

Policy and Resources Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 22 October 2020 at 15:30

Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors P Carpenter, Flaxman-Taylor, Grant, Plant, Wainwright, B Walker, C M Walker, Wells, Williamson & A Wright.

Councillor Candon attended as a substitute for Councillor P Hammond.

Mrs S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Mrs K Sly (Finance Director), Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Mrs L Barker (Strategic Director), Mrs N Turner (Housing Director), Mrs J Beck (Head of Property & Asset Management), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Mr S Hubbard (Strategic Planning Manager), Mrs S Tate (Head of OD), Mr M Severn (IT Support Officer) & Mrs S Wintle (Corporate Services Manager).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Hammond & Myers.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P Carpenter declared a personal interest in item 6 as she was a

member of the Norfolk Safeguarding Board & Executive Committee. However, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, was allowed to both speak & vote on the matter.

Councillor A Wright asked for clarification in regard to item 8. As he was a member of Development Control Committee, should he declare a personal interest and would this lead to future conflict if/when it came to Committee for determination. The Monitoring Officer reported that it was not necessary for him to declare a personal interest as he would not be conflicted if an application came before Development Control Committee.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 were approved by assent.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

The Chairman reported that an item was due to be added to the Forward Plan regarding the memorial vases on the benches along Gorleston Seafront. However, this report required more work before it could be brought to Committee. The Chairman therefore proposed that a small, cross-party, politically balanced Member Working Group (3-2) be set up to work on the production of a Gorleston Strategy. The Chairman would discuss the membership, outside of this meeting, with Councillor Wainwright.

5 ADOPTION OF THE COASTAL CONCORDAT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Strategic Planning Manager.

The Strategic Planning Manager reported that the Coastal Concordat applied to the consenting of coastal developments, such as coastal defenses, in England where several bodies had a regulatory function, such as the Council, the MMO and the Environment Agency. It applied to developments which spanned the inter-tidal zone. It did not apply to solely marine or terrestrial projects. Its aim was to reduce unnecessary duplication of work between the regulatory authorities, improve consistency of advice and provide a simpler, streamlined process for applicants. This would be of benefit to developments such as coastal defense/management schemes.

The Strategic Development Manager reported that the Government had

recognised the importance of the Coastal Concordat in its 25 year Environment Plan and was keen for all Council's with a coastal interest to sign up to the Concordat by 2021.

Councillor Plant asked if the concordat would encompass offshore energy planning applications both on and offshore. The Strategic Planning Manager reported that this would normally be dealt with by the Development Consent Order process by the Planning Inspectorate.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee:-

(i) Adopt the Coastal Concordat and commit the Council to apply the principles of the Concordat in discharging its [planning functions; and

(ii) Gives delegated authority to the Director of Planning & Growth to write to the DEFRA Marine Planning and Licensing Team to inform the Government that the Council had adopted the Concordat.

6 REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Committee received and considered the report by the Strategic Director.

The Strategic Director reported that the Council had a duty to safeguard Children and Adults and had a safeguarding approach in place to enable it to meet this requirement throughout the Council. The previous Safeguarding Policy had been approved in March 2017 with the agreement to review it after three years. The review had now been completed having been delayed due to the pandemic.

The Strategic Director reported that the Corporate Services Manager had agreed to be the designated officer contact for Members.

Councillor Wainwright asked if it was a statutory requirement for all Members to receive safeguarding training and requested that the policy, although available on The Loop, be forwarded to all Members via email. The Monitoring Officer reported that it was not a statutory requirement but was best practice for Members to receive safeguarding training.

Councillor Wainwright reported that many members sat on outside bodies and asked how they would know if the organisation had the necessary safeguarding arrangements in place. The Strategic Director reported that the Strategic Officer Group would be auditing outside bodies, contracts and contracted-out services to ensure that they all had safeguarding policies in place.

Councillor C M Walker asked if officers had seen an increase in cases of

anxiety and mental health issues, especially in the youth of the Borough, since lockdown. The Strategic Director reported that the Early Help Hub Manager had not reported a significant increase in approaches to the Council. The Housing Director reported that Housing had launched a General Needs Support Service on 1 October 2020 to identify and make early referrals on behalf of its tenants.

Councillor P Carpenter asked if the same level of support offered to officers would be made available to Members if they had to deal with any harrowing safeguarding instances. The Head of OD reported that the Norfolk Support Service available to staff would be available for members to access.

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor asked that the safeguarding presentation shown during the Norfolk Health & Wellbeing Board meeting last week be shown to all Members and that a comprehensive report on safeguarding be presented to a future meeting of the Housing & Neighbourhoods Committee.

The Head of OD reported that the online safeguarding training was split into various modules and it would be easy for Members to undertake the training to fit in with their schedules as it did not have to be completed in one sitting.

Councillor Candon asked whether, in future, Members would be required to be DBS checked. The Chief Executive Officer reported that this would be unnecessary as the Council did not expect Members to go out into the community and tackle safeguarding issues on their own. However, it was important that Members had a clear knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Council had an over-arching statutory duty to draw up a safeguarding policy and provide a clear reporting framework for officers and Members.

Councillor B Walker reported that he would abstain from voting as he had experienced IT issues during the item and had not been present for the full debate.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That the Committee approve the new Safeguarding Policy; and

(ii) That the Committee agree to carry out a review of this policy after three years, unless, there was a significant change in legislation requiring an earlier review.

7 2020/21 PERIOD 5 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Financial

Services Manager.

The Finance Director reported that the report compared the actual expenditure and income position at the end of August 2020 to the general fund budget for 2020/21 and also presented a forecast position for the current year. The forecast had been informed by the impact of Covid19 on the Council's budget, most significantly, where the Council had incurred additional spend in response to the pandemic and where demand-led services had seen a shortfall of income collected or due to be collected in the current financial year, eg, car parking income.

The Chairman reported that the Council had received a further £891k of funding from the Government today which would help to mitigate additional costs incurred by the council due to the pandemic.

The Chairman thanked the finance Director and her team for the sterling work they had undertaken to secure the extra government funding.

Councillors Plant and Wainwright thanked the Finance Director and her team and reported that they supported the recommendations contained within the report.

Councillor Wainwright suggested that as the Council's finances were not as dire due to the latest injection of funding from the government, that the Council might look to fund free school meals for the children of the Borough over the Christmas holidays. The Chief Executive Officer reported that the additional funding was welcome news but the Council could not be complacent as we did not know what would happen next year and we had some big projects to deliver and needed to be prudent with our funds and reserves.

Councillor Candon reported that the government had increased the grants available to the self-employed of the Borough to cover 20% to 40% of their profit (not earnings).

Councillor A Wright asked if the Council would be prepared to look into the cost to provide free school meals over the Christmas holidays to ensure no child went hungry. Councillor C M Walker reported that a little good will would go a long way.

Councillor Wells clarified the figures for the two government funding initiatives available to businesses in Tier 2 & Tier 3 and the self-employed.

The Finance Director suggested that Members could utilise their ward budget allocation to help feed school children during the Christmas school holidays. Councillor Wainwright reported that this issue needed to be looked at as a whole and not on a piecemeal basis, ward by ward.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That the Committee note the content of the report and the revised forecast

for 2020/21,

(ii) That the Committee approve the extension of the "2 hours for 1 hour" car park scheme for a further two months at the Market Place, King Street, Brewery Plain and Gorleston High Street car parks,

(iii) That the Committee approve the capital budget of £20,605 for the replacement of the Crematorium flat roof, including insulation improvements; and

(iv) That the Committee delegate to the S151 Officer and Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the decision to join the Norfolk Business rates Pool for 2021/22.

8 MODULAR HOUSING SCHEME - PART OF BEACH COACH STATION

The Committee received and considered the report from the Property Asset Manager.

The Head of Property & Asset Management reported that the appropriation of the surplus general fund property should be undertaken, as the property was no longer required for the general fund purposes for which it was held, and such appropriation assisted in bringing back into use for modular housing. The appropriation from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account of land at beach Coach station would support and facilitate HRA Housing development in accordance with the Corporate plan objectives.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve the appropriation of land at Beach Coach Station from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account for the transfer value of £280k.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive and all the staff for stepping up during the last few weeks during the latest outbreak of the pandemic in the Borough. He also thanked his fellow Council Leaders, Norfolk County Council, Trading Standards and all of the volunteers who had helped to get the Council's message out to the community.

(ii) Councillor Wainwright informed the Committee that His Worship the Mayor, had emailed all Councillors informing them that the usual Service of Remembrance would not be held this year to keep everybody safe. He asked that Councillors remember from their own homes and to donate to the RBL online, if they so wish.

10 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED:-

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act.

11 CONFIDENTIAL - MARKET PLACE REDEVELOPMENT

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

12 CONFIDENTIAL - THURNESIDE REPORT

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

13 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 17:30