

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**KING'S LYNN AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

Minutes from the Meeting of the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee held on Thursday, 7th January, 2016 at 6.00 pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn

PRESENT: Councillor A Tyler (Chairman)
Councillors L Bambridge, Mrs S Buck, J Collop, Mrs S Collop, G Middleton, P Rochford, T Smith, A Tyler and Mrs M Wilkinson

An apology for absence was received from Councillor I Gourlay and T Wing-Pentelow

1 **WELCOME**

The Chairman, Councillor Tyler welcomed everyone to the meeting. He also thanked the officers who had supported the Committee since it had been formed.

The Chairman welcomed Stuart Ashworth, Assistant Director who would be the new Management Team's representative for the meeting. He also welcomed Quentin Brogdale from Norfolk County Council for item 7 of the agenda.

2 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee was asked to confirm that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 September 2015 were a correct record, however several Members commented that they had not been able to access them on the Ipad.

The Chairman advised that if any Member had any problems accessing minutes or the agenda then they should contact IT or Democratic Services before the meeting.

AGREED: That confirmation of the minutes be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

4 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business to report.

5 **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Mrs E A Nockolds on item 9 – Allotments.

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

The Chairman reported that he had received an email from Mr J Loveless about bulbs being given to schools to plant. The email also asked if Councillors would be happy to promote this.

In response to a query from Councillor Miss Bambridge, the Operations Manager explained that Mr Loveless had been given some sacks of bulbs from the Nursery. Mr Loveless subsequently went back to the Nursery and saw some more stock of bulbs but these were not available and had been allocated to other people.

The Operations Manager also confirmed that the Council would be happy to promote bulb planting by schools.

7 **KING'S LYNN TRANSPORT ISSUES**

The Chairman invited Quentin Brogdale to give an update to the Committee on King's Lynn Transport Issues.

He explained that he had been sent some questions on behalf of Councillor Gourlay and would answer those, as follows:

- *The growth of King's Lynn and surrounding areas and how the overstretched road network was going to cope with this extra traffic.*

In response, it was explained that any major development would be referred to the County Council as a consultee on highways issues. As a consultee the County Council would assess the highway impact and, if necessary, recommend any appropriate mitigation measures.

- *Could traffic lights be installed at Asda and Winston Churchill Drive not hospital entrance at peak times.*

It was explained that this had been put forward for inclusion in the Traffic Management Programme.

- *Problems had been encountered with parking on Winston Churchill Drive and on William Booth Road, starting to park on both sides of the road which if it developed would mean cars and buses potentially would have to reserve back along the road.*

In response, it was explained that if buses were faced with roads not satisfactory, this was in the process of being monitored and if the problem existed then measures would be taken.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson informed the Committee that the problem was particularly a nuisance along Winston Churchill Drive, and that she had spoken with Sally Bettinson from NCC so she was also aware of the issue.

- *What roads on Bishop Park, Fairstead and King's Reach were still awaiting adoption?*

It was explained that Norfolk County Council were still waiting for the roads to be brought up to adoption standard which was the responsibility of the developer.

- Who was responsible for the state of footpaths on these two developments?

In response, it was explained that the developer would be responsible until the developments were adopted.

- *How often was the service roads and footpaths inspected on Fairstead, or is it dependant on residents or Councillors reporting the need for repair.*

It was explained that there was an inspection regime carried out on a 12 week programme which operated a priority system. He pointed out that some of the road on Fairstead did not belong to Norfolk County Council.

- *With new estates what steps were being taken to speed up adoption? There were problems with the new estate in the Baldock Drive area which required action by Ronald Mortimer.*

In response, it was explained that the Baldock Drive area was not adopted and there was no current plans for these to be. It would be the responsibility of the developer.

The Assistant Director referred to the problems with the adoption of Baldock Drive and Millfield Estate and explained that the problems had not only been encountered here but also across the country. He explained that the Council now added a condition on permissions for new estates regarding arrangements for future maintenance of the estate, and this condition would continue to be added onto any permission.

Councillor Collop added that the developers constructed Millfields and then went bust leaving the residents having to pay for the road. He stated that he understood that developers

should make good a section of the road before moving onto the next part.

Quentin Brogdale explained that until the developers put forward a scheme for adoption it was their responsibility. The Assistant Director added that the Council would now be imposing a condition on how they would maintain the estate in future and that condition could be enforced.

Councillor Tyler had raised the following issues:

- *Lorries using Loke Road and Tennyson Avenue and turning at the Woolpack corner into Loke Road.*

It was explained that Norfolk County Council were now in the process of implementing a 7 tonne weight limit.

Councillor Tyler added that there was a problem with cracks leading into people's properties. He asked for assurance that the measures put forward by Norfolk County Council would solve the problem.

Quentin Brogdale explained that it would be illegal for any HGV over 7 tonnes to use that route. He added that Norfolk County Council would encourage the Police to enforce and prosecute.

Councillor Mrs Buck stated that a resident had taken a note of the HGVs using the route and a lot were learner drivers.

The Operations Manager queried whether this would restrict the events that took place in the Walks. It was explained that the weight limit would have the proviso 'except for access'.

Councillor Miss Bambridge asked when the restriction would be put in place as this issue had been raised at SNAP meetings for at least the last 3 years.

Mr Brogdale advised that he would find out and let the Democratic Services Officer know, who would forward the information to the Committee.

Councillor Miss Bambridge stressed the importance of cooperation with the Police on this and the need for the Police to enforce and prosecute.

- *General traffic issues in King's Lynn*

Councillor Tyler stated that as a cyclist, he had noticed an increase in traffic within King's Lynn. Quentin Brogdale agreed that there was an increase in traffic particularly in the town centre. He explained that widening works were taking place

where they could and traffic lights were being replaced to be responsive.

Councillor Tyler reported that the traffic lights at the Woolpack in Gaywood often changed within seconds. Quentin Brogdale suggested that this could be a fault.

Councillor Smith asked how often County Highways looked at the whole of King's Lynn and considered other options. He stated that the main road through his ward had been the same as 80 years ago. He added that some houses had 3 cars. He asked how the town's rush hour could be stopped.

In response, Quentin Brogdale explained that County Highways did not just look at junctions in isolation, all traffic lights were linked and monitored and all movements could be seen throughout the town.

The Executive Director, Commercial Services explained that he had recently met with Tom McCabe and it had been suggested, as a pilot scheme, to carry out some changes to London Road. He outlined the proposed changes and stated that County were looking at that at the current time.

Councillor Mrs Buck stated that when travelling from South Lynn, there was no way of getting onto the roundabout because cars blocked it. The Executive Director explained that there was no loading restriction on the roundabout currently but consideration was being given to putting a loading restriction on.

The Executive Director advised the Committee that Norfolk County Highways had reduced budgets available to them.

The Executive Director referred to the road at South Lynn (CIF) into King's Lynn which was currently used by buses and asked why this could not be opened up for cars. He suggested that the planning permission might need to be varied or a new permission sought.

The Assistant Director explained that the road was tied to funding, the criteria of which would need to be looked into further.

Councillor Tyler referred to the traffic crossings at night being silent. Quentin Brogdale explained that at night there tended to be less traffic, and the noise that the crossing made was quite piercing and did irritate residents.

The Chairman thanked Quentin Brogdale for attending the meeting and for a useful discussion.

AGREED: That, the Assistant Director/Norfolk County Council investigates the possibility of opening the CIF road for cars to help alleviate the traffic issues around the Southgates roundabout.

8 **KING'S LYNN SPECIAL EXPENSES**

Toby Cowper, Principal Accountant gave a presentation to the Committee on King's Lynn Special Expenses. The presentation covered the following:

- What are 'Special Expenses'?
- What Special Expenses were charged for?
- How the Special Expenses were calculated.

The Committee noted that the estimated Special Expenses Charge for 2016/2017 would be £43.33.

Councillor Collop stated that King's Lynn was the only area that could not spend its money where it wanted to. He added that people should know where the money was being spent.

The Executive Director explained that a special expense charge was made on Hunstanton, Downham Market and King's Lynn.

Councillor Rochford added that as he understood it King's Lynn Councillors were elected to give the views of the public.

Councillor Collop stated that Hunstanton had some control over how money was spent. He added that King's Lynn Councillors had never had the chance to have an input on how money was spent.

In accordance with Standing Order 34, Councillor Mrs E Nockolds stated that at the Regeneration & Development Panel held last night, a report on Grounds Maintenance had been considered and agreed a Special Expense for all Parishes. In addition, the Council held budget meetings which any Councillor could come along at speak at. This Committee had also been formed and could put its views forward.

The Chairman stated that from the debate there was obviously a desire for the Committee to be able to discuss this item in greater detail. He suggested that an item be added to the Work Programme earlier to allow a discussion on special expenses.

The Principal Accountant suggested it could be considered at the September meeting as part of the budget process.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson also requested that a paper be written for the item rather than a power-point presentation.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson also requested a list of street lights and numbers be sent to her.

Councillor Smith referred to closed churchyards and asked why the Council had to pay for that. In response, it was explained that the Council had a statutory responsibility for closed churchyards.

The Committee then discussed the issue of grounds maintenance. The Executive Director explained that the County previously only paid for 5 cuts on highway grass. The Council had taken on the responsibility to cut the grass on highways to ensure it was kept to a high standard. The County Council were now only going to pay for 4 cuts per year. A review had been carried out and each individual space had been looked at. For example if Winston Churchill Drive was only cut 4 times per year then it would make the area look untidy and the estate would deteriorate. It had been agreed to implement an 18, 12 or 6 cut regime, and areas had been allocated into these cut regimes. This could be reduced or increased as required.

The Executive Director explained that the Borough Council would be receiving 20% less from Norfolk County Council in relation to grounds maintenance. The Borough Council was receiving less money from Government and had to look at different ways of working.

The Executive Director suggested that the Committee might want to consider, as part of Special Expenses, a list of aspirations for King's Lynn.

AGREED: (1) That Special Expenses be added to the Committee's Work Programme for September.

(2) That the Committee considers their aspirations for King's Lynn at the next meeting.

9

KING'S LYNN ALLOTMENTS

The Committee were given a presentation from the Operations Manager and were invited to make appropriate comments.

The Operations Manager explained that, as discussed at the last meeting, officers were asked to put together a proposal that could move the service away from the reliance on the special expense charge and capital funds by looking at a rent increase.

The current rent was £17.50 per plot.

Special expenses charge for allotments provided a further £20k income.

April 2017 – Increase rent to £35.00 (double current rate) with no change to special expense charge, but keep a maintenance allowance of £8.

April 2018 – Increase rent to £52.50 which would reduce special expenses from £20k to £12k

April 2019 – Increase rent to £70.00 which would further reduce the special expense charge to £4k

If at any point there was an underspend then this could be transferred to reserves for future maintenance.

Nothing could be changed until April 2017 as 12 months' notice would have to be given. A course of action needed to be agreed to be able to inform tenants with their next invoices in April

Councillor Mrs Buck stated that if the proposals went ahead then she would like to see a concession made for charities who used allotments, as funds were tight for those organisations.

The Operations Manager explained that charities did not currently have concessions, but she could look into that with any proposed increase.

Councillor Rochford stated that he supported the idea of youth groups or charities receiving a concession and would like to see by 2020 no charge to special expenses for allotments.

The Executive Director stated that the Committee as a group could make a recommendation on what that money could be spent on.

Councillor J Collop stated that the review needed to be carried out however he could not see the running costs for the Council.

The Executive Director explained that the cost of running allotments was £28,000 - £8,000 rents and £20,000 special expenses.

Councillor J Collop stated that if the Council did increase rents then people tended to look after their allotment better, and this would not cost the Council as much to maintain them. The Executive Director explained that the costs might reduce on a phased basis and the maintenance cost could reduce. Any money could be put into reserves.

Councillor J Collop added that eventually allotments would become self-sufficient.

Councillor Tyler asked that if the proposal went ahead would there be a fall-off in the people wanting to use an allotment.

Councillor Rochford advised that there was a massive waiting list.

The Operations Manager explained that it was a possibility that the popularity of allotments might fall away, however they were currently fashionable and it would be quite easy to do a marketing campaign. She did not see this as a major issue.

In response to a query from Councillor Mrs Collop, it was explained that 10 plots out of 557 allotments were used by schools, etc.

In response to a query regarding the size of plots, the Operations Manager explained plots did vary in size and the Council did try to match people up with their requirements.

The Committee agreed with the proposal to increase rents, and would like to see any expense to Special Expenses removed. The Committee would also want a review after a year and that a waiver or reduced cost be introduced for charities/schools or groups who were deemed worthy.

The Committee recommends that:

Delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer to increase rents and to remove a charge to Special Expenses, and a report be presented to the next meeting outlining how this would be achieved.

10 **APPOINTMENTS TO PLANNING SUB-GROUP/DISCUSSION ON FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Chairman reported that he had approached Councillor Rochford to see if he would be willing to be a Member of the Committee's Planning Sub-Group. Councillor Rochford had agreed.

Councillor Smith also volunteered to become a member of the Planning Sub-Group. It was advised that Councillor Smith would need to undertake some training beforehand and the Democratic Services Officer would contact him with the date.

Councillors Mrs Collop and C Kittow had already volunteered to be a member of the Sub-Group.

11 **COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2016/17.

Councillor Rochford informed the Committee that he had been approached by the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Bike Users Group about a proposal for a bike hire scheme in King's Lynn.

Councillor Smith raised the issue of having Smokeless Zones in the town centre.

AGREED: (1) That, this item be added to the Work Programme for a future meeting and Councillor Rochford contact the Group directly with dates of the Committee.

(2) That the issue of Smokeless Zones in the town centre be added on the Work Programme for a future meeting.

12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on **Monday, 14 March 2016** at **6pm** in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm