

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Minutes from the Meeting of the Resources and Performance Panel held on Tuesday, 1st September, 2015 at 6.00 pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn

PRESENT: Councillor H Humphrey (Chairman)
Councillors R Blunt, J Collop, I Devereux, I Gourlay, G Hipperson, P Hodson, G Middleton, A Morrison and D Tyler

Portfolio Holders

Councillor A Beales, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets

Councillor P Beal, Portfolio Holder Coastal and Tourism

Observing:

Councillor Mrs S Young

Officers:

Becky Box, Personnel Manager
Lorraine Gore, Assistant Director
Ray Harding, Chief Executive

RP34 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Daubney and Wareham.

RP35 MINUTES

The minutes of the Resources and Performance Panel held on 21 July 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RP36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

RP37 URGENT BUSINESS UNDER STANDING ORDER 7

There was no urgent business.

RP38 MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

There were no Members present pursuant to Standing Order 34.

RP39 **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)**

The Chairman reported that he had received correspondence from a complainant regarding Item 10 – Complaints against the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

The Chief Executive explained that he would provide the relevant information to the Panel under Agenda Item 10.

RP40 **MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE FROM OTHER COUNCIL BODIES AND RESPONSES MADE TO PREVIOUS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS/REQUESTS**

None.

RP41 **HUNSTANTON SAILING CLUB PROGRESS REPORT**

In the absence of representatives from the Sailing Club being available to answer questions, the Panel discussed the progress report and invited comments from the Portfolio Holder and Ward Member.

RESOLVED: The item be deferred until the next meeting of the Panel on 29 September 2015 when representatives of the Hunstanton Sailing Club be requested to attend to present an outline Business Plan and answer questions from Members.

RP42 **Q1 2015/2016 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

In presenting the report, the Personnel Services Manager explained that this was the first quarterly report for 2015/2016.

Members were asked to note that, in response to a request from Members of the Panel in July 2015, the Council's Monthly Budget Monitoring Report, which detailed financial performance monitoring, was now being published on Insite alongside the Corporate Performance Monitoring report.

The Panel's attention was drawn to section 3.2 of the report which provided details of the 10 new/revised performance indicators which had been added and would be monitored from Q1 2015/16. It was highlighted that performance indicator CC10 had been added as a new target following a request from the Panel in July 2015.

The Personnel Manager advised that the performance for 35% of the indicators had improved during Q1 2015/2016, which had increased compared to Q1 2014/2015. The 18 indicators reported under 'Other' Q1 2015/2016 would decrease throughout the year as figures for the previous year would become available for comparison purposes.

Members were advised that the opportunity had also been taken to review the performance indicators by Portfolio and by Directorate and the relevant tables were provided at section 4.4 of the report.

The Personnel Services Manager referred to the Action Report on page 12 and explained that fewer indicators had been identified that required further action.

The Panel noted that the full Action Report was available on pages 13 to 17 of the Agenda.

In response to questions from Councillor Devereux regarding indicators to record performance against budget to ensure that the Council was on track, the Chairman, Councillor Humphrey advised that the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report was circulated to all Members and contained financial information. Councillor Devereux further commented that a set of KPI's were required to ensure that the Borough Council ran a successful operation.

The Assistant Director advised that the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report had a percentage of such financial indicators and gave examples of capital spend to date and the present revenue variances. She added that previously the reports had been separate, but had now been placed alongside the quarterly performance monitoring report on Insite. The Assistant Director explained that officers could look at indicators in the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report if the Panel so wished.

Councillor Devereux added that it would be useful to have the following key financial indicators:

- Revenue.
- Cashflow.
- Capital Spending.

The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey advised that the above indicators were available in the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report, but not presented in the way required. The Assistant Director undertook to look at the key performance indicators and how they could be presented in future.

The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey referred to Performance Indicator CO3 - % of rent achievable on industrial estates and commented that it had only missed the target marginally and that it had been given a red flag.

Councillor Blunt asked if the missed target could be identified by an amber colour to show where an indicator had only marginally missed its target. In response, the Chairman, Councillor Humphrey added that he had asked the same question previously and the response had been that an indicator had either met or not met its target. In response to the comments made by the Chairman and Councillor Blunt, the Personnel Services Manager advised that the information could be presented with an amber coloured symbol, but that the Panel would need to agree.

In response to questions and comments from Councillor Blunt regarding Performance Indicator CE2: Percentage of long term empty homes in the Borough as a percentage of overall dwellings, the Chief Executive explained that the Borough Council had progressed this indicator as far as realistically possible in the context of the current policy. He provided the Panel with an overview of the Council's current policy and added that the Council wrote to owners on an annual basis where properties had been empty for two years, it was noted that generally in some cases this did trigger action. The Chief Executive advised that there were a significant number of long term empty homes and that Members could be provided with a summary when the Performance Monitoring Report was next presented to the Panel.

The Chief Executive informed the Panel that the Borough Council had put together a scheme with Freebridge Community Housing to bring back empty homes into use and this had resulted in a good take up.

In response to questions from Councillor Devereux regarding empty homes and income from rates, the Chairman, Councillor Humphrey explained that long term empty properties were penalised by council tax payments, but highlighted that the Council's aim was to bring as many empty properties as possible back into use.

In response to questions from the Chairman, Councillor Humphrey regarding performance indicator CC6: % of Careline alarms installed within 10 days of enquiry and whether the new database would improve the target, the Personnel Manager advised that she did not have the information to hand. The Chief Executive explained that the new database would not make a difference to the performance levels, but that the changes implemented to the process would improve performance levels.

In response to questions from Councillor Hodson, the Chief Executive explained that if the Council took a more proactive stance it was likely that further results would be obtained, but it was dependent on Member's objectives.

The Deputy Leader commented that housing was a complex issue and there was a balance to be achieved as well as reducing the number of empty homes and added that there was a fundamental democratic right to enjoy your property. The Deputy Leader stated that it would not,

however, be incorrect to revisit the Council's current policy. The Panel noted that the Council did currently promote residential units above retail shops. The Deputy Leader outlined the importance of continually monitoring the performance indicators and welcomed feedback from Members how they wished the information to be presented.

The Assistant Director advised that the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report included information on the level of rates recovery.

RESOLVED: The Panel reviewed and noted the Council's Q1 2015/2016 Performance Monitoring Report and agree the actions outlined within the Action Report.

RP43 **FORMAL COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE BOROUGH COUNCIL - 1
APRIL 2014 TO 31 MARCH 2015**

The Chief Executive referred to the correspondence received by the Chairman relating to the Annual Complaints Report for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The Chief Executive provided the Panel with an overview and background details of the two complaints which the Members present noted. It was also noted that one of the complaints had been omitted from the 2013/2014 summary of complaints (reference CB07). This complaint had been upheld.

The Chief Executive advised that for Members information, the report for the previous year should have also included an additional justified corporate complaint (CB07) within the Leisure Portfolio. The corporate complaint was upheld.

In presenting the Annual Report, the Chief Executive highlighted the key points as set out below:

- Corporate Complaints: 32 were received during 2014/2017, compared with 37 during the previous year. Of those complaints, 8 were considered to be justified and 4 were considered to be partly justified.
- Appendix A of the report set out a summary of the justified complaints.
- Of the 32 corporate complaints received, 16 went to an Appeal to the Chief Executive (Stage 2) and out of the 16 complaints, 3 were considered to be justified and 3 partly justified.

The Chief Executive outlined the Council's current complaints procedure and explained that the current procedure worked well.

Councillor Devereux commented on the total cost of compensation £310 and asked what was the cost to the Council to administer the complaints procedure. In response, the Chief Executive explained that it depended on the complexity of the complaint and advised that it varied from two hours up to as much 40 hours in some isolated cases. He added that it was important that the public had confidence in the Council's robust complaints procedure.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Annual Report.

RP44 **CABINET REPORT: NON DOMESTIC RATES - EXTENSION OF TRANSITIONAL RELIEF**

The Revenues and Benefits Manager presented the report and explained that it proposed an extension to the Council's current scheme and Council approval was required. It was noted that the scheme was reviewed every five years and a review had last been undertaken by the Council in 2010.

The Panel were advised that the Government had legislated to allow Councils to adopt a discretionary scheme of Transition Relief for qualifying ratepayers in their area as the statutory scheme ended on 31 March 2015 and the revaluation had been deferred until 2017. The cost would be met in full by Central Government.

In response to questions from Councillor Devereux, the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that Central Government did not meet the Borough Council's cost of administering the scheme.

RESOLVED: That the Panel support the recommendation to Cabinet as follows:

Cabinet recommend to Council to adopt the Discretionary Transitional Relief Scheme for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 as detailed in the report and shown at Appendix A.

RP45 **CABINET REPORT: COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/2017**

In presenting the report the Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that the Council must review and agree its Council Tax Support Scheme each financial year. The process included consulting with major preceptors, publishing a draft Council Tax Support Scheme and then consulting with interested parties before the final Council Tax Support Scheme was approved.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that the report detailed a review of the 2015/2016 Council Tax Support Scheme, the consultation responses from Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner, and the recommended draft 2016/2017 Council Tax Support Scheme to go to public consultation.

The Panel were provided with background information. It was noted that the Council Tax Benefit was abolished on 31 March 2013 and from April 2013 billing authorities had implemented their own local schemes of Council Tax Support to assist people on low incomes with their council tax costs.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager outlined some of the elements of a local Council Tax Scheme which Central Government had prescribed as set out below:

- Pension age claimants were excluded from local Council Tax Support Schemes and received Council Tax Support based on a national, more generous, set of regulations, although the cost was still met by local Councils.
- Vulnerable groups must be considered for protection from any reduction in support compared to the national Council Tax Support Scheme.
- Work incentives should be promoted.

Members were advised that there was little feedback received following public consultation and compared to the same time last year, the Borough Council's overall caseload had decreased by 5%. However, the number of people under the work incentives had increased which was encouraging.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager provided an overview of The Welfare Reform Bill 2015 and Universal Credit as set out in the report at section 3.

Members' attention was drawn to the other options considered detailed at section 6 of the report.

Councillor Collop commented that the Borough Council did not know what other Councils were proposing and that there were a number of different schemes being operated in Norfolk. He added that when the Borough Council knew what other Councils were proposing then the Borough Council could make a decision. In response, the Chairman, Councillor Humphrey commented that there was contact amongst Norfolk Councils, but it was important that the Borough Council made a decision on a draft scheme to go out to consultation. In conclusion, the Chairman added that in the past the Borough Council's scheme had been at the correct level for the Borough.

In response to further questions from Councillor Collop, the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that the reason why the Borough Council's had the biggest cut was down to the demographics of the area and the number of pension age claimants which had to be protected and informed Members that there were 54% of pensioners in the Borough.

Following further comments from Councillor Collop, the Assistant Director explained that the Borough Council did have information from other Councils and undertook to email the information to the Panel. The Assistant Director advised that from a financial point of view during year 1 a transitional grant was available. If the Council proposed a 100% fully funded scheme there would be a cost of £100,000 to the

Council and if the percentage was therefore changed it would have an impact on the Financial Plan.

The Deputy Leader informed the Panel that when the report was considered by Cabinet, the Leader took into account of the schemes in operation in other Norfolk Councils as well as the Borough Council's demographics and gave Members assurance that all benefactors were taken into account by Cabinet.

In response to questions from Councillor Collop on the amount of money received by Norfolk County Council from other District Councils and other schemes which were beneficial to residents, the Chief Executive referred to section 2.5 of the report – the spend on protected groups and the costs of the work incentives within the scheme.

Councillor Collop commented that the Borough Council should look at other Norfolk Councils to see what they did differently.

The Deputy Leader stated that this was an important point and referred to Appendix B – Comparison of the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 caseloads and that only 10% were not protected, this indicated that the Council was proposing a Scheme which could be supported. Comparisons with other Councils had formed part of the report.

Councillor Collop wished it to be recorded that he did not support recommendation 3.

RESOLVED: The Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

- 1) Note the consultation responses from Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 2) Agree a public consultation period running online over a six week period from 18 September 2015 to 30 October 2015.
- 3) Agree the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016, with the amendments as shown at Appendix C, as the draft Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017 to go to public consultation.
- 4) Note that a further report detailing the proposed final Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017 would be presented to Cabinet, for recommendation to Council, before 31 January 2016.
- 5) The cost of the Council Tax Scheme and the impact of the taxbase would be monitored and an update report brought back before Members after six months.

RP46 **WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016 AND FORWARD DECISIONS LIST**

The Panel noted the Work Programme for 2015/16.

29 September 2015

Corporate Business Plan – The Panel will receive a presentation from the Policy and Partnerships Manager.

Hunstanton Sailing Club – Progress report.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm