

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 06 March 2014 at 18:30

Present:

Councillor Stone (in the chair), Councillors Castle, M.Coleman, Collins, Fairhead, Hacon, Hanton, Marsden, Robinson-Payne, Shrimplin, J Smith and Wright.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Field.

Councillor's T Wainwright, Jeal and Plant attended as observers.

Mrs J Beck (Director of Customer Services), Mrs M Lee (Customer Services Group Manager), Mr T Chaplin (Housing Services Group Manager), Mr C Rowland (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer), Mr P Cheeseman (Employment and Skills Officer) and Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mrs K Smith (Senior Member Services Officer).

Mr P Hardy (Consultant) attended for item 7.

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2014 were confirmed subject to the following amendments:-

That Councillor Robinson-Payne stated that the Conservation Officer had reported that he had recommended refusal of the proposal to adopt the contractors and that this had not been minuted by the Preservation Trust.

The Cabinet Secretary reported that he had written to DCLG and to date had not received a response.

2 TO REVIEW THE IMPACT OF BENEFIT CHANGES UPON THE BOROUGH

The Committee considered the Measuring the Impact of Welfare Reform report which included the impact of under occupancy, collecting rent and benefits.

A Member stated that Norfolk Constabulary had reported that there were no crimes as a result of Fuel Poverty in the rural villages and that crime was being reduced and asked for this part of the report to be removed. The Employment and Skills Officer stated that the report was not a static report and that this could be updated and that this information had been received from the Norfolk Rural Communities Council.

A Member pointed out that residents on benefits still spend this in the town and that any cuts to benefits results in money being removed from the local economy.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - MEASURES AND PROJECTS QUARTER 3

The Corporate Policy and Performance Officer reported on the second quarter's performance report in the new format.

A Member queried how much officer time was being spent on KP07 and the Director of Customer Services stated that no officer time was being spent on this as it was just a performance measure of when the project would come to fruition.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

4 BUS STATION UPDATE

The Cabinet Secretary read out the following update from Norfolk County Council:-

* Procurement of the signage has been completed and the signs ordered from the supplier. The signage has been procured via a European procurement that was conducted as part of a larger project being delivered in Norwich (the Better Bus Area Initiative) to also install new electronic signage. By adopting this approach, we have been able to achieve economies of scale through a larger sign order.

* Site visits have been conducted to identify the specific fitment requirements at each bus stop. This has highlighted the need for new fitment brackets to be designed, manufactured and installed to ensure there is sufficient headroom beneath the signage for people to walk within the shelters. This is underway with the involvement of Clear Channel, the bus shelter providers.

* site visits have been conducted as part of a package of works to ensure all bus shelters have electrical power for the signage (and for existing lighting). There are currently four shelters without electrical power and works are underway for this to be resolved. Some problems have been encountered in terms of finding the existing ducting and cabling with several areas of Market Gates being excavated. An option to utilise street lighting electrical power is being progressed, which will require around 3 metres of excavation at the site.

In summary, the main focus of work at the moment is around the reinstatement of electrical power and the installation of brackets for fitment of the displays. All signage has been ordered and orders raised for the completion of the required electrical and installation works. A revised installation date will be around Easter 2014 but this is dependant on electrical works being completed.

5 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

That the Cabinet Secretary reported that it was anticipated that the following items would be considered at the April meeting:-

- Civic Protocols
- Budget Monitoring
- Land Holdings

6 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The Cabinet Secretary read out the following advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer:-

"The Local Government Act 1972 allows a local authority to consider a matter in private if two tests are met: it must be likely that exempt information will be disclosed and it must be considered that there is no public interest in discussing the matter in open session. In this case it could be argued that the report discloses exempt information in that it relates loosely to the financial or business affairs of the contractor and consultants employed on the St George's project. The question then to ask is whether there is public interest in discussing this information in public that outweighs the fact that exempt information may be disclosed. If members consider that the report as it stands should be discussed in public, there is no reason why a resolution to move into private session should not be passed if the nature of the discussions become more specific."

It was therefore agreed to take the item as a confidential item.

7 ST GEORGES CHAPEL AND PAVILION

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information);

The meeting ended at: 19:45