



**Cabinet**

**17:30 to 18:20**

**15 November 2023**

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

Also present: Councillor Galvin, Green group leader

**1. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Public questions/ petitions**

There were no public questions.

**3. Questions to cabinet members**

There were no questions to cabinet members from members of the council.

**4. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023.

**5. Corporate Performance Report for Quarter 2, 2023-2024**

Councillor Stonard, leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development, presented the report and referred members to the appendices. During his presentation he highlighted that the key performance indicators (KPIs) included the changes to KPI 11 to increase responses and monitor community safety and residents' perceptions of feeling safe in their local area during the day and at night. The report detailed progress against the council's corporate priorities and the reasons for KPIS being red or amber, and referred members to the table of successes at Appendix A, commenting that overall it was a pleasing report.

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion, referred to the improvements to processing speeds for the assessment of new housing benefit claims (paragraph 28 of the report) averaging 16.9 days over the year and well within the 19.5 day target. The Department of Work and Pensions had praised the service for its excellent performance. He pointed out that whilst not a corporate KPI the

Revenues and Benefits service had also improved the assessment of applications for Council Tax Reduction to just under 32 days, which was within the target of 35 days, and added his congratulations to the team.

Councillor Galvin referred to KPI 26, noting that the number of complaints responded to within 10 days dropped by 10 per cent this quarter, whilst the total volume of complaints had increased by 5 per cent, and asked which services were unable to achieve their targets. The Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety said that the two principal drivers for complaints were in Property Services relating to the wider issues of contract delivery by Norwich City Services Ltd and Environmental Services. The Executive Director of Development and City Services said that there was a new organisational structure in the service and processes needed to be in place to ensure that complaints were responded to. Some complaints were really requests for services such as cutting back hedges and vegetation.

**RESOLVED** to note the progress of the performance indicators for this quarter.

## **6. Budget Monitoring Report for Quarter 2, 2023-2024**

(This report is contained in the supplementary agenda pack.)

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, said that he had been on a course in Bristol to prepare him for advising on financial matters as a member of a Local Government Association Peer Review panel. Norwich City Council's financial management was well regarded in the sector. Many councils did not publish or share its financial reports with other members of the council or members of the public. He referred to the current financial difficulties experienced by other councils and cautioned that several years ago this council had been unable to balance its budget. Since 2011, the council had been in a much better financial position despite a decade of austerity. He thanked the Interim Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer and S151 predecessors, and said that he looked forward to working with Karen Sly, Director of Finance and S151 Officer when she takes up her appointment.

The cabinet member for resources then presented the report which demonstrated that the council was in a strong financial position at the end of quarter 2 to go into the budget setting process for the next financial year.

In reply to a question from Councillor Galvin, the Interim Chief Finance Officer said that there was no additional budget allocated to the wholly owned company (referred to in paragraph 1.5) and an expectation, that the cashflow loan would be repaid in the current financial year.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) note the forecast £3.260m underspend on the general fund revenue account and the £2.015m overspend on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA);
- (2) note the forecast £0.486m underspend against the general fund and the £0.297m underspend against the HRA capital programmes.
- (3) note the areas of significant variances contained within the report.

- (4) note the detailed breakdown of capital programme variances.
- (5) note the carry-forward of unspent 2022/23 capital budgets for utilisation in 2023/24 and future years as approved under delegation by the Interim Chief Finance Officer.
- (6) note the re-profiling of capital budgets as approved under delegation by the Interim Chief Finance Officer resulting in the revised capital programme set out in Appendix 1.
- (7) approve the proposed virement within the 2023/24 HRA capital programme as set out in Appendix 2.
- (8) note the virements and additions to the 2023/24 General Fund capital programme approved under delegation by the interim chief finance officer as set out in Appendix 2.
- (9) recommend to Council, the removal of £6.250m of General Fund budgets and £4.306m of HRA budgets from the 2023/24 General Fund and HRA capital programmes as set out in Appendix 2.

## **7. Corporate Risk Register, Quarter 2, 2023-2024**

(This report is contained in the supplementary agenda pack.)

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, introduced the report. He explained that all risks were reviewed by the risk owners and the senior management team. He drew members' attention to the risks showing as red and advised members that if the mitigation measures did not reduce them, they would be referred to members. The audit committee would be reviewing the risk register at its next meeting (21 November 2023). The corporate risks needed careful monitoring on a month-to-month basis but these appeared to be static. He regretted that the bill on nutrient neutrality had failed and that the Department of Levelling Up and Communities had not removed the restrictions.

In reply to a question from Councillor Galvin, the Interim Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) said that he considered that the risks classed as "static" was a reasonable position as it took time for mitigation to come through. There were other factors too such as capital risk monitoring which was expected to come through in the next quarter.

**RESOLVED** to that the cabinet notes the identified risks and the direction of travel.

## **8. Rough Sleeping Strategy – Prevention, Intervention and Recovery 2023-2028**

Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety, introduced the report, in which she thanked the officers for their contribution. Since 2009, the council had produced a separate Rough Sleeping Strategy to its Homelessness Strategy. She was proud of the work that the council does with its partners in the Pathways Consortium and their contribution to the review of the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-2022. Rough sleeping was significant to those who

experienced it. In Norwich, the number of people sleeping rough had reduced to 7, which went against national trends, but there was no room for complacency.

The deputy leader referred to the report and said that the key challenges for the work with those rough sleeping included: the Covid pandemic and its impact on homelessness; the cost-of-living crisis; people with no recourse to public funds; and long term and multiple disadvantages. The Pathways Consortium partners, including St Martin's Housing Trust and the Magdalen Group, had contributed to the consultation on the strategy, and the Norwich Co-production Alliance (a group of people with lived experience of rough sleeping) were invited to comment on the final version of the draft strategy. The council had a leading role in addressing rough sleeping but could not do it alone without the assistance of a wider network of key stakeholders across the city. The strategy followed the government's key priority areas: Prevention; Intervention and Recovery and Systems and sets out targets to measure success. This includes working with hostels to decrease the number of people evicted from the hostel system; the creation of a post to work with partners to deliver targeted services; introduction of a trauma informed approach and enhanced tool kit to assist front line staff; and housing led projects. The strategy was a positive step forward.

The chair welcomed the report.

In reply to a question from Councillor Galvin, the Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety said that the Housing First model removes the barrier of requiring a medical assessment of the individual before providing housing and then ensures that there was "wrap around" support to assist them. Going forward there would be full awareness that a medical assessment would not be requested. The deputy leader referred to discussion in the community about mental health issues and support and would be very concerned if someone was excluded on those grounds.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028.

## **9. The Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Agreement (Key decision)**

Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety, introduced the report and said that the process to renew the Tenancy Strategy, Policy, and Agreement, had been delayed due to the Covid pandemic. She thanked the tenants and members of the council who had taken part in the consultation exercise, and praised the work of the officers in the engagement with tenants in a variety of ways including letters, texts, and social media, and the council's website. There had been over 500 responses to the consultation, improving on the 91 responses to previous consultations. Over 8 out of 9 tenants agreed with the changes and the remainder wanted clarification on specific points. It was 10 years since the Tenancy Strategy had last been published and there have been a lot of changes in that time including increased financial pressures on tenants from the cost of living crisis, changes in the stance towards lifetime secure tenancies, and to reflect the work of the council to support residents subjected to domestic abuse. Work was in progress on the review of the council's Anti-Social Behaviour policy. She expressed her gratitude to the report authors for their report and contribution.

The chair also commented that this was an excellent piece of work.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Agreement documents.

#### **10. Procurement of Council Insurance Programme (Key decision)**

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, introduced the report. He said that the current insurance contract was due for renewal from April 2024 and due to the council's scale of operations its insurance needs were complex.

The chair commented that the council's insurance needs included cover for cybersecurity and the civic regalia.

In reply to question from Councillor Galvin, the Head of Legal and Procurement said that the procurement process for the insurance contract was a lengthy process and had been started in April 2023. The reason for delegated approval being sought was to ensure that officers could move quickly following evaluation of submitted tenders to confirm the preferred bidder in January 2024, and resolve any contractual requirements before cover comes into place in April 2024.

**RESOLVED** to delegate to the executive director with responsibility for insurance, in consultation with the cabinet member for resources to enter into contracts for insurance cover for the council.

#### **11. Exclusion of the public**

**RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items \*12 and \*13 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

##### **\*12. Corporate Risk Register, Quarter 2 2023/2024 (Paragraph 3)**

**RESOLVED**, having considered the report, to note the exempt appendix.

##### **\*13. Disposal of Assets (Housing) (Paragraph 3)**

Councillor Jones, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety, introduced the report and said that the disposal of these two properties would provide capital receipts back into the Housing Revenue Account.

**RESOLVED** to approve the disposal of the freehold interest in the property assets of the two properties referred to in the report.

CHAIR