause.

He emphasised that this was not a commitment to joining the proposed Joint Venture, only to contribute towards the set up at this stage.

The Executive director of development and city services referred to paragraph eight of the report and said that a response had been received that day from Natural England. It was largely positive with manageable issues to be addressed and gave increased confidence about moving forward.

It was highlighted that paragraph 23 referenced North Norfolk and Broadland District Council but should instead read 'North Norfolk and Breckland'.

In response to Councillor Galvin's question on independent assurance around the scheme, the Executive director of development and city services said that the proposal was to seek clarification on risks and best practice before signing up to the Joint Venture. Moving forward, Natural England would be acting as a watchdog to ensure that the schemes they had accredited were delivering.

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

**RESOLVED** to approve:

- 1) The principle of entering into a Joint Venture (a company limited by guarantee) with Anglian Water and other local authorities in Norfolk for the provision of environmental credits (initially focussing on addressing nutrient neutrality) be endorsed;
- 2) To commit £30,000 revenue funding finance in 2023/24 to allow the Joint Venture to cover its year one operating costs and produce a business case so that it can secure capital investment and deliver its objectives; and
- 3) A report to be brought back early in the new civic year to consider formally joining the Joint Venture once a business case is produced and investment requirements are known.

## **\*16. Establishing a Joint Venture with Anglian Water and Norfolk Authorities to provide environmental credits – Exempt appendices (para 3)**

This item was noted under item 15 above.

CHAIR