



# **Policy and Resources Committee**

## **Minutes**

Monday, 13 February 2023 at 18:00

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Candon, P Carpenter, Flaxman-Taylor, P Hammond, Jeal, Myers, Wainwright, B Walker, Williamson & A Wright.

Councillor Hanton attended as a substitute for Councillor Grant.

Councillor Annison attended as a substitute for Councillor Wells.

Councillor Fairhead attended for item number 9.

Ms S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Ms K Sly (Finance director & Section 151 Officer), Mrs J Beck (Head of Property & Asset Management), Mrs S Tate (Head of OD), Mrs S Wintle (Corporate Services Manager), Mr N Fountain (Principal Strategic Planner), Mr T Williams (Media & Communications Manager), Ms L Snow (Finance Manager), Ms S Bolan (Enabling & Empty Homes Officer), Mrs D Wilby (Licensing & Elections Manager), Mr M Brett (IT Support) & Mrs C Webb (Democratic Services Officer).

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grant & Wells.

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hanton declared a personal interest in item number 15, as he was Chairman of the Great Yarmouth Community Safety Partnership which receives funding from the Council.

## **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2022 were confirmed.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the above minutes which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the Committee note the Forward Plan.

## **6 OPEN SPACE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Principal Strategic Planner.

The Principal Strategic Planner reported that through the final draft consultation, the Open Space SPD had responses from 10 individuals/organisations, most of which contained multiple representations to be considered. A Consultation Statement is attached to this report setting out what comments were made and how they have been addressed. Overall, the proposed amendments from that of the final draft document were relatively minor. The SPD was considered and endorsed by the Local Plan Working Party on 24 January 2023. Subject to endorsement by the Policy and Resources Committee, the Open Space SPD can be adopted to support the Local Plan.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the Committee adopts the Open Space Supplementary Planning Document.

## 7 PEOPLE STRATEGY

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Organisational Development (OD).

The Head of OD reported that the strategy sets out our vision and plan for what the Council needed to do to ensure we can carry on delivering services that continue to meet the needs of our diverse and growing communities, whilst looking after our own wellbeing and that of our colleagues. Through the delivery of this strategy and the supporting plans, The Council will ensure we have a positive, skilled, and healthy workforce, with career and succession planning in place, and the ability to retain good people, making us an employer of choice. We will do this by building the capability of our leaders and managers, developing, and engaging with our employees and supporting their health and wellbeing. The strategy and action plan has been shared with the ELT, Heads of Service, the Joint Consultative Working Group and Staff Engagement Group for feedback and comment. Comments received were positive and supportive.

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor asked why there was no Member involvement included in the strategy when the excellent working relationships between Members and staff had been praised in the recent Peer Review. The Head of OD replied that the strategy was for staff only and therefore excluded working relationships with elected Members.

Councillor Williamson reported that he could not see a mention of the annual staff survey in the strategy. The Head of OD reported that this was mention in the Action Plan on page 70 paragraph 1.1.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee reviewed, commented and approved the People Strategy and Action Plan.

## 8 DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO AMEND POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Committee received and considered the report from the Licensing & Elections Manager.

The Licensing & Elections Manager reported that in Great Yarmouth, the delegation in the constitution to approve the polling districts sits with the Policy & Resources Committee. However, recent and continuing events, including the requirements expected from the Elections Bill 2022, could result in the potential of a polling place or polling station being unsuitable or unavailable for the elections in May. This has highlighted the need to consider how amendments could be made to polling districts and polling places at very short notice.

This report requests the delegation of authority from the Policy and Resources Committee to the Returning Officer to enable amendments to polling districts and places, in the event it is necessary to do so, where there would be insufficient time to

follow the usual process of undertaking consultation and gaining committee approval. The timeframe for consultation and committee approval could be 3-6 months and there are times where changes are required within this timeframe due to existing polling stations not being available and no other suitable venue existing within the polling place. We are asking for this delegation to be permanent for cover all future elections. Every effort would still be made to explain the reasons for the changes to the voters affected, as well as the political parties and candidates concerned.

Councillor Jeal reported that he hoped that Ward Members would be consulted if suitable polling stations could not be identified in their wards. The head of Licensing & Elections reported that it was difficult to find suitable polling stations which were fit for purpose. For example, the usual Polling Station in Runham could not be used as the village hall was closed due to H & S issues and the nearest suitable station would be in Stokesby, a nearby village. The Licensing & Elections Manager, as the Returning Officer, would do all that she could to ensure that the Polling Station was in walking distance of residents in the affected ward.

The Chief Executive Officer asked that if Members had concerns, whether they would consider delegation to the officers for this election and not a permanent amendment.

Councillor A Wright reported that since schools were unable to be utilised as Polling stations due to safeguarding issues, that this was becoming a problem for some wards such as Middlegate.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the Committee delegate authority to amend the designation of polling districts and polling places to the Returning Officer of Great Yarmouth Borough Council in the event it is necessary to do so where there would be insufficient time to follow the usual process of undertaking consultation and gaining committee approval.

## **9 GORLESTON CARNEGIE CLOCK**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Property & Asset Management.

The Head of Property & Asset Management reported that in 2022 with Council support Property and Asset Management were contacted to assist with the relocating of the clock, works to restore were underway however a final location remained undeveloped. Property and Assets contacted Michelmayr to gather information on the position with the renovation and visited the Gorleston Cinema building to consider locations for the clock. In order to accurately project installation issues and provide detail for order of cost a local Structural Surveyor was engaged to review options and survey potential locations for installation. These discussions identified concerns regarding the installation on the Cinema Building due to its fabric and the need for what would be extensive structural supports to install the clock on the front façade of the building.

The outcome of the initial investigations was as follows:-

- The clock weighs in excess of 4t and will need careful consideration to identify

an appropriate location for installation.

- Repair works remain ongoing with the clock and modifications to the mechanism will be required to install in any final location – change from mechanical to electronic mechanism.
- Any relocation onto an existing building will be challenging due to the weight and require the requirement for significant structural modification to hold the clock cantilevered from a building. At this stage after discussions with a local Structural Engineer it is recommended that installation on a building be discounted due to cost, complexity and risk both in relation to the installation and ongoing maintenance and access requirements.
- It has been identified that Planning permission will be required in any location.
- The funding for works to date has only partially completed the initial restoration. Further funding is required for the final design, build and installation of the clock including to cover further modifications to the mechanism, planning permission, structural calculations, installation and ongoing maintenance of any location identified.
- Investigations into housing the clock for display purposes only have also failed to provide any alternatives.

The above points lead to the need to consider ease of installation, ongoing access, health and safety and maintenance all of which point to the benefits of building a standalone structure in a central location. The clock has now been gifted to the Council by Norfolk County Council. As the responsible organisation for ongoing maintenance and costs of operation (energy) it is suggested that the mechanism be energised to avoid the need to wind on a weekly basis however this will be a further additional cost. Locations on the High Street, Gorleston its original location has been considered, there are no suitable buildings however an option of a stand-alone tower located in the High Street / Baker Street junction may be a suitable location for a tower to be constructed utilising Council land. A development of this type would enable the clock to be installed in a location close to the original site. The Conservation team have confirmed either a building installation or a standalone site would be acceptable from a heritage perspective. It is the opinion of the Structural Surveyor that a standalone site designed specifically for the clock may be more structurally achievable to house the clock.

Councillor Fairhead addressed the Committee and reported how hard the local community committee had worked to secure the financing to repair the clock and that they were deeply disappointed that the estimated cost to have the clock put back in to its rightful place in Gorleston was circa £100k which was out of their reach. Councillor Fairhead reported that she was at a loss as to how this would be funded.

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor asked if any Town Deal funding could be utilised and suggested an amendment to the resolution; that the Committee agree to the preferred location of the clock as detailed in the report and ask that officers review the budget and/or potential funding streams and bring a further report to the Committee. Councillor P Carpenter seconded the proposed amendment.

Councillor A Wright suggested that a round-table meeting be held with all parties concerned as it was imperative that Gorleston got its significant, landmark clock back.

Councillor Williamson suggested that some of the Levelling-Up funds be earmarked to fund the installation of the clock which would benefit the residents of Gorleston as the majority of funds was earmarked for spend in Great Yarmouth.

The Finance Director reported that the committee needed to be clear on how this project would be funded moving forwards in light of the difficult budget decisions the Council was required to make in the budget 2023/24.

The Chief Executive Officer suggested that the Committee to agree the preferred location for the stand-alone column for the clock and that officers be asked to explore funding avenues/opportunities and bring a further report back to the committee.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the Committee agree the preferred location for the stand-alone column for the clock and that officers to explore funding opportunities and bring a further report back to the committee.

## **10 COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Enabling & Empty Homes Officer.

The Enabling & Empty Homes Officer reported that The property at 114 Colomb Road was built in 1996 and occupied until it was sold in 1999. The property has remained empty since its purchase in 1999 and was initially maintained by the owner. However, it is evident the owner has not been maintaining the property in recent years. Compulsory acquisition of the property is required, to enable the property to be renovated, improved, and brought back into beneficial use, which will remedy its adverse environmental, economic, and social impact on the surrounding area. The Council has exhausted all other options to bring the property back into use.

Indicative plans drawn up by the Council based on the planning permission issued for the property have identified that it can be converted into a 3-bedroom wheelchair accessible property with hoist between the main bedroom and shower room. In addition to being used by homeless households, the property provides an opportunity to accommodate other households, where adaptation works are being carried out by the Council's Independent Living Service, and it is not suitable for them to remain in their home whilst the works are undertaken or alternatively to provide short term accommodation for those leaving hospital and requiring adaptation work to their property before returning home.

A funding opportunity has been identified, within the Independent Living Service to utilise the underspend on DFG, that arose during the pandemic because of several national lockdowns and restrictions being place on the work that could be carried out in people's homes. The underspend will fund the costs of acquiring, repairing and adapting 114 Colomb Road, into a fully wheelchair accessible property. Norfolk County Council have been approached about the proposal to use the underspend to

acquire, renovate and adapt the property and have responded stating that they are supportive of the principle that DFG can be used more flexibly to support people in the community. A formal request is being submitted and will be considered shortly. Should the option of the Council retaining 114 Colomb Road and converting it to a wheelchair accessible property prove unviable, DFG monies are not available or the property be found to be unsuitable once a full internal inspection can be carried out, the Council would, once the CPO process is complete, dispose of the property via public auction, with a covenant requiring the property to be brought back into use within a reasonable timeframe.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee agree the Compulsory Purchase Order for the property known as 114 Colomb Road, Gorleston and a further report outlining all costs associated with the proposed renovation and adaptation works to the property be brought back to the Committee.

## 11 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24

The Committee received and considered the report from the Finance Manager.

The Finance Manager reported that this capital strategy report gave a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributed to the provision of local public services together with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. Decisions made this year on capital and treasury management would have financial consequences for the Authority for many years to come. They were therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, which were summarised in the agenda report.

The Finance Manager reported that tables 1 & 2 set out the Council's planned capital expenditure and how this was currently intended to be financed for, based on the capital programme as approved and presented within the 2023/24 budgets for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. The report also provided details in table 3 and section 7 of the revenue impact of the Council's capital strategy, in the form of repayment of borrowing via the Minimum Revenue Provision and the corresponding borrowing interest.

The liability benchmark was a new requirement for this year and was effectively the net borrowing requirement of a local authority, plus a liquidity allowance, which was then compared to actual borrowing. Where actual loans exceeded the liability benchmark, the authority could choose to make long-term investments for cash flow management or repay loans early; where the liability benchmark exceeded loans, the authority could take long-term borrowing or sell investments. Each of these decisions would be made looking at cost implications and risks for each option. In comparison, this would need to be monitored and reported throughout the financial year.

Councillor Wainwright asked for clarification regarding capital expenditure and financing as detailed on page 89 of the agenda report in relation to the under-spend of the HRA budget.

RESOLVED:-

That Policy & Resources Committee recommend to Council the 2023-2024 Capital Strategy.

## **12 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2023-24**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Finance Manager.

The Finance Manager reported that the Authority invested its money for three broad purposes:-

- because it had surplus cash as a result of its day-to-day activities, for example, when income was received in advance of expenditure (known as treasury management investments),
- to support local public services by lending to or buying shares in other organisations (service investments); and
- to earn investment income (known as commercial investments where this was the main purpose).

This investment strategy met the requirements of statutory guidance issued by the government and focused on the second and third of the above categories.

The Finance Manager reported that tables 1 & 2 included the loans & shares for service purposes, the significant changes from last year were for the updates for the new loans & shares approved to the Equinox subsidiaries. Table 1 also included the finance leases for the GYS limited asset acquisition, but there were no shares for GYS Limited as this company was limited by guarantee, so would have members rather than shareholders and so would hold no share capital.

The Finance Manager reported that table 3 showed the property held for investment purposes and this had changed from last year for the removal of the market place asset. This was following the review of asset classification, as part of the 2021 Accounts which revised this asset to be an operational asset rather than an investment asset, as it was not held solely for a return.

The Finance Manager reported that there were no other significant changes for any of the other sections beyond the changes noted above that flowed through the report and tables. One of the main risks of the investments held by the Council were mitigated by being underwritten by being secured against assets, so for example, the finance leased asset to GYS limited were owned by the Council or the properties purchased by Equinox Property Holdings could be sold should repayments by the company become problematic and then repay the debt outstanding.

**RESOLVED:-**

That Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council the 2023/24 Investment Strategy.

## 13 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023/24

The Committee received and considered the report from the Finance Manager.

The Finance Manager reported that the Council continued to maintain an under-borrowed position, which meant that the capital borrowing required (the Capital Financing Requirement) had not been fully funded with external loan debt, as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow had been used as a temporary measure. The Council continued to use the service of Arlingclose, as treasury advisors to advise on treasury management and the Council's position and plans.

The Finance Manager reported the position as at 31/12/22 was £102.511m loans and £12.9m treasury investments were held. Balance sheet summary indicated an increasing CFR and there will be approximately £52.9m new borrowing in the forecast period (up to 31/3/26) this was in line with borrowing anticipated to support the capital programme.

The Finance Manager reported that the liability benchmark was reported and was in line with the reporting already covered within the Capital Strategy. The liability benchmark was a new requirement for this year and was effectively the net borrowing requirement of a local authority plus a liquidity allowance which was then compared to actual borrowing. Where actual loans exceeded the liability benchmark, the authority could choose to make long-term investments for cash flow management or repay loans early; where the liability benchmark exceeded loans, the authority could take long-term borrowing or sell investments. Each of these decisions would be made looking at cost implications and risks for each option. In comparison, this will need to be monitored and reported throughout the year.

The Finance Manager reported that the borrowing strategy provided a list of approved long and short term borrowers. The Council continued to be advised that borrowing in advance of need was not financially prudent as the cost of carry would outweigh any lower interest rates obtained.

The Finance Manager reported that in regard to the Treasury Investment Strategy, this provided a list of approved counterparties and limits where surplus funds could be invested. The Council took a low risk approach to investments focusing more on the liquidity & security of investments above the return to be generated.

The Finance Manager reported that in regard to Cash Flow/Liquidity Management, the Council maintained a detailed cash flow forecast for each coming year. The forecast was compiled on a prudent basis with receipts being under-estimated and payments over-estimated to minimise the risk of the Council being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments.

The Finance Manager reported that in regard to the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators, the Council measured and managed its exposed treasury management risks using the following indicators:-

- Security
- Liquidity

- Interest rate exposure
- Maturity structure of borrowing
- Principle sums invested for periods longer than a year.

Financial implications included within the strategy were reflected within the 2023/24 budgets in relation to interest receivable and payable as well as debt repayments.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the Policy and Resources Committee agree and recommend to Council:-

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24,
- (b) The Treasury Investment Strategy (section 4),
- (c) Prudential Indications (section 5); and

- (d) Operational Boundary and Authorised Limits (Appendix C).

## **14 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Finance Director.

The Finance Director reported that the fees and charges for 2023/24 have been reviewed in detail to inform the budget setting for the same period.

The fees and charges policy was approved in December 2019 and covers the period up until 2024/25. The policy provides a clear framework for the annual review and setting of fees and charges as part of the budget process that allows for annual increases of RPI only or RPI plus up to 2% and also having regard to the cost of the provision of services and the impact on demand for the service and what the market can stand.

The proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 are included at appendix A to the report which starts at page 131 on the agenda.

For 2023/24 the maximum allowed for within the policy is 14.6% which, taking into account RPI was 12.6% in September 2022. All fees and charges have been reviewed with the relevant managers and where applicable increases applied to mitigate some of the increased spending pressures facing the authority.

There are a few exceptions where recommendations have been included in the budget report to be recommended to Council later this month for new charges and changes to tariff structures.

These are in relation to two new charges in for confirming compliance with S106 and planning conditions and changes to the tariff structure for the town centre car parks to incorporate a new 30 minute tariff and removal of the first hours tariff.

In addition, a new overnight tariff has been recommended for the Marina Leisure Centre Car park to align with the seafront short stay car parks and a new tariff for the seafront long stay car park as a daily fee between November and February to provide flexibility through the winter period for specific events where appropriate.

The detailed appendix to the report outlines the proposed fees to be implemented from April 2022 for which the associated income assumptions have been used to

inform the budget position for the same period.

The recommendations can be found on page 166 of the agenda and this is asking Policy and Resources to approve those fees and charges as included at Appendix A and recommend to Council those at appendix B.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve the schedule of fees and charges for 2023/24 as detailed in appendix A of the report as per the Fees & Charges Policy.

## **15 2023/24 GENERAL FUND BUDGET REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Finance Director.

The Finance Director reported that this report presented for consideration for recommendation to Council next week the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets for the general fund.

The Finance Director reported that there was an amendment to the recommendations on page 135 of the agenda report in regard to Transfers from Reserves; the figure in paragraph 3(b) should read £671,572.

The budget has been informed by the one-year provisional local government finance settlement for the 2023/24 financial year which was announced in December.

The final settlement was announced last Monday, whilst the headline announcements did confirm an additional national grant funding allocation of £27million, the final allocations for the Borough resulted in an additional £6,000 for services grant but a reduction of the same amount of funding guarantee grant, so no change to the figures included in the report as presented.

The detail of the budget along with the assumptions used to inform the position are included within the commentary of the report and also within the appendices.

Members will recall that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as reported in November highlighted a forecast reliance on reserves in 2023/24 of £1.085. This was after allowing for planned savings of £1.35m and forecasts of assumed levels of grants and income, plus assumptions of spending pressures.

The budget as presented includes savings of £1.1m that are forecast to increase to £1.4m by 2024/25 and is only balanced after a transfer of £1,143,503 from the general reserve, an additional £58,503 compared to the position as reported in November last year.

The budget process for 2023/24 has been challenging, the additional cost pressures that the council is facing from rising inflation has had a significant impact on the financial position, for example:-

- increases in utility costs;
- the impact of the 2022/23 pay award and the cumulative impact on the budget for 2023/24;
- Other pressures on the revenue budget are from higher interest rates and the

impact of financing the capital programmes from borrowing, which has partly been mitigated by an increase in interest receivable;

- Contract inflation on contracts that we have for example for provision of software and other services;
- Furthermore the fall in the market for recyclable material has reduced the income from recycling credits by £250,000 in the coming year.

As part of the budget process, management team were asked to put forward proposals for savings and additional income for 2023/24 and future years. Those that have been included in the budget are detailed at Appendix D, most have been allocated to services, although there are some that will be subject to business cases and proposals to be brought forward in the year.

The budget assumes the increase in a band D Council tax for the Boroughs element of the Council tax bill which will increase the annual amount for a band D property to £181.48, this is an increase of 2.83%, £5. The referendum limits for 2023/24 for shire districts is the higher of £5 or 3% so, the proposals are within this.

The Council continues to hold a number of earmarked reserves which along with the general reserve provides some financial stability, however the use of the general reserve for 2023/24 will take the balance below the recommended level and therefore the report is recommending re-allocations from earmarked reserves which have previously been held to mitigate the fluctuations of business rates income to re-establish the general reserve at the minimum level of £3.5m.

The recommended level of the general reserve for the coming year is £3.5m and this has been informed by the policy framework for reserves as included at Appendix E of the report.

The report also includes for approval a number of capital bids as listed at Appendix H, some of which will be subject to more detailed business cases ahead of releasing funds.

Whilst the report presents for approval the budget for 2023/24, the high-level future financial forecasts have been included for information which show a forecast gap of £2million for 2024/25.

The use of reserves is only a one-off source of funding and in order to present a budget for 2023/24 it has been necessary to make a transfer from reserves. However, this is not sustainable in the medium to long term and early action in the 2023/24 financial year on a review of the base budget and income levels will be required and a proposal brought forward at an early stage to inform the future budget setting process and where possible alleviate pressures on reserves in the coming financial year.

Councillor Myers asked for clarification on the massive reduction in capital spend during 2024/25 & 2025/26 as detailed on page 161 of the agenda report. The Finance Director reported that the Future High street and Town Deal projects would be completed in this timeframe.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Director and her dedicated team for all their sterling work on the budget.

RESOLVED:-

That the Policy & resources Committee recommend to Full Council:-

- 1) The general fund revenue budget as detailed at Appendix A;
- 2) The Council Tax for 2023/24 for the Borough Council tax be £181.48 (for an average Band D);
- 3) That the demand on the Collection Fund for 2023/24 be:-  
(a) £5,417,359 for the Borough Council purposes;  
(b) £670,326 for Parish Precepts (subject to two parishes finalising their precepts);
- 4) The new fees and charges as outlined at Appendix D1 and 3.5 be approved;
- 5) The reserves statement and movement on the reserves as detailed at Appendix E and within section 4 of the report;
- 6) The Policy framework for reserves as detailed at Appendix F;
- 7) The updated Capital Programme and financing for 2022/23 to 2023/24 as detailed at Appendix G;
- 8) An additional £328,314 be added to the capital programme for the asset purchase as outlined at 5.7;
- 9) The new capital bid proposals at Appendix H; and
- 10) The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2023/24 as included at Appendix I.
- 11) The amendment to the Transfers from Reserves recommendation on page 135 of the agenda report at paragraph 3(b) to read £671,572.

## **16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman reported that there was no other business being of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration at the meeting.

The meeting ended at: 20:00