

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 31 MARCH 2015 FROM THE
REGENERATION, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD
ON 25 MARCH 2015**

REC138: CABINET REPORT – NORA JOINT VENTURE

The Corporate Project Officer presented the Cabinet report which updated Members on progress made on the NORA Housing project and requested Members to authorise the signing of contracts to enable the start of works for Phase 2.

He reminded the Panel that on 29th July 2014 Cabinet had authorised the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, subject to a trigger point of 20 sales on phase 1, to authorise the signing of contracts and the start of works for phase 2. The latter was subject to the business case not requiring an additional contribution for phase 2 of more than £400,000.

The Corporate Project Officer explained that this position had not quite been reached, even though sales had gone well with 42 out of 54 units having been sold, of which nine had been exchanged, eleven were due to be exchanged in the coming weeks and 22 had been reserved.

The Corporate Project Officer outlined the options available to Cabinet as set out in the report at point 3. Option 3 was the preferred option which would be recommended to Cabinet and would include the provision of affordable housing units. The Corporate Project Officer provided the Panel with details of the other options available.

The Panel was informed that under the initial agreement each party had invested £1 million into the project, the Council's investment being in the form of land value. Norfolk County Council had now increased their contribution to £1.2 million.

The Corporate Project Officer referred to the financial implications and risk management implications as set out in the report.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Project Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, some of which are summarised below.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets, Councillor Beales reminded the Panel how the NORA site used to be and the significant amount of work involved to make it into a developable site. He felt that the end result was very pleasing and units were selling well. He encouraged members of the Panel to visit the site to see the quality properties which had been provided.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets explained that the key issue was the provision of affordable housing. The Council

could have put a case together that the provision of affordable housing was unviable, but he felt the provision of affordable housing was important.

Councillor Moriarty sought assurance that no further funds would be required following the current request and asked if the commencement of phase 2 could wait until the remaining units on phase 1 had been sold. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets explained that funds were required for the completion of phase 1. The completion of phase 2 would result in further capital receipts which could be used on other capital projects. The Portfolio Holder reminded those present that the project was a regeneration project and would not be consuming capital it would be generating it at a level cost to the tax payer.

The Corporate Project Officer explained that it was hoped that the remaining units would be sold shortly. An event would be held on site to promote the Help to Buy scheme. The Corporate Project Officer explained that this site was the only site available in King's Lynn which offered the Help to Buy scheme. The Panel was informed that there was already a demand for phase 2 properties and by starting work on phase 2 there would hopefully be a continuous product available.

Councillor Bubb requested clarification on the qualifications for affordable housing. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community agreed to circulate details of the criteria to the Panel for information.

Councillor Mrs Collingham expressed support for the scheme and felt that it was an excellent way to make use of Capital Funds, especially considering the need for housing in King's Lynn. She referred to the New Homes Bonus and the Council Tax which would be received by the Council. Councillor Mrs Collingham commended the scheme.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets thanked Councillor Mrs Collingham for her positive comments and referred to point 6.4 of the report which explained that it was estimated that the Borough Council would receive £1,072,350 and Norfolk County Council would receive £1,177,389 in New Homes Bonus, subject to the continuation of the scheme.

The Chief Executive reminded those present that a number of years ago the Council had made a decision to regenerate the NORA site. It was a very difficult site to get involved with and required significant investment. The Chief Executive explained that it was now important to ensure that development continued. He informed the Panel that the units provided on the site were very high quality and recommended that Members conduct a visit to the site. The Chief Executive reminded those present that alongside receiving capital receipts, the Council would still be retaining an asset in equity shares.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration, Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

1. To authorise the signing of contracts to enable the start of works for Phase 2.
2. To fund additional contributions from a reduction in the overall land receipt using option 3 paragraph 3.3 of the Cabinet report.

REC139: **CABINET REPORT – AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN**

The Environmental Health Manager (Environment) presented the Cabinet report which highlighted the work which had been completed in drawing up an Air Quality Action Plan and the mechanisms used to consult with the public and stakeholders on the proposed air quality reduction measures.

The Environmental Health Manager (Environment) reminded those present that they had received in 2014 prior to the plan going out for public consultation. The Cabinet report included the results of the consultation and presented the final version of the Air Quality Action Plan for adoption.

The Panel was informed that DEFRA provided guidelines on what should be included in an Air Quality Action Plan and these guidelines had been followed by the Council.

The Environmental Health Manager explained that an Air Quality Steering Group had been set up by the Council with the Portfolio Holder for Environment in the Chair. The Group had produced the draft Air Quality Action Plan and had co-ordinated the consultation exercise which had included information published on the website, online surveys and drop in sessions. A report detailing the consultation responses was included in the report at Appendix 1.

DEFRA had also considered the draft Air Quality Action Plan and were supportive. DEFRA's report was available on the Borough Council's website.

Following the consultation exercise the Air Quality Steering Group had met to consider responses and formulate 20 measures which had been included in the Air Quality Action Plan – Non-technical Summary.

The Environmental Health Manager referred to the Policy Implications as set out in the report and explained that the Air Quality Action Plan would be used to implement measures designed to, in combination, reduce the levels of NO₂ to levels below the National Air Quality Objective and eventually lead to the revocation of both Air Quality Management Areas within King's Lynn.

The Environmental Health Manager reminded the Panel that it was a legal requirement for the Borough Council to complete, adopt and implement an Air Quality Action Plan.

The Environmental Health Manager drew the Panels attention to page 19 of the agenda which was a chart showing the results of the consultation exercise.

The Chairman thanked the Environmental Health Manager (Environment) for his report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, some of which are summarised below.

Councillor Crofts referred to Air Quality Policy Action 5 which was to consider, with Norfolk County Council, if taxis and private hire vehicles could use the 'bus only' lane from Wisbech Road through to the Friars and Boal Street. He felt that this was a good idea as it would divert some traffic away from London Road and should definitely be progressed. The Environmental Health Manager explained that a local bicycle user group had raised concerns on this issue in that there would be additional traffic on the bus route. Comments had also been received from residents and the nearby school.

Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh felt that more consideration should be given to encouraging people to visit King's Lynn by rail from Downham Market and Watlington. The Environmental Health Manager explained that options to utilise the old Sand Line had been investigated for possible use as a 'Park and Rail' facility but was not feasible. The Environmental Health Manager referred to Air Quality Policy Action 6 which was to look at ways that public transport could be made more attractive.

Councillor Bubb referred to 'Park and Ride' schemes. He was aware that this had been looked at in the past but had not been feasible. He asked if it was worth looking at it again. The Environmental Health Manager explained that options for 'Park and Ride' had been looked at but was very expensive to set up and there would have to be an incentive for customers, for example not having to then sit in traffic on a bus to come into town. Improvement measures such as installation of the variable messaging system to direct vehicle users to available car parking spaces had already been implemented and would hopefully have an impact on air quality as drivers would not have to drive round searching for spaces.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Leamon, the Environmental Health Manager explained that various policy actions within the plan addressed car parking issues and any implemented actions would be monitored in terms of air quality. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that any new developments would be subject to Air Quality Impact Assessments as part of the planning application process.

In response to a further question from Councillor Mrs Leamon, the Environmental Health Manager confirmed that there were two Air Quality Monitoring Stations in the Borough, one at London Road, King's Lynn and one near Gaywood Clock. There were also 66 diffusion tubes across the Borough which were used to monitor and compare sites and could be used to look at the cumulative impact.

The Environmental Health manager explained that patterns and trends could be identified through the monitoring process, for example an increase in pollutants during rush hour, and different levels on each side of the road depending on the direction of travel.

In response to a question from the Vice Chairman the Environmental Health Manager explained that monitoring was carried out in residential areas, or in areas where people were likely to congregate for a period of time, for example the bus station. In response to a question from the Vice Chairman regarding the Hardwick Retail Park, the Executive Director explained that it was private land, so issues with queues in the car park would need to be addressed by the land owner.

Councillor Moriarty asked for clarification on what would happen if the Air Quality Action Plan was adopted by the Council in terms of ongoing monitoring. The Environmental Health Manager explained that the Air Quality Steering Group would look at all data available and where levels were the highest. They would then look at available resources to take forward individual measures. This could require further consultation with specific user groups and Norfolk County Council Highways. The Environmental Health Manager reminded those present that an update report was presented to Cabinet on an annual basis and the Regeneration, Environment and Community Panel would also have the opportunity to consider the update report.

The Executive Director reminded the Panel that some of the measures contained within the action plan were in the process of being implemented, for example the variable messaging system and improvements to the bus station.

Councillor Moriarty asked if there was the scope to involve outside people in the Air Quality Steering Group. The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Long explained that the Steering Group was made up of officers, but going forward the relevant people and organisations could become involved in specific consultation exercises, they would not, however, become formal members of the Steering Group. The Executive Director reminded those present that Norfolk County Council Highways would also carry out an extensive consultation exercise if traffic management proposals were put forward.

Councillor Loveless addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He referred to the increase in vehicles using the roads and asked what

could be done to discourage car use and provide alternative ways to travel. Councillor Loveless felt that the report addressed problems with pollution at a certain level, but asked what about the spread generally across the areas. The Environmental Health Manager explained that general background pollutant levels were decreasing and he felt that this was due to the decrease in coal burning gas stations, an increase in 'green' energy and improvements to vehicle technology. The Environmental Health Manger explained that there had been a downward trend in background pollutants over the past decade and in King's Lynn 2014 had been the lowest year recorded. More details of this would be included in the Annual Report.

Councillor Loveless asked if he would have the opportunity to make further comments on the prioritising of the actions points and the Environmental Health Manager explained that once the specific actions were being looked at, it was likely that further consultation would be carried out.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Regeneration, Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:
That Cabinet adopt the Air Quality Action Plan.
(ii) The Panel noted that several of the initiatives were already in place.

REC140: **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

REC141: **EXEMPT CABINET REPORT – KING'S LYNN INNOVATION CENTRE**

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager presented the Cabinet report which updated on progress with the development of the King's Lynn Innovation Centre and summarised the outcome of the procurement process to appoint a contractor to build the centre.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager provided the Panel with information on the results of the tender process. He explained that potential funding sources had been identified and a bid had been submitted to the Norfolk Business Rates Pool, the results of which were awaited. If the bid was unsuccessful it was proposed that the Council loaned an equivalent amount to the project partners as an extension to the existing loan agreement.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager explained that since writing the report there had been some progress and he outlined the changes to the recommendations.

The Chairman thanked the Regeneration and Economic Development Manager for his report and the Regeneration and Economic Development Manager responded to questions and comments from the Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Regeneration, Environment and Community Panel support recommendation 1 & 2, subject to the figure being amended from £420, 000 to £450,000 and that recommendations 3 & 4 be amended to recommendation 3 as set out below:

1. Endorse the submission of an application for £450,000 grant funding to the Norfolk business Rate Pool to cover the build cost shortfall following submission of tenders.
2. In the event that the bid to the Norfolk Business Rates Pool is unsuccessful, the Cabinet agrees to provide a loan of £450,000 to NWES to enable them to meet the build cost shortfall.
3. That a further report be presented to Cabinet on the outcome of the method chosen for the ground improvement works.