



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, 27 July 2021 at 18:00

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Myers & Williamson.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Plant & Smith declared a personal interest in item 10, Public Events Policy, as they were Directors of the Great Yarmouth Town Centre Partnership.

Councillors Hammond & A Wright declared a personal interest in item 10, Public Events Policy, as they were Directors of GYTABIA.

However, in accordance with the Council's Constitution were allowed to both speak and vote on the items.

Councillor Wells declared a personal interest in item 14, Agreement with GYPT & Norfolk Conservation Ltd and would leave the room whilst the matter was determined acting upon advice from the Monitoring Officer.

3 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the Forward Plan.

4 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2021-22

The Committee received and considered the report from the Senior Performance & Data Protection Officer.

The Senior Performance & Data Protection Officer reported that the Annual Action Plan 2021-22 documented the projects and activities that would be taken forward by the Council during 2021-22, this builds on the previous year's action plan and continued the delivery of 'The Plan 2020 - 2025'.

The Annual Action Plan also included a suite of Performance Indicators which related to 'The Plan 2020 - 2025' and on-going service delivery of the Council. This data would be presented to Members quarterly through the various Service Committees.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee consider the Annual Action Plan 2021-22 and the suite of Performance Indicators detailed in Appendix 1, of the report.

5 AGILE WORKING POLICY

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

The Head of Organisational Development reported that the new policy would build on the ways of working which had been so successful during the pandemic, it would help shape our future ways of working and enable the Council to continue to deliver to its high standard, be an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the best people for jobs and help us to remain competitive in the market place.

The roll out of the policy would be supported by an action plan which would consider the resources required to implement together with linkages to the wider corporate strategies including the Digital Improvement Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The policy would be subject to regular review in response to changing service delivery needs and with the ongoing development of new technologies.

The Head of Organisational Development reported that introducing agile working practices would involve developing a new work culture. It was not about doing things in the old way with some new technologies and redesigned offices; it was about new ways of working using new tools, new processes, and new approaches to management and teamwork. The Council would support managers and staff through these changes by helping to identify where changes were needed and provide to tools and knowledge to realise those changes.

The Head of Organisational Development reported that agile working was the idea that work was an activity we do rather than a place we go. It placed an emphasis on how we make use of the technology and workspace available to complete our work. It supported a culture of looking at outcomes as the measure of success. By working in

an agile way, we would develop a modern, dynamic workforce that delivered our services from locations other than the traditional working environment of a desk in a Council building. The overriding ethos to agile work was that “work is what you do – not where you do it”. Agile working aimed to provide greater flexibility, particularly in relation to the time and location employees could work, subject to the requirements of the service and individual jobs.

Councillor Wainwright asked that when officers were on leave, that they left up to date, out of office emails so that Members were able to obtain help when required. This oversight was echoed by Councillor A Wright.

Councillor P Carpenter reminded the Committee that the policy was a living, working document. However, she had voiced her concerns at the JCWG meeting that staff who were unable to work from home must be accommodated in an office to ensure their well-being.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee agree the new Agile Working Policy.

6 HERITAGE ACTION ZONE - SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING

The Committee received and considered the report from the Strategic Planning Manager and Heritage Action Zone Project Manager.

The Director of Planning & Growth reported that the scheme comprised of a series of projects and workstreams which collectively tackled problems of empty, redundant and neglected buildings through repair and re-use, transforming dilapidated properties into new homes, shops and community spaces. Through capital projects, it would repair and restore the historic environment and public realm and encourage property owners to invest in conservation improvements to restore historic character through a scheme of small grants. The project strategically aligned with the Future High Street Fund and Town Deal Investment Plan actions and objectives and would deliver a significant community benefit.

The Director of Planning & Growth reported that the five design guides would cover shopfronts, extensions, repairs and public realm together with an umbrella guide. The first design guide to be prepared was the Shopfront Design Guide. It was proposed that the guide would help support the grant system for shopfront repairs but would also be a planning policy document to help determine applications involving shopfronts. Therefore, it was proposed that that the document was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). SPDs build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. They do not form part of the ‘development plan’ but were a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Councillor Plant commented that he felt this was an excellent report and highlighted pages 66 & 73 and suggested that officers should consider not just the shop front but the architecture above it too.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve the first draft Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (appendix 1) for consultation.

7 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - PERMISSION TO CONSULT ON 2022 SCHEME

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Customer Services.

The Head of Customer Services reported that this report was seeking Members approval to proceed with consultation on the 2022 Council Tax Support Scheme. As outlined in the report, the Council was not recommending any changes from the existing scheme for the next year.

Following the consultation period, a further report would be presented to the Committee later in the year with the final recommendations for the 2022 scheme.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee grant permission to consult on retaining the current scheme for 2022 as set out in section 4.1 of the report.

8 ANNUAL DEBT RECOVERY REPORT 2020/21

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Customer Services.

The Head of Customer Services reported that this was the Annual Debt Recovery report covering the period 2020/21 and was one of the performance management measures to provide Members with outturn figures for the prior year. The report included:-

- A summary of debts written off in each debt area showing the reasons for write off and values,
- Collection performance for Council Tax and Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR); and
- Level of arrears outstanding

The Head of Customer Services highlighted that section 1.3 of the report summarised the impact that the COVID pandemic had had on collection rates and reflected the organisations decision to take a considered approach to recovery and enforcement action through a difficult year for residents and businesses. However, It should be noted that in terms of the revenue services team performance, they had focused resources and maximum efforts to administer the range of national business grants & discounts over the course of last year and into the current year. Appendix 1 provided a factual summary of the Council's three main income streams and the level of debt associated with each. The Committee was asked to note that whilst in-year collection rates had suffered together with arrears of debt, housing benefit debt continued to reduce. In addition to this, although it had been a difficult year for collection, we continued to pursue these debts and can confirm our collection rates for last year have already increased to 96% for Council Tax with Business Rates expected to reach the same within the next couple of weeks.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve the annual report giving details of the Council's write-offs in accordance with the Council's Recovery Guidelines and performance in relation to revenues collection.

9 NOTICE OF ADJUSTMENT TO SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE OFF WITHIN REVENUE WRITE OFF REPORT

The Committee received a verbal update from the Head of Customer Services.

The Head of Customer Services reported an update following the Revenues Write Off report which was presented to the Policy & Resources Committee on the 23rd March 2021, where Members approved the individual cases for write-off contained within the schedules.

Following the Committee, there had been an update to the case of the Football Club where the Committee approved the write off, of £11,810.62 being statute barred. Following representations made by the club, we have reallocated payments made to more recent debt, which had previously been automatically applied to the oldest debt. This had resulted in an additional sum of £5,950 which was also statute barred under the Limitations Act 1980, being over 6 years old. The write off, of this sum, is within officer delegation for decision.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the update as provided.

10 PUBLIC EVENTS POLICY

The Committee received and considered the report from the Head of Marketing & Communications.

The Head of Marketing & Communications reported that Great Yarmouth was renowned for its history of performance and entertainment. A comprehensive schedule of public events & festivals all-year round that were accessible to all, considered equality, diversity and inclusivity, which also had due regard to good environmental stewardship, would help continue this reputation. Public events were designed to attract footfall and benefit local businesses and communities, helping to make Great Yarmouth a fantastic place to live, work and visit. Going forward, public events & festivals would be guided by the proposed Events Policy reflecting the ambitions of the Council as a Place and measured to assess effectiveness and shared learning.

The Head of Marketing & Communications reported that officers proposed to work to expand the portfolio of public events & festivals for the Borough and would specifically look to increase the number of events outside the traditional visitor season in

alignment with the Culture, Heritage and Tourism Strategy. To steer the direction of future potential and prospective public events, Members were asked to consider and agree an Events Policy (Appendix A) which sets out a series of criteria and considerations aligned to the Council's strategic objectives. This includes ensuring events provide value – social, environmental &/or financial to the residents and businesses of the borough and safeguards the place as a whole. If agreed, the policy would be developed with key partners to ensure alignment to the Culture, Heritage and Tourism Strategy and wider ambition of City of Culture 2025.

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor asked if Ward Members could be notified when an event was taking place in their ward, and commented that it would be good to see events taking place in other parts of the Borough such as Hopton, Bradwell, Hemsby, Scratby, Caister & Winterton. Councillor Flaxman-Taylor also asked how often partners would be invited who are mentioned within the recommendations to present to P&R Committee.

Councillor A Wright suggested that it might be difficult for businesses to be able to agree to a three year plan as we were coming out of the pandemic. he asked that businesses were kept abreast of the changing rules and regulations as the borough emerged from lockdown into business as usual.

The Chairman stressed that all events must go through the Council's Event Safety Awareness Group, whether they were to be held on public or private land.

Councillor Plant highlighted paragraphs 2.1 & 2.2 on page 131 of the report which summarised the Council's aspirations for the next 5 to 10 years.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee agree to:-

- a) Formalise the partnership between Great Yarmouth Borough Council, the Town Centre Partnership and Great Yarmouth Tourism and Business Improvement District,
- b) Approve the Events policy with a view to it being further developed with the above partners,
- c) Note the forthcoming public events & festival programme for the next twelve months to July 2022; and
- d) Work with the above partners to develop the events programme and invite partners to a future Policy and Resources Committee to present their collective proposals for events for the next 3 years with an aim to support the bid for City of Culture 2025.

11 COVID-19 PATHWAY TO RECOVERY - UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report from the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer advised that this report provided members with an update on the 'Pathway to Recovery' paper approved by this Committee on 23 June 2020. Throughout the last 12 months, the Council had continued to respond to the needs of

residents and businesses impacted by the pandemic by actively working with NHS health services, the County Council, other districts, NALEP, voluntary and community sector, community volunteers, business groups and local partner agencies. The Recovery Plan had been adapted and refocused taking account of immediate needs, as well as maintaining a medium to long term view of economic and community recovery.

The Council continues to deliver against an ambitious vision as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan. Significant investment had been secured within the last 12 months to drive forward our regeneration plans.

The Chairman highlighted the enhanced trace and testing currently being undertaken in Ormesby and Hemsby following an experiential rise in Covid numbers in the villages which was a partnership between the Council, NCC, and Public Health England.

Councillor Wainwright asked what the Council's plan was moving forwards from 16 August 2021 as observed tests for staff and members would be heavily resource intensive. The Chairman reported that this matter was currently being discussed.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee:-

(a) Note and approve the updated Action Plan for the Great Yarmouth's 'Pathway to Recovery Plan' in Appendix 1; and

(b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to sign the Partnership Agreement with Norfolk County Council in regards to the Local Outbreak Management Plan.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chief Executive Officer announced that the Mayor of Great Yarmouth, Councillor Sue Hacon, had tendered her resignation this evening.

13 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 3 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act.

14 AGREEMENT WITH GREAT YARMOUTH PRESERVATION TRUST AND NORFOLK CONSERVATION LIMITED

(Confidential Minute on this Item)

The meeting ended at: 18:45

PRESENT:-

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

Ms S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Ms S Gibbs (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Ms K Sly (Finance Director), Mrs C Dyble (Head of Marketing & Communications), Mrs M Burdett (Head of Inward Investment), Mrs M Lee (Head of Customer Services), Mrs S Tate (Head of OD), Mr D Glason (Director of Planning & Growth), Mr J Wedon (Senior Policy & Data Protection Officer) & Mrs C Webb (Executive Services Officer).