

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOINT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2020 TO CABINET 30 JUNE 2020

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RECOVERY STRATEGY

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT THE FULL DEBATE CAN BE VIEWED ON YOU TUBE

The Assistant to the Chief Executive gave a presentation, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.

A question and answer session followed, as set out below.

Councillor Mrs A Dickinson

Reference to 1.2 what is the make-up of the Recovery Co-ordination Group?

Response: The Chief Executive is not on actual Recovery Group because the Leader and herself are overseers. The Recovery Group was being led by the Executive Directors – Debbie Gates and Geoff Hall, together with Assistant Directors and the Communications Manager.

It would be useful to drill down into the detail to enable Members to gain a better understanding of what has happened and what will happen in the near and medium term.

Response: The Recovery Strategy (the overarching strategy) will be presented to Cabinet on 30 June 2020 and there would be a great deal of detail to be included in the Recovery Plan during July, which will require a lot of work by officers and Members. This will provide Members with the detail requested.

What will be the democratic process going forward?. Will the zoom facilities continue and be the new way of operating, or will we ever go back to the sorts of meeting formats in the past.

Response: The Council had to move to this virtual way of working to allow the democratic process to continue, otherwise there would be no meetings. This method of working will be reviewed in conjunction with the guidance going forward.

Councillor T Parish

The timings of public accessible meetings. The current situation is not suitable for all Councillors, particularly for at least a third of the Independent Group.

A difference of what suits officers, necessarily, or the Council working efficiently, what suits Councillors working effectively if they cannot actually attend meetings.

I as a councillor value the understanding of working operations for the council, but you also need suitable working arrangements for councillors

Response: At the moment virtual meetings via zoom were put in place to reinstate the democratic process as an early response to the crisis. The council cancelled all face to face meetings and explained that as further social distance guidance changes, the Council would look at how continue to hold meetings and timings of meetings. It was highlighted that additional support was required to ensure that meetings ran smoothly to enable public access, but also enable all Members to successfully join meeting.

Comments were made on the importance of car park revenue and the advantages of walking and cycling and there seemed to be a discrepancy between the two statements.

Could the council have discussions with government to ask if it is possible to make any change particularly with regard to second homes.

Response: Car park income provided an income stream. Central government funding had been reducing, so the council have had to look at other income generating initiatives that includes fees and charges, local taxation and commercial investments, so the council is relying on a number of income streams to fund services.

As far as car park income and the impact of taking some of that space, the council are holding discussions in King's Lynn with the BID about how the council can help the hospitality sector, particularly with the fact that they probably can't get as many people into premises.

As far as council tax is concerned, the council have to operate within the regulations for council tax and the council can only increase council tax by a certain percentage and that applies as well on not being able to increase council tax for the second homes above the full council tax charge.

The government have deferred the Fair Funding Review for local authorities to 2021. As part of that process, there will be consultation with local authorities.

Councillor C Morley

Questions regarding the strategic recovery structure.

The COVID 19 analysis highlighted deprivation as being a set of serious concern in West Norfolk and has reduced our citizens

resistance to infection as they get older. Deprivation is a really key issue for this area, and I would like to see on the recovery structure deprivations are or something of that type who will be working with the county and those three groups and enterprise units.

To increase and enhance social mobility and from the bottom all way through. Concentration is needed on education as well as employment, housing, the quality of affordable and social housing as well as rented properties.

Leisure of course, and the new sport activities and link to the transport strategy which you highlighted in the walking and cycling section.

I think that those working in cross functional chimneys and the functional chimneys would be contained in the recovery structure. I therefore think an independent person appointed separately of sufficient status to work across areas with a highlight of deprivation.

Response: The council was aware of the deprivation skills agenda and were obviously aware of the issues that faced West Norfolk pre Covid and none of those issues had gone away. As the council had responded to the pandemic, some of those issues had become more apparent so the council will pick that agenda up as it moves into the recovery phase which is referenced in the Strategy at 8.8. When the strategy is presented to Panels and Cabinet in the future, if the high level strategy is adopted that the strategy will be considered alongside the Council's corporate business plan.

Reference was made to the Cambridge Track and Trace Call Centre and how this was being co-ordinating track and trace tests across all of Norfolk.

Response: Any questions reference the Cambridge Call Centre should be addressed to Dr Louise Smith at Public Health.

Comments made on the performance matrix not relating to deprivation. I would be keen to discuss with officers.

Response: The report itself does pick up issues around deprivation, which have all manner of aspects to it, but it would be brought back to Panels.

Councillor A Kemp

My questions is about the well-being, health and homelessness.

I think focus should be placed on the deprivation issue, this impacted so much on the response of our residents to COVID and their resilience, particularly people with lung disease, obesity and diabetes. These were all conditions implicated in poor outcomes for COVID.

Can the council put together a healthy community action plan with the Director of Public Health and the NHS in respect of each ward, particularly the deprived towards to help build up community resilience. The council also needed a response regarding housing standards and there are housing stock which put people at risk. The recovery strategy needs to mention the benefits of increasing walking and cycling.

Councillor Kemp requested an immediate end to all proposals to build anywhere on Hardings Way because this is the green space for 10,000 residents in high density areas. Green space is fundamental to health and the Council needs to be encouraging this and enhancing as part of our tourism offer.

The councils needs to accelerate what it is currently doing because of the risks of a second outbreak of COVID.

Councillor Kemp asked for assurance that there could be inroads made into the points raised above as soon as possible.

Response: As part of the response through the Norfolk Resilience Forum there had been lots of evidence of collaborative working and cross working with different organisations and there has been lots of benefits from that and will continue to do so as we go forward into recovery. Building Better together is a strong theme for all organisations. Some of these important issues will be picked up as the council starts to look at the detail behind the high-level strategy and will then be addressed through the panels at the next stage. A full review of the council's capital programme would be undertaken during the process.

My point was about the impact on the reduction of council tax, bearing in mind that a third of the workforce had been furloughed and to what extent will this and the people having to apply for universal credit have made already.

Response: With regard to the collection of council tax, there was a hardship fund which applied to those in receipt of council tax support. The council will have to see as the economy moves forward and what impact there are long term on jobs and then what impact this has on the council's collection rates.

Councillor J Lowe

Please define what the new normal will be. From what I have gathered the new normal will not be sustainable for the economy, considering the social distance has already been cut and the Council as little influence on behaviour and enforcing these rules.

Response: There is not a definition on the new normal. As the country comes out of lockdown and the guidance around social

distancing changes and allows businesses to come back, the Council will work with businesses to enable them to return.

With regard to enforcement, this does not all rest with the Borough Council. There would also be enforcement undertaken by public health and the police. The message from government was to remain alert to control the virus.

Councillor L Bambridge

Questions have already been answered but I make the following comment:

I am particularly aware of so called social deprivation which occurs in particularly St Margarets with St Nicholas Ward.

There are young people in the Borough but there is a significant number of residents over the age of 70. Older people possibly need a little bit more caring attention.

Reference was also made to the homelessness issue within the Borough.

The Council needs to impress upon the government that licensing laws need to be revised.

Councillor J Moriarty

I would like to seek reassurance regarding transparency. Which meetings will continue to be held, membership and are minutes available for Councillors to view.

Response: The Norfolk Resilience Forum is one of the local resilience forums that were set up by the Government as a response to a crisis where one organisation might be overwhelmed by that response. It involves all local authorities and a number of organisations including the blue light services and public health working together in response. The member input was outlined and it was explained that a recovery impact assessment was undertaken as part of the Norfolk Resilience Forum to determine the structure going forward.

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the internal operational groups which would feed into portfolio holders, the Leader, herself and then to panels and Cabinet.

Over the past weeks, officers had been working on the high-level strategy and had been responding to assist businesses by awarding grants. As the council moves into recovery, the council would need to pick up those things that have worked well in response and those which are to be taken forward to address some of the issues that have

been raised today regarding skills, deprivation, health and well-being, etc.

Comment made on the relaxation or loosening up a social distancing, the council needs to think about members and the public who wish to listen to meetings and the timings of such meetings.

Comment: Not much reference to rural communities. Please could the council give some thought to this.

Comment: The government implied that if there is a second spike it would be down to local authorities to deal with it.

Response: If there are local outbreaks Public Health are putting together a local outbreak plan. Local authorities would come together with Public Health to deal with those issues if there was a second national spike.

Councillor Mrs J Collingham

What thought has been given to concrete ideas which could be put to Government as being part of some blue sky thinking, some sort of SWOT analysis. A key strategy and flagship project which is really going to drive footfall back into our towns.

Response: The Chief Executive provided an overview of the Future High Streets Fund and the Towns Fund. It was noted that the Towns Fund Board comprised of Members of businesses in King's Lynn, Council Officers and Members coming together to develop a Town Investment Plan and will need to look very closely at some of the projects. A Panel chair could request that a progress report be presented

Councillor M de Whalley

Could I have more detail on the work across the Council to re-evaluate and record the risks that is the financial risks with respect to the potential of additional waves, the virus and prolonged economic downturn.

Response: The Council will present its revised budget to Cabinet in August 2020. In addition, the Council is starting to look on the impact on the budget and the risk register. As part of the business continuity the Council have been looked on a daily basis on each of our service areas and what has been the impact during response and will need to continue to do so as we go through recovery.

Councillor F Bone

Many of the shops in King's Lynn are in private ownership, is it possible to have a levy imposed or an increasing rate on these shops.

Response: Business rates are set on a national scale, so it is based on evaluation of the business, therefore the council have to follow the national scheme for business rates.

Councillor A Ryves (Standing Order 34)

Comments made on the success that the Borough has enjoyed comes from the result following the collaboration between the Council and Outside Bodies.

What happens with rough sleepers once the government funding ceases.

Response: The Chief Executive advised that within the last few days there had been an announcement that there would be some additional funding available but no details had been received.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and the Assistant to the Chief Executive for an excellent presentation.

RESOLVED: The Joint Panel recommend that Cabinet recommend to Council that the proposal Recovery Strategy attached is adopted subject to the Panel's comments set out above being taken into consideration during the recovery stage.