

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL**

Minutes from the Meeting of the Environment and Community Panel held on Tuesday, 3rd October, 2023 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillors S Collop (Chair), T Barclay, M Bartrum, J Bhondi, P Bland, P Devulapalli, A Kemp (substitute for A Bullen), P Kunes, J Ratcliffe, S Sandell and A Ware.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS:

Councillor A Beales – Portfolio Holder for Business

Councillor M de Whalley – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity

Councillor S Ring – Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Events and Marketing

Councillor J Rust – Portfolio Holder for People and Communities

OFFICERS:

Becky Box – Assistant Director

Martin Chisholm – Assistant Director

Oliver Judges – Executive Director

Jacob Medlock – Housing Standards Officer

EC37: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bullen and Squire.

EC38: MINUTES

RESOLVED: The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC39: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EC40: URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

EC41: MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

There was none.

EC42: CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

EC43: **HOME IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES PRESENTATION**

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The Panel received a presentation from the Housing Standards Officer. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Chair thanked the officer for the presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Sandell, the Housing Standards Officer confirmed that work was being carried out to engage with Parish Councils and community events had been arranged. He acknowledged that there were some problems with some installers of air sources heat pumps, but there was a scheme in place to stop rogue traders and those participating in the schemes outlined in the presentation would be checked for the relevant accreditations.

Councillor Kunes asked for advice on applying for grants and if payment was required up front and then claimed back. The Housing Standards Officer explained that different schemes had different criteria and if individuals were unsure they were welcome to contact Housing Standards for advice.

Councillor Ware asked if the schemes permitted cold calling and unsolicited calls and it was explained that individuals could phone the Housing Standards Team to check the legitimacy of organisations or they could check online that they were a reputable company. He advised individuals not to give out personal or financial information to cold callers.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust, thanked the Housing Standards Officer for the fantastic work in this area to reduce costs for residents and cut carbon emissions. Councillor Rust reiterated the concerns relating to cold callers and how it could deter vulnerable and elderly people from engaging in genuine schemes.

Councillor Kemp referred to the social housing decarbonisation fund and the initial target of 100 properties. She felt that this meant that a lot of properties would be missing out. The Housing Standards Officer explained that this was the initial target, but the scheme would run until 2025 so there could be opportunities to do more. The Council was also working closely with relevant Housing Associations. In response to a further question from Councillor Kemp, the Housing Standards Officer explained that Norfolk Warm Homes Consortium was used to deliver

and ensure that deprived areas within the Borough had been contacted to make them aware of schemes available to them.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust, stated that she held regular meetings with Freebridge Community Housing and would work with them to ensure that progress with schemes was monitored and discussed as required.

The Chair asked if schemes were available for private landlord tenants and the Housing Standards Officer explained that there were schemes available and individuals could contact the Housing Standards Team for more information.

The Vice Chair asked about the difference in attainment for Eco 4 verses Eco 5 and was advised it was due to resources being allocated this time around. The Vice Chair also asked for information on the amount of funding available through the schemes mentioned in the presentation and the Housing Standards Officer agreed to provide the information. He also explained that the schemes were coming forward this year as the resources were now in place to manage them and the Council were working with the NHS on referrals.

In response to a question from the Vice Chair, the Housing Standards Officer confirmed that Councillors could refer households directly to Housing Standards for further investigation on what schemes they could potentially benefit from.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity, Councillor de Whalley, thanked the Housing Standards Officer for the work in this area and stated that it was important to get the message out to as many households as possible. He asked about older properties within the Borough and the Housing Standards Officer stated that there were options available to improve energy efficiency including external and internal wall insulation.

RESOLVED: The update was noted.

EC44: **CABINET REPORT - CARE LEAVERS COVENANT**

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The Assistant Director presented the report which set out proposals for the commitment to sign the care leaver's covenant. She explained that Norfolk County Council was the primary support network, but each district also had an important role to play to support care leavers.

If the covenant was signed then a local offer of support would be developed. It was noted that there were already some schemes in place to offer support and signing up to the covenant would bring these all together for a joined up approach.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for her report and invited questions and comments, as summarised below.

Councillor Kemp indicated she was in favour of this national initiative and asked how care leavers were identified. The Assistant Director explained that work was carried out with Norfolk County Council Corporate Parenting Team for links and contacts to ensure that support was available for them.

Councillor Kemp referred to the Boost Project and asked if this offered training opportunities for care leavers. The Assistant Director confirmed that it did and additional opportunities would also be looked at, for example Mentoring programmes.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust commented that the Council was committed to providing the best offer for care leavers and hoped that signing up to the covenant would increase opportunities and aspirations.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Devulapalli, referred to the report and commented that it did not include any financial implications. The Assistant Director explained that signing up to the covenant did not have any financial implications, however any additional projects or offers would come back for a separate decision if required.

In response to a further question from the Vice Chair, the Assistant Director explained that links and information to access housing was provided and the provision of information could be looked at again as part of the local offer that would be put together.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

That the Council commits to taking action to meet the requirements of the Care Leavers Covenant.

EC45: **CABINET REPORT - UKSPF 24/25 - CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION OF BOOST PROJECT AND WEST NORFOLK TRAINING GRANTS**

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The Executive Director presented the report which set out detail of the projects to be delivered in 2024/25 under the investment priorities local Businesses and People and Skills to ensure smooth transition and continuation of existing projects which currently only had funding approved until March 2024.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Kemp commended this project which was part of the Town Deal. The Executive Director referred Councillor Kemp to the report which provided statistics on how many individuals had benefitted from the project so far. The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Rust informed the Panel that originally as the project had been part of the Town Deal it was focussed on King's Lynn, however extension of the project utilising the UKSPF funding meant that it could be expanded across the Borough and work could be carried out with partner organisations as appropriate including the CITB and Swan Youth Project.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Devulapalli referred to the previous report considered by the Panel relating to the care leavers covenant and made a plea that they would be included in opportunities.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below.

1. Endorse the continuation and expansion of the BOOST project for young people across West Norfolk as per section 6, table 2, option 2.
2. Approve the allocation of UKSPF 'People and Skills' funding for the Boost project for 2024/25 as set out in section 7, table 3 of the report.
3. Endorse the continuation and expansion of the West Norfolk Training Grant into 2024/25 as per section 13, table 6, option 3.
4. Approve the allocation of the UKSPF funding for the West Norfolk Training Grant project for 2024/25 as set out in section 12, table 5.
5. Approve the delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Regeneration, Housing and Place in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Business to agree delivery arrangements and any changes to ensure the efficient delivery of the Boost and West Norfolk Training Grant projects for 2024/25
6. Officers to provide an annual report on the progress and performance of the projects to the Corporate Performance Panel.

EC46: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

Councillor Kemp requested that the Panel give consideration to the digital switch over and the impact it could have on West Norfolk residents who did not have access to digital services. The Chair advised Councillor Kemp to complete the form available to request that an item be considered by the Panel.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Decision List was noted.

EC47: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on 14th November 2023 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall.

EC48: **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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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 paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

EC49: **EXEMPT - CABINET REPORT - 5 YEAR MART AGREEMENT**

The Assistant Director presented the Cabinet report and responded to questions from the Panel as summarised below.

Councillor Kunes asked if, in the future, it could be built into the contract the need to reduce carbon emissions and the Assistant Director explained that the Mart operators were aware of efficiencies and moving towards this as they replaced systems.

The Panel discussed safety issues and suggested ways that the commercial operator could ensure its own future viability by trialling different ways of operating to increase participation, especially during the current economic climate.

The Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Events and Marketing, Councillor Ring, addressed the Panel and commented that he supported the proposals as set out in the report to ensure the Mart continued to operate safely and hoped that the operator would consider initiatives to ensure that it remained viable.

The Assistant Director confirmed that he had a good working relationship with the operator and would pass the Panels comments on to them, noting that the Panel wanted to see the Mart continue to be successful and viable.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supported the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out in the report.

The meeting closed at 5.55 pm