



Cabinet

16:30 to 18:20

10 March 2021

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

Also present: Councillor Osborn

1. Declarations of interest

Councillors Kendrick and Stonard declared a personal interest in items 7 and *11 below as directors of Norwich Regeneration Ltd.

Councillor Harris declared a personal interest in item *12 below as a director of Norse Building.

2. Public Questions/Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021.

4. Improving the diversity of the council's workforce

The leader of the council presented the report. A motion had been passed by the council around the Black Lives Matter movement which was an important driver for politicians and was an important priority for the chief executive and Norwich City Council.

The chief executive said that he wanted to improve diversity across a range of characteristics which would be good for the council. There was no gender pay gap and 58% of the workforce was female, which included two out of the three executive directors. There were, however, other areas in which the council needed to make progress. In terms of the demographic of the city, 9% of the population were from BAME backgrounds, compared to only 3.4% of the workforce. This meant that the council was not as representative as it could be of the communities within Norwich.

Progress would mean a sustained effort across the council, as well as the council's wholly owned companies as part of the one council approach.

The report identified three main themes which were ensuring recruitment practices and processes which were designed to attract a diverse candidate pool, building an

inclusive workplace and supporting the retention and progression of talented employees. Action was needed to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds saw Norwich as a place to work and live and saw the council as a place for a career.

A detailed action plan would be developed and there was a need to test a draft strategy with representatives from the backgrounds that the council was looking to attract.

Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion, asked if there would be an opportunity to review the essential qualifications on job descriptions as it was difficult for applicants to know if the qualifications they held were equivalent to GCSEs or A Levels. The head of HR and Learning said that there was a piece of work to be done on reviewing and rewriting job descriptions and a review of the qualifications would be included in this.

Councillor Osborn asked what the consultation process would be for the strategy. The chief executive said that it was still in development and there were various organisations in the city which could usefully support the work, including the City Vision partners.

RESOLVED to note:

- (1) the outline strategy and action plan which aimed to improve the ethnic diversity of the council's workforce over time; and
- (2) the data in respect of the council's BAME workforce profile and how this compared to the data in relation to the city.

5. Pay policy statement 2021-22

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the report. He said that the Pay Policy had to be ratified at council each year and would be considered at the council meeting in March 2021.

He highlighted the pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid employees at paragraph 5.2 of the report and added that the council did not operate a bonus or performance related pay scheme but did support officers in professional studies and memberships of professional organisations, both of which benefitted the council. There were also enhanced redundancy packages and membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme available.

Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion, said that there was no policy on maintaining the ratio between the lowest and highest paid employees and asked if this could be investigated going forward.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, said that she was pleased that the council did not operate performance related pay or bonus schemes as these could be divisive. She commented that the figures did not show the commitment of staff to Norwich residents during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Osborn referred to the travel allowances for staff that drove to work for evening meetings and asked if the same allowances were made for those who had to take public transport. The head of HR and learning said that any staff member who incurred expenses for business related travel could be reimbursed which included mileage for cycling. The council also had pool bikes for staff use and was part of the Cycle to Work scheme.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) recommend council to approve the pay policy statement for 2021-22; and
- 2) ask officers to investigate a policy for maintaining the pay ratios between the highest and lowest paid employees.

6. Q3 performance and risk report

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the report. He directed members to the link to the online database at paragraph 5 of the report if they required more granular information.

Staff had been reassigned to different department in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to keep residents safe and a previous report to cabinet had reminded members that the performance and risk reports should sit alongside the Covid Recovery Plan. Paragraph 8 of the report showed the challenges faced and there was a need to take into account the limitations from the pandemic.

There was some good news such as the Digital Inclusion Strategy which helped people with technology to be able to keep in contact through the use of video calling.

Issues with the household waste performance but were due to additional cardboard from online deliveries. Community engagement had been limited by Covid-19. Every effort had been made to meet new pressures with finite resources and government funding had been used to help with this.

The risk register was robust and opportunities were taken to strengthen this. The register went to the audit committee twice a year, at the request of the chair of the audit committee and was also the responsibility of cabinet. He said he was impressed by the work to identify the impact and mitigation of risk in such challenging times.

Councillor Jones, cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods, said that the private rented sector remained a priority. The eviction ban had ended but good, proactive work was being undertaken by the council's tenancy support officer which was mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on people losing their homes.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, referred to the item on avoidable contact at page 48 of the agenda papers and said that work was being done to make online forms easy to access. A 'ring back' system had also been put in place as there would always be a need for some residents to call the council.

Councillor Osborn said that the inclusion of ASB was very welcome on the risk register and asked if the actions taken in response to this would include physical changes to the environment such as CCTV coverage and security doors. The interim director of neighbourhoods said that as part of the work around the ASB team, there would be a review of processes and methods. Service standards would also be reviewed and brought back to committee.

The chief executive said that the report set out how Covid-19 had impacted the council, but this was being most acutely seen in regulatory services. There was a national shortage of experienced regulatory officers. The government had set out a list of priorities for the councils which had been targeted and the second tier of these included private rental sector enforcement, licensing and responding to noise complaints. There would be an action plan to improve on this as the council came out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED to note progress on the key performance indicators for this quarter and the corporate risk register.

7. Norwich Regeneration Ltd business plan

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the report. There was a piece of work undertaken to strengthen the expertise on the Norwich Regeneration Ltd (NRL) board with the appointment of non-executive directors and the oversight of the section 151 officer. Work was also being done to minimise delays and the opportunity was being taken to use the company to deliver the objectives of the Housing Revenue Account.

A member/officer stakeholder panel would be set up which would give another level of scrutiny and engagement.

There were good quality, sustainable houses being built which would add value to the housing stock and were also an economic boost to the area.

(At this point, the monitoring officer advised that councillors Kendrick and Stonard left the meeting due to their personal interests in the matter as directors of NRL. Councillors Kendrick and Stonard were removed from the virtual meeting for the remainder of the item.)

The director of place said this was an annual process and the recommendations at this point were not committing any council finances. These would come in due course with more detailed financial business cases and it was recommended that the council obtained outside advice on these before approval.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that the homes built at Trinity Gardens were of a good standard with happy tenants. She urged any expert advice to be sought in a timely manner to ensure impetus wasn't lost.

Councillor Osborn referred to the stakeholder panel and asked if opposition councillors would have a seat. Councillor Waters said that it was important to have

the group leader of the main opposition party as part of that panel and cabinet members with portfolios with a stake in the work of NRL should sit on the stakeholder panel, rather than as directors of the NRL board.

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) welcome the Business Plan for Norwich Regeneration Limited for 2021/22 and agree that:
 - a) NRL should move forward to develop a detailed business case for the development of Three Score Phase 3 as described in the Business Plan to allow the shareholder to consider further investment in this scheme;
 - b) Invite NRL to continue work on the design and feasibility of the Ber Street development; and
 - c) The Council as shareholder should support both above activities so that robust business cases can be established to enable the Council to make investment decisions.
- 2) To instruct that officers to obtain expert independent advice, scrutiny and assurance in relation to the NRL business Plan and its underlying assumptions before agreeing to detailed business cases.
- 3) To extend the remit of the Shareholders Panel set up to provide scrutiny of NCSL performance and objectives to also include NRL.

(Councillors Kendrick and Stonard were readmitted to the meeting).

8. Award of contract for kitchen and bathroom upgrade programme of council dwellings – KEY DECISION

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing presented the report. She said that the Eastern Procurement Framework had been used and the recommendation was to award the contract as a one plus one plus one year contract, with orders placed depending on quality of services delivered. The award was to a local contractor which would give employment to a Norwich company.

Councillor Osborn asked what happened to the old appliances. The housing and operations manager said that there was a recycling programme for carcasses and appliances were disposed of as they were usually old.

RESOLVED to approve the award of a contract for the dwellings for kitchens and bathrooms upgrade programme to council dwellings valuing a total of £10,446,215 over three years, using the Eastern Procurement Framework Ltd contracts to Gasway Services Ltd.

9. Award of contract for replacement seating at the Halls – KEY DECISION

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the report. The project was financed using some money received as part of the Towns Fund funding and also from the capital programme. The Halls were the largest remaining intact friary in the

UK and were central to cultural life in the city. The replacement seating would provide a better customer experience.

The halls manager said that it was an exciting project for the halls staff as the retractable tiered seating would only take five minutes to set out as opposed to an hour with the current seating.

Councillor Waters asked for details on what would happen to the older seating. The halls manager said that some furniture would be free cycled but there was a value to some of the older chairs which would need to be worked out. Older tables were put on the LUMi platform for use by community groups and metal chairs would be recycled.

RESOLVED To award The Halls replacement seating contract to Hussey Seatway Ltd.

10. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items *11 to *14 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***11. Norwich Regeneration Ltd business plan - exempt appendix (paragraph 3)**

(Councillors Kendrick and Stonard were removed from the virtual meeting for this item).

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the exempt appendix. The managing director of NRL highlighted the key elements in the business plan and answered member's questions.

RESOLVED to note the exempt appendix.

(Councillors Kendrick and Stonard were readmitted to the meeting).

***12. Q3 performance and risk report – exempt appendix (paragraph 3)**

(Councillor Harris was removed from the virtual meeting for this item).

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, presented the exempt appendix.

RESOLVED to note the exempt appendix.

(Councillor Harris was readmitted to the meeting).

***13. Grant of Right to Buy one for one receipts (paragraph 3) – KEY
DECISION**

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

RESOLVED to approve the award of retained right to buy one for one replacement receipts to support the development of 106 new affordable dwellings as described in the report

***14. Award of contract for merchant acquiring services (paragraph 3) – KEY
DECISION**

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

RESOLVED to award the contract as outline in the report.

CHAIR