



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, 14 September 2021 at 18:00

PRESENT:-

Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors P Carpenter, Flaxman-Taylor, Grant, P Hammond, Hanton, Myers, Wainwright, Wells, Williamson & T Wright.

Councillor Candon attended as a substitute for Councillor Smith.

Ms S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Mrs K Blakemore (Strategic Director), Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Ms K Sly (Finance Director), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Mrs M Lee (Head of Customer Services), Mrs G Britton (Commercial Team Manager), Mr J Wedon (Senior Performance & Data Protection Officer), Mr S Hubbard (Strategic Planning Manager) & Mrs C Webb (Executive Services Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Smith & B Walker.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P Carpenter declared a personal interest in item 13 as she was a member of the GYBS Liaison Board and Norse Board.

Councillor Wells declared a personal interest in item 13 as he was a Director of GYBS.

Councillor Hanton declared a personal interest in item 10 as he was the Independent Chairman of Great Yarmouth Community Safety Ltd.

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

3 MINUTES - 13.7.21

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021 were confirmed.

Councillor A Wright referred to minute number 5, regarding the proposed shared Information Hub on Great Yarmouth seafront as he felt that Members had been misled as the Information Hub had only opened for 4 weekends and as a result of the closure of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC), 3 members of staff had been made redundant. He felt that if Members had been informed of this information on the evening, they would not have supported the officer recommendation. Great Yarmouth was a Top 10 resort and the only resort without a dedicated TIC which made him feel disappointed and angry. Councillor Wright asked that this item be revisited and a report brought back to this Committee recommending that a TIC be opened in preparation for the 2022 summer season. Councillor Wright stressed that it was imperative that Members had the full facts before them before they were asked to make a decision.

The Chairman referred Councillor Wright to recommendation (d) of minute number 5. The Chief Executive Officer reported that it was hoped to provide a TIC in the former Greenwoods building but this had been reliant on interest being expressed in a joint venture between the Council/CCG/Norfolk Police. However, the CCG had used an empty retail unit at Market Gates as a walk-in vaccination centre. However, as next year was predicted to be just as busy as this year, the Council would work with the Police to provide a facility. The Covid Marshalls were acting as tourism ambassadors and the new Heritage Centre would provide this service in the future.

4 MINUTES - 27.7.21

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2021 were confirmed.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the Forward Plan.

6 QUARTER ONE KEY PROJECT AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

The Senior Performance & Data Protection Officer reported that the report gave an update on performance for the first quarter of 2021/22 (Apr – Jun) where progress was assessed against targets which were set at the start of the financial year. The report also provided an update on the position of key projects that were linked to the corporate priorities from 'The Plan 2020-2025'. A summary of progress for the suite of key projects and individual highlight reports for each of these key projects were presented in Appendix 1 of the report. The performance measures, see Appendix 2, gave a comprehensive overview of how the authority as a whole was performing and covered most Council functions.

Councillor P Carpenter asked if any of the major project builds would be affected by the shortages of building materials and were their risk registers being updated to reflect this potential knock-on effect to the completion dates. The Chief Executive reported that each project had its own risk register. The majority of the building materials for the Marina Centre had already been sourced and purchased so it was not an issue. However, for projects like the Wintergardens this could become an issue so the project teams were considering the pricing of contracts and the contingency elements.

Councillor Wainwright asked in regard to the level of interest in the Incubator Units at the Gy Energy Park. The Chief Executive reported that in regard to the O & M campus, close contact was being kept with Tier 1 suppliers and there had been a good level of interest in the units. A needs assessment was being commissioned as the present one was over 2 years old to ensure that needs continued to be met and that this was work in progress.

The Chairman assured the Committee that the Third River Crossing and the O & M Campus were in hand and that County was keeping a close eye on cost, price and delivery of all major projects in the County.

Councillor A Wright reported that the shortage of goods was a result of the pandemic and Brexit. Councillor Wright referred to the wording on page 35 of the agenda report which he thought was clumsily worded. The Chief Executive agreed with Councillor Wright and reported that the final paragraph under Mitigation on page 35, would be amended.

Councillor Myers reported that the furloughing of staff had caused production of goods to cease as there was no demand during the pandemic. The Chairman reported that this issue had also been compounded by the lack of HGV drivers.

Councillor Wainwright reported that the delivery of the new Marina Centre was both on time and on budget and the topping-out ceremony would be taking place the following week.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee agree that:-

(i) All measures to be monitored during the next quarter; and

(ii) All key projects would continue to be monitored over the next quarter with the aim of maintaining a green status and where possible, attaining a green status for those key projects which are currently amber.

7 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS - INITIAL CONSULTATION DELEGATION

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

The Strategic Planning Manager reported that the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) built upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. They did not form part of the 'development plan' but were a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Council currently had two adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) for Hall Quay and North Quay.

The Strategic Planning Manager reported that the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 required at least two stages of consultation during the preparation of an SPD. Firstly, consultation was required during the initial preparation of the document to inform a draft SPD. This consultation was typically more informal and could be in a questionnaire format (such as the initial consultation on the North Quay SPD) or in the form of a first draft of the SPD. More than one consultation could be undertaken if necessary and some consultations could be more tailored to be focused on certain interest groups. The point of consultation at this stage was to give people an early say on the content of the SPDs before the Council had formalised a final position on the matter.

The Strategic Planning Manager reported that in order to support the timely production of these documents this report requested that delegated authority was given to the Director of Planning and Growth, in consultation with the Local Plan Working Party and the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee, to approve the public consultation at the initial stages of preparation. The Local Plan Working Party would have input on the drafting and formulation of consultation materials for these initial stages. Prior to approving materials for consultation, the Director of Planning and Growth would also consult with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee and feedback the input from the Local Plan Working Party. The formal stage of consultation on the final draft of the SPD would still be subject to approval by the Policy and Resources Committee which also had the responsibility for adoption of the SPD on behalf of the Council.

The Chairman asked if the issue of where the s106 monies would feed in to this process would be addressed. The Strategic Planning Manager assured the Committee that this issue was in hand.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee delegate authority to the Director of Planning & Growth, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee and the Local

Plan Working Party, to approve the first stages of public consultation on emerging Supplementary planning Documents.

8 REVISED HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The Committee received and considered the report from the Corporate Health & Safety Advisor.

The Commercial Team Manager reported that the review provided an overview of revisions made to the Council's Health & Safety Policy which had been last updated in 2018.

Councillor P Hammond asked if this policy included Members. The Commercial Team Manager reported that this policy was for staff and there would be a separate Health & Safety Policy for Members. Councillor P Carpenter reported that this policy had been reviewed and commented on by the Joint Consultative Working Group where this question had also been raised and was being looked in to by the Head of Organisational Development.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee formally agree the revisions to the Health & Safety Policy.

9 REVENUES WRITE OFF REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Revenue & Benefits Service Manager.

The Head of Customer Services reported that the Committee had last considered the Revenues Write-off report and schedules of debt in March this year. Consideration for writing off a debt was given where it was held to be uneconomical to recover, was time barred or was legally unenforceable. Under the law, there was an obligation to take reasonable steps to collect debts. There were, however, many situations where there was justification for writing off debts, where reasonable steps have been taken regarding each individual case.

Where a debt was irrecoverable, write-off of such debts was important, so that the Council could budget for bad debts. An integral part of debt recovery, was the effective management of bad debts, to ensure resources were applied efficiently to the collection of monies outstanding which could reasonably be expected to be collected.

The Head of Customer Services reported that the Council had a bad debt provision within its financial accounts, as part of its monitoring process, and the amount of this provision was reviewed annually. Before presenting this report, final checks were made to determine if there were any material changes that would remove the need to write the debts off. Where the Council writes off a debt and then later finds there had been a change in the debtors circumstances, it would reinstate and pursue recovery of the monies owed.

The Head of Customer Services reported that this report sought the approval and

authorisation of a schedule of one Business Rate and one Sundry Debt account, where the debts were both deemed unrecoverable due to being subject to either a Company or Individual Voluntary Arrangement and, therefore, both recommended for write-off.

Councillor Myers asked for clarification as to why there was a drop in write-offs for 2018 and 2019 compared to other years. The Head of Customer Services reported that she did not have the relevant information to hand but would respond to Councillor Myers after the meeting.

Councillor Grant asked for clarification regarding the over-payment of Housing Benefit as detailed on page 86 of the report and asked whether this was fraud and subject to prosecution. The Head of Customer Services reported that the DWP had now taken over responsibility of investigating and taking action including possible prosecution of Housing Benefit Fraud and confirmed the Council was still responsible for any debt arising from the over-payment of housing benefit.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee approve and authorise individual write-offs as detailed within the Schedule 1 (Business Rates) and Schedule 2 (Sundry Debt).

10 2021-22 PERIOD 4 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report from the Financial Services Manager.

The Finance Director reported that this report presented the financial monitoring position to the end of July compared to the budget as approved in February this year. The latest monitoring position was a forecast deficit of £163k compared to the budgeted deficit of £111k, a movement of £52k.

The Finance Director reported that the detail of the report provided the commentary on the variances to date, together with, where applicable, the full year forecasts. These were continuing to be monitored and actions taken as applicable.

The Finance Director reported that the report also provided the current position on the capital programme, of which there would be a more detailed review over the coming months to be updated, and included in the medium term financial strategy.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee note the content of the report and the revised forecast for 2021/22.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

RESOLVED:-