

**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**

**REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Regeneration and Development Panel held  
on Wednesday, 25th November, 2015 at 4.00 pm in the Committee Suite,  
King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs K Mellish (Chairman),  
T Bubb (substitute for D Whitby), Mrs J Collingham, C Crofts,  
M Chenery of Horsbrugh, Mrs E Nockolds, J M Tilbury,  
Mrs E Watson and Mrs A Wright

**Portfolio Holders:**

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

Councillor B Long – Portfolio Holder for Environment

Councillor Mrs E Nockolds – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health.

**Officers:**

Chris Bamfield – Executive Director  
Mark Fuller – Principal Project Surveyor  
Ray Harding – Chief Executive  
Tim Humphreys – Tourism Manager

**By Invitation:**

Eliska Cheeseman – Norfolk County Council

Vince Muspratt – Norfolk County Council

Paul Searle – Destination Management Plan

**RD1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Daubney, Howland, Shorting, Tyler and Whitby.

**RD2: MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** The minutes from the joint meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**RD3: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was none.

**RD4: URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

RD5: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

There was none.

RD6: **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

RD7: **MATTERS REFERRED TO THE PANEL FROM OTHER COUNCIL BODIES AND RESPONSES MADE TO PREVIOUS PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS/REQUESTS**

The Panel noted the response made by Cabinet to the recommendations from the Joint Panel Meeting on 28 October 2015 in respect of the following items:

- Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Fees.
- Gambling Act Policies
- Licensing Act Policies.

RD8: **NORFOLK RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE AND LOCAL STRATEGY FOR THE WEST NORFOLK LEADER PROGRAMME**

The Chairman welcomed Vince Muspratt and Eliska Cheeseman to the Meeting who provided an update on the Norfolk Rural Development Strategy, West Norfolk Local Action Group and other support for accessing EU funding.

A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix 1.

The Chairman thanked officers for their presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Baron Cheney of Horsburgh it was explained that the West Norfolk Local Action Group comprised 50% private sector representatives, a Borough Council representative (the Economic Development Officer), representatives from the National Farmers Union and Community Action Norfolk and was supported by officers from Norfolk County Council. Eliska Cheeseman explained that it would be beneficial if there were more private sector representatives on the Group and informed those present that if they knew anyone who would like to be involved to contact her.

In response to a further question from Councillor Baron Cheney of Horsburgh regarding Broadband and Mobile Phone coverage, it was

explained that a Digital Divide Group had been established and were campaigning for broadband and mobile coverage improvements. Eliska Cheeseman explained that the group received the roll out plans and downtimes from the main mobile providers and had received presentations from them. She explained that sometimes there were down time periods of about six weeks during reconfiguration of masts and infrastructure. The Digital Divide Group was campaigning for increased mobile coverage in rural areas.

Councillor Mrs Watson explained that she was concerned with housing needs. She felt that it was problematic on the Coast as there was little affordable housing provision and social housing was being sold. She commented that it was important to provide affordable homes along the Coast to enable people to remain in the area. Eliska Cheeseman explained that this had been recognised as an issue in the Rural Development Strategy and there was a need to provide housing so that young people did not leave the area due to lack of appropriate housing. The Panel was informed that this was not something that the private sector could solve alone, so incentives could be looked at on how social housing could be provided and business owners could investigate how the needs of their labour forces could be met.

Vince Muspratt commented that the Rural Development Strategy would not solve all problems, but it could help communities to develop ways of working together. The funding available for communities could assist them in looking at housing needs and communities could carry out initiatives or create Community Housing Trusts if they were willing to become involved and take ownership. The Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Wright asked if this was something that Borough Councillors could promote within their Constituency and it was explained that the option could be explored and if there was a desire to proceed there was the possibility that some funding could be available.

In response to a question from the Vice Chairman, Eliska Cheeseman provided an example of the types of businesses which could benefit from ESF and ERDF Funding. She explained that it would be available to businesses looking to grow and create jobs within the key sector areas. There were few restrictions, only that the business had to be small and retail businesses were excluded. The LEADER grant funding was available in rural areas and grant applications were considered by the Local Action Group. The West Norfolk Local Action Group had identified six priority areas as set out in the presentation.

Councillor Tilbury commented that the funding opportunities seemed to be relatively small scale and was informed by Vice Muspratt that there was funding available from the Local Enterprise Partnership for larger scale development. The LEADER, ESF and ERDF funding was working from the bottom up and focussed on micro businesses which were unable to compete for bigger funding opportunities. Vince Muspratt explained that Norfolk County Council officers were available

to provide advice and guidance to businesses who wanted to bid for funding.

Councillor Tilbury commented that until this meeting he was unaware of the existence of the West Norfolk Local Action Group. Vince Muspratt explained that it had been a challenge to raise awareness of the group and the opportunities available. He explained that the Economic Development Officers who were representatives on the Group were kept up to date on progress.

The Chairman commented that it would be beneficial for the Panel to receive updates from the Economic Development Officer at the Borough Council as appropriate. The Chairman also requested that if any information was available on the potential formation of Community Housing Trusts that it be circulated to the Panel.

In response to a question from the Chairman it was explained that the current status of the LEADER funding was that businesses could now apply for funding and the Local Action Group would meet in the New Year to assess the applications. Work was ongoing to promote the availability of the grant funding. The Portfolio Holder for Culture Heritage and Health, Councillor Mrs Nockolds commented that the availability of the LEADER funding had been promoted at a recent meeting of the West Norfolk Tourism Forum.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Long asked where businesses should be directed if there were having difficulty with broadband connection. The Panel was informed that funding was unavailable through the LEADER programme for broadband as this was covered by the Better Broadband for Norfolk roll out. She explained that the programme was ongoing to improve connectivity in the area. Vouchers were available to businesses that could not be connected through the scheme and businesses should contact Norfolk County Council.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets, Councillor Beales, commented that the funding available through the scheme could be useful to small local businesses and the tourism sector. He reminded those present that funding opportunities had been available previously and this was the next round of available funding.

**RESOLVED:** (i) The update was noted.  
(ii) The Panel be kept informed of progress as appropriate.

RD9:                    **ARTS CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT**

The Principal Project Surveyor provided the Panel with an update on the King's Lynn Arts Centre Complex as attached. The Panel was provided with an overview of the history of the Arts Centre, the different

buildings which comprised the centre and current issues and problems. Members of the Panel had been invited on a tour of the Arts Centre prior to the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Principal Project Surveyor for his presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Crofts explained that he felt the buildings were under used and asked if consideration had been given to holding antique fairs in the Arts Centre. The Principal Project Surveyor explained that consideration had been given to dividing the White Barn into workshop spaces and other options could be considered in the future.

Councillor Mrs Collingham commented that it was important to introduce a commercial Management Structure to the Arts Centre to make it economically viable, whilst underpinning the Arts.

In response to a question from Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh, it was explained that the next stage was to engage with stakeholders and review options with a view to presenting them to Members in March 2016. Subject to Member approval it was proposed that an initial project enquiry be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in spring 2016. The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health explained that she had already spoken to some stakeholders regarding the future of the Arts Centre.

Councillor Bubb commented that there was lack of connectivity between the buildings and one solution could be to put a roof or canopy over the centre of the complex.

Councillor Mrs Watson commented that the Arts Centre appealed to a niche group of regular users who felt ownership of the space. She explained that it was important to open up the space and raise awareness that it was open for everyone to enjoy. She asked if it would be possible to show a plan of the Arts Centre complex in other Council owned buildings which could also advertise events and encourage people to visit the complex.

The Executive Director explained that as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund application it would have to be proven that there was public support for the project, so the public would be engaged in the consultation process of the Council determined to proceed.

Councillor Tilbury asked if any draft proposals had been considered and asked why upset the current operation of the Arts Centre. The Chairman explained that the current complex was under used and could be better utilised. Proposals would look at how to maximise the use of the space and become commercially viable.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Industrial Assets explained that everyone had different ideas on the future of the Arts Centre and the next stage would be to engage with stakeholders. He commented that the Arts Centre was not widely visible from the street and needed to be opened up in order to draw people to the site. He felt that the Arts Centre needed to be commercial, but a sensitive approach was required to underpin the Arts offer. He felt that the Arts Centre was a hidden gem.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Wright felt that the complex comprised an exciting group of buildings and agreed that a commercial approach was necessary whilst underpinning the Arts. She commented that she would be hesitant of an Arts Council National Portfolio Funded approach.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Industrial Assets reminded those present that the availability of funding was uncertain at the moment and would be required in order to make it sustainable.

In response to a question from Councillor Crofts, the Executive Director explained that nothing had been ruled out at this stage and there was the potential that part of the venue could be utilised as a wedding venue. The Town Hall was currently in high demand as a venue and often fully booked; the Arts Centre could be a good alternative venue and would be commercially viable.

**RESOLVED:** (i) The update was noted.  
(ii) The Panel to be kept updated on progress.

RD10:                    **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Tourism Manager presented the West Norfolk Destination Management Plan. He introduced Paul Searle to the Panel who had been involved in the creation of the Plan and was a Member of the West Norfolk Tourism Forum Executive Committee. The Tourism Manager explained that the plan had been developed to provide a framework of objectives and actions over the next five years for increasing the value that visitor spending could make to the local economy throughout the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. This approach was being actively encouraged by organisations including Visit England and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. The plan included proposals on how the overall destination, locations and products could be branded and promoted and provided an understanding of how other destination management organisation and tourism bodies could work to meet the needs of the visitor economy in West Norfolk. The Tourism Manager provided an overview of key issues reviewed and the resultant aims and objectives of the plan.

A copy of the Tourism Managers presentation is attached.

Paul Searle addressed the Panel and explained that a lot of work had been done to bring the plan into fruition. He referred to the plan's objectives and aims and felt that it was important to promote West Norfolk as a visitor destination. Increasing visitor stay was important and the tourism experience needed to be developed. Work should be carried out to capitalize on day trippers and encourage them to stay in the area for longer periods. It was important to continue developing activities and events to give a reason for people to come to the area, which would have a knock on effect on local businesses and the local economy.

Paul Searle congratulated all those involved in creation of the plan and commented that it was supported by the tourism industry.

The Chairman thanked the Tourism Manager and Paul Searle for their presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Crofts asked if opportunities could be created for touring caravans to stop in King's Lynn as most remained along the coast. He referred to the waterfront area and asked if there was potential for this to be used as a caravan park. Paul Searle explained that he had not considered the potential for a touring caravan park in King's Lynn as caravans tended to be located in rural locations; however, this was something that could be investigated in the future if required. He emphasised the importance of continually offering ideas and encouraging visitors to experience activities and attractions across the local area.

Councillor Mrs Watson referred to the Coasthopper bus service and felt that the service was not as good as it had been previously. She felt the service did not link up with rail services as well as it had done in the past. She suggested that more could be done to promote Farmers Markets and she commented that she had visited many of these Markets and they always tended to be busy. She commented that the cover of the Destination Management Plan did not stand out and was too familiar. Paul Searle explained that this was the first Destination Management Plan which had been created and the plan was not to be confused with a brochure for the area, it would be used by businesses. The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health reiterated that the document was for businesses and it identified opportunities for them locally, it was not to be confused with a visitor guide.

Councillor Mrs Collingham commented that it was important to improve the King's Lynn offer as she felt that currently there was not enough to do to spend the day in King's Lynn, particularly for children. She explained that the events drew people in, but often not enough cafes etc. were open to support the increased amount of visitors. The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health, Councillor Mrs Nockolds explained that the Destination Management Plan would be

used to encourage businesses to maximise their potential and improve the overall offer of the area.

It was suggested that there was a need for more available activities and attractions during periods of poor weather. Public conveniences also needed to be improved. The Tourism Manager explained that in order to capitalise there was a need to promote the attractions available and encourage visitors to stay in the area for longer periods of time. He referred to the LEADER funding which was available for small businesses in West Norfolk.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Wright felt that the area had a considerable Heritage offer and Heritage trails should be promoted across the Borough. She explained that one of her concerns was the high levels of traffic particularly throughout the summer. The Tourism Manager noted that this had been highlighted in the plan.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Mellish commented that she felt that most of the tourism promotion focussed on the Northern Area. The Tourism Manager commented that the whole of West Norfolk was considered within the plan with the emphasis placed on spreading tourism visits and spending across the area and more widely throughout the seasons.

Councillor Crofts commented that Norfolk tourism was seasonal and for consideration to be given to encourage off season tourists.

Councillor Baron Chenery of Horsbrugh commented that branding was important and that West Norfolk should be branded separately to North Norfolk.

Councillor Mrs Collingham commented that more activities should be available during wet weather particularly for children and families.

The Chairman thanked the Tourism Manager and Paul Searle for the information provided at the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** The Regeneration and Development Panel supported the recommendations as follows:

1. That the Borough Council considers and endorses this plan as the tourism industry's assessment of the issues and opportunities for sustainably increasing the contribution that visitor spending makes to the economy of West Norfolk.
2. That annually, the Borough Council receives a presentation and report on the progress and any changes to the Destination Management Plan.



The Chairman informed those present that if they had any suggestions for items to be added to the Work Programme they could email her at any time.

**RESOLVED:** The Work Plan and Forward Decision List was noted.

RD12:            **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Regeneration and Development Panel was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 6 January 2015 at 6.00pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1EX.

**The meeting closed at 5.50 pm**