

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 14 JANUARY 2025 FROM THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL MEETING HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2025

CP88: CABINET REPORT – TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

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The Chief Executive presented the report and reminded the Panel that one of the recommendations from the Peer Review in 2023 was to establish a transformation programme. Since 2023 work had been carried out informally and this report set out how the process would be formalised and how work would be carried out going forward.

The Chief Executive presented the emerging framework and it was noted that the next stage would be to create a list of projects, programmes and priorities.

Three pillars of change had been identified which were linked to the Corporate Strategy and also included some cross cutting themes. Examples of the types of projects that could be carried out under each pillar was provided to the Panel.

Information on governance framework was also provided and it was highlighted that a Programme Board would monitor performance and provide strategic oversight.

The Chief Executive explained that staff had been engaged in processes and responsible officers had been identified to take the three pillars of work forward.

The plan was to start the process from 1st April 2025 and the programme was intended to run for two years.

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

In response to a question from Councillor Collingham, it was clarified that this was separate to the work of the Member Major Projects Board.

The Chair asked about the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and the Chief Executive stated that at this stage Cabinet were being asked to agree the framework and individual projects and programmes would then follow and those that ensured they put the Council in a strong position for the future, realised efficiencies and modernised the workforce would be progressed.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Beales added that long term benefits still needed to be looked at, along with more efficient ways of working and the Cabinet would prioritise and consider the projects to be progressed. He provided the Panel with an update on recent discussions relating to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and how the Devolution Programme did not require a delay to Elections as Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation were two different things and he was working closely with other District Councils to make this point. The Leader of the Council explained that the Transformation Programme would strengthen the Councils position and ensure that the needs of residents were being met.

The Chair agreed that it was important to collaborate with others to ensure that the Council were future proofing, becoming more efficient and modernising.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Blunt commented that, along with the work required on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, this additional transformation work would require additional resources and it was important that there was support from Councillors. He welcomed the proposal for a cross party working group.

The Leader of the Council commented that it was important to identify what was possible to take forward and consider this against Political priorities. He referred to the proposal for a cross party group and asked the Panel to consider if they felt that this should be politically proportional, or if Membership should be based upon those that had an interest and could commit.

The Chair agreed that Members serving on the Group should have an interest, but felt that cross party representation was required. He commented that the Group did not necessarily need to be politically balanced, but required representation from all Political Groups.

The Chair proposed an amendment to the recommendation that the Transformation Board Membership be politically representative, rather than politically balanced so that it reassured that there would be cross party representation, but provided flexibility. This was agreed by the Panel.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet with one amendment (highlighted in bold), as set out below.

CABINET RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet Resolves:

- To note the contents of the report and the emerging Transformation Programme.
- To establish a politically **representative** member representation on the Transformation Programme Board to be chaired by the Chief Executive.

CP89: CABINET REPORT – PROCUREMENT STRATEGY AND CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

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The Monitoring Officer presented the report which introduced a new set of Contract Standing Orders which captured the recommendations from the ongoing Procurement Transformation Project and changes introduced by the Procurement Act 2023. The Monitoring Officer also presented the new Procurement and Contract Management Strategy which set out the strategic direction for the delivery of the Procurement and Contract Management function.

The Monitoring Officer explained that an officer handbook would be produced and published on the new Intranet. This would be available to Members so that they could become familiar with processes.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted the requirement to have a set of Contract Standing Orders as part of the Constitution and that the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy was an operational document and included a vision on what the Council wanted to achieve to support the Corporate Strategy.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted three key changes relating to thresholds, increasing the profile of contract management and the National Policy Procurement Strategy Government Framework.

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

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley commented that this suite of documents would make the processes easier to follow and deliver better outcomes.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Blunt asked what review mechanisms would be put in place and the Monitoring Officer explained that Contract Management Plans would be a requirement

and monitoring could take place via Key Performance Indicators. With regard to the additional resources that the new processes would require, it was noted that because the thresholds would be increased, officer resource would be available to work with departments and undertake monitoring as required.

The Chair, Councillor Long commented that the Council needed to spend public funds efficiently and acknowledged that thresholds needed to be increased, but consideration needed to be given to repeat awards of contracts and the cumulative effect. The Council needed to ensure that they were getting best value and that there was fair competition. The Monitoring Officer explained that the Procurement Team would be carrying out a lot more spend analysis and market testing to ensure that the Council continue to achieved best value. Information would also be included in the officer handbook.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

Cabinet recommends to Full Council:

1. The adoption of the Contract Standing Orders attached as Appendix 1 into the Constitution from and including 24 February 2025 as a replacement to the current Contract Standing Orders.

Cabinet resolves:

2. To approve the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy attached as Appendix 2.
3. Authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance to make revisions to the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy to reflect relevant changes within the revised National Procurement Policy Statement issued under section 13(3)(c) of the Procurement Act 2023

CP90: CABINET REPORT – SOCIAL VALUE POLICY

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The Monitoring Officer presented the report which proposed the adoption of a Social Value Policy to codify the Council's approach to meeting legislative requirements under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the Procurement Act 2023.

The Panel were directed to page 109 of the Agenda which provided examples of Social Value and the Monitoring Officer provided an example of the health, wellbeing and intervention work which Alive West Norfolk undertook.

The Monitoring Officer explained that framework would be developed to determine priorities, outcomes and how they would be delivered and the Policy being proposed today was the start of this process.

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

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley referred the Panel to Appendix 2 of the report which showed the value of social value and commented that it would be good to have a holistic approach and mechanisms in place to measure value.

The Chair, Councillor Long provided an example of a project which had provided social value outcomes and commented that it could impact the cost of contracts if additional stipulations were included.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Blunt commented that social value was subjective, and asked how it would be calculated. The Monitoring Officer explained that calculation tools were available and political priorities would be considered.

Councillor Collingham was concerned that this would require an increase in resources, at a time when officers were already busy and the Monitoring Officer referred to the previous Agenda item and the reduction in work relating to the increase in thresholds, which would free up officer time to support the Social Value Policy.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS: Cabinet recommends to Full Council:

1. The adoption of the Social Value Policy attached at Appendix 1.
2. Authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance to make revisions to the Social Value Policy to reflect updates within the National Procurement Policy Statement issued under section 13(3)(c) of the Procurement Act 2023.

CP91: CABINET REPORT – CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

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The Assistant Director presented the Budget Monitoring Report for Quarter 2, 1st April to 30th September 2024 explaining that previously this report would have been considered by the Audit Committee, but since the Terms of Reference of the Committee had changed, it was necessary to bring this report through the Panel and Cabinet process. There were no recommendations to consider, other than to note the report, but going forward suggested actions would be brought forward for Cabinets consideration.

The Assistant Director explained that work was ongoing to reduce the deficit and draw down from reserves and this would be included in the next report along with detail of turnover savings.

The Panel noted that there was no update to the section of the report relating to Capital because the Capital Programme was currently under review and the outcomes of the review would be included in future reports.

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

The Chair asked the Portfolio Holder how confident he was that year end targets would be achieved and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley anticipated that it would be close to target and more information would be provided in the next period monitoring report once work on budget setting had been completed.

The Panel noted that the reports were also published on the Council's Mod Gov System for all Councillors to view.

Councillor Collingham asked about the impact of increased National Insurance Employer contributions and the Assistant Director confirmed that this would come into effect in the next financial year. It was noted that there was no rebate from Government on this, however Government had stated that it would be considered in the Local Government Settlement. The Assistant Director explained that the provisional settlement had been received, but the final settlement was awaited and would hopefully be confirmed in time to feed into the budget setting process.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

CABINET RECOMMENDATION: To note the contents of the report.

CP92: CABINET REPORT – MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2024/2025

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The Assistant Director presented the report which proposed that the cost of living increase be applied to Member's Allowances for the 2024/2025 year. It was explained that previously the increase in allowances mirrored the staff pay award, but because the officer pay award was not one flat rate a proposal was required to be agreed by Council. The calculation had been worked out on the overall increase of the staff pay budget.

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

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Beales commented that this was the most straight forward approach and the Panel would be considering, at a future meeting, the report of the Independent Members Remuneration Panel regarding Members Allowances going forward.

The Chair, Councillor Long agreed with the methodology for the increase and felt that it was the proper approach.

Councillor Rose referred to the amount that Members could claim for mileage and was informed that this was in line with HMRC rates, tax liability and what staff could claim.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel supports the recommendation to Cabinet, as set out below.

CABINET RECOMMENDATION: That Council agrees an increase of 4.1% for all Member Allowances for the year 2024/25 with effect from 1st April 2024.

CP97: CABINET REPORT – COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUMS FOR EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES RESOLUTION

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Councillor Blunt declared a Pecuniary Interest and left the meeting for this item of business.

Councillor Spikings left the meeting at this point.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager presented the report which summarised the current position and made recommendations for the discounts and premiums for empty properties, uninhabitable properties and second homes.

The Panels attention was drawn to the technical detail contained in the report, the Government mandated exceptions and the financial implications. It was noted that this resolution needed to be considered in advance of the budget setting process.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager highlighted the additional Government Guidance which had been appended to the report.

The Chair thanked the Revenues and Benefits Manager for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Morley commented that discussions were ongoing with Norfolk County Council on the distribution of additional funds which would be received.

Councillor Collingham commented that she hoped that additional funds would come back to the Council and local residents could benefit.

Councillor Osborne commended officers on the useful information that was included on the website and the additional work required to contact those that would be affected by the proposal.

The Chair, Councillor Long commented that long term empty properties could be a blight on the landscape and attract anti social behaviour, but there were sometimes genuine circumstances on why a property could not be brought back into use and the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that there was discretion to waive the premiums in exceptional circumstances and each case would be considered on its own merits.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below.

The following discounts and premiums are recommended to Council for 2025/2026:

Class A Second Homes Discount for 2025/2026:

- No reduction, i.e. a 0% discount;

Class B Second Homes Discount for 2025/2026:

- No reduction i.e. a 0% discount, plus
- An additional premium of 100%

Class C Empty / Unfurnished Discount 2025/2026:

- 0% for both the initial and follow on periods

Long-Term Empty Property Premiums (Levy):

- 100% for properties empty between one and five years,
- 200% for properties empty longer than five years, and
- 300% for properties empty longer than ten years.

Class D Uninhabitable Properties:

- 25% for 12 months starting on the day the property becomes uninhabitable; then:
- 0% once the 12 month period has expired;

Cabinet recommends to Council that the Exceptions Policy as summarised below and detailed at Appendix 3 is agreed.

Cabinet and Council to note the government guidance of November 2024 as included at Appendix D.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 14 JANUARY 2025 FROM THE ENVIROMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 8TH JANUARY 2025

EC63: CABINET REPORT- HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES CONTRACT

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The Senior Housing Manager presented the report and outlined the reason and need for procuring two services for a minimum of three-year period to help with the delivery of the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy: Ending Homelessness, Person by Person.

He explained to the panel the services were an Intensive Support Service and an Early Intervention Service. He brought to the attention of the Panel there were seven bids for the invitation to tender. He confirmed a contractor had been selected and the pre contract process had begun.

The Senior Housing Manager highlighted there were no direct financial implication for the Council as there were existing reserves from previous central government grants which were ringfenced by Central Government for the prevention and relief of homelessness.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and invited questions and comments from the panel.

Councillor Heneghan asked if this service was cheaper to deliver in house.

The Senior Housing Manager commented he could not advise if the services were cheaper to deliver in house but believed the services would be more effective when delivered in partnership. He added the Council had strong partnerships with specialised services within West Norfolk. He added further if there was a cost saving with the services being inhouse this would be outweighed by the existing partnerships.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification on funding and asked if we were waiting to find out about additional funding.

The Senior Housing Manager clarified; the funding available was from reserves which had previously been granted by Central Government which were ringfenced for the prevention and relief of homelessness. He added there was funding for 2025/26 through MHCLG's rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification on the impact of devolution on the three-year contracts being proposed.

The Senior Housing Manager advised the Council would not be the first Local Authority to enter a contract such as this and go through devolution. He provided an example of Somerset Council went through this process.

The Housing Services Manager confirmed the included in the contract was standard clauses such as funding, changes in legislation and statutory requirements. She added devolution would be covered in these clauses in the contract and for now the services needed to continue.

Councillor Rust, Portfolio Holder for People and Communities advised of the importance of these services and the families which are homeless needed to be supported. She added the external partnership are different to the relationships clients have with the Council and

encouragement engagement with all parties. She added further with devolution, the services need to be delivered and the three-year contract provides reassurance to the external partnerships.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

1. to agree that £756,600 of funding, ringfenced for homelessness services, should be spent on the procurement of an Intensive Support Service and an Early Intervention Service.
2. to agree that the spending on this service should be derived from ringfenced government grants in the first instance and ringfenced reserves to make up any shortfall.

EC64: **CABINET REPORT- REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING FEE LEVELS**

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The Senior Licensing Officer presented the report to the Panel.

He brought to the Panel's attention legislation requires fees to be agreed by Full Council in accordance with the Local Authority Functions and Responsibilities Regulations 2000. He added the new figures and charges had been established with consideration of fees of neighbouring authorities, case law, CIPFA regulations and assessing the time spend on each aspect of the specific licensing functions. The Senior Licensing Officer explained the current fees and charges were last revised and approved on the 26th November 2015 and came into effect from 1st December 2015. He advised failure to set fees to a level that ensures full cost recovery could result in a deficit of funds for services provided. The Senior Licensing Officer outlined to the Panel a consultation was held between 25th September 2024 to 18th December 2024 where Members of the licensed trade were invited to attend meetings with Officers and Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder.

The Chair thanked the Senior Licensing Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the panel.

Councillor Colwell commented the response from the consultation acknowledged and accepted the need for the fees and charges to be increased and renewed. He sought clarification in the difference of fee between Private Hire and Hackney Carriage.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed process of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage were different as Hackney Carriages are provided r more services as part of the licence therefore there were higher costs. He added the initial process was the same however the ongoing costs are different due to the additional services.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Devulapalli commented the Council should not have to subsidy the costs of licences. She asked how our fees compare to neighbouring areas. She sought further clarification on the difference in fees between licensing one vehicle opposed to multiple vehicles.

The Senior Licensing Officer responded to Councillor Devulapalli and advised our fees were average compared to neighbouring authorities. He explained to the Panel the fee for Private Hire Operator with multiple vehicles was higher as there are more checks and further administration and it was based on the number of records which had to be checked.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Kemp on Zoom sought clarification on the affect and impact on disability vehicles and asked if there was a reduction or exemption on the fees.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed there was not a reduction or exemption but an additional cost of £32.00 to test a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle at the first licence but this was not chargeable at the renewal of the licence.

The Assistant Director for Operations and Commercial clarified further the fee of £32.00 was a single cost and was unlikely to cause an impact but it would encourage further Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.

Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing commented further, there was additional checks which was therefore safer and more appropriate for clients.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Devulapalli asked if there was an option to pay the fees in instalments.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed this was not offered and had not been done previously. He explained this could increase fees further due to the further administration of chasing payments. He added conditions would need to be put in place for non-payments and the ability for Officer to revoke or suspend licences.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

1.The Council approves the new fee structure for drivers of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.

2.The Council approves the new fee structure for private hire operators.

3.The Council approves the new fee structure for vehicles and other sundry matters attached in the fee structure.

EC65: **CABINET REPORT- REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING PROCEDURES AND CONDITIONS**

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The Senior Licensing Officer presented the report to the Panel and explained the current Hackney Carriage Licensing Procedures and Conditions were approved by Council on 25th April 2022. He highlighted to the Panel the Department for Transport had published Statutory Standards in July 2020 and new Best Practice Guidance in November 2023 which were now incorporated in the revised procedures and conditions. The Senior Licensing Officer outlined to the Panel a consultation was held between 25th September 2024 to 18th December 2024 where Members of the license trader were invited to attend meetings with Officers and Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder.

The Chair thanked the Senior Licensing Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the panel.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Kemp on Zoom asked if disability training was being offered and mandatory. She sought clarification in cross border regulations and commented drivers are going to surrounding areas such as Wisbech to obtain their licence.

The Senior Licensing Officer clarified there had not been a problem with cross border vehicles and confirmed several of the current drivers had completed a disability awareness course with Norfolk County Council. He confirmed there was proposed changes in the

procedures and conditions that all new drivers were to undertake a disability awareness course and pass the assessment before becoming licenced.

Councillor Colwell referred to 2.15 and 2.16 of the report and sought clarification on the knowledge test and commented they were only allowed three occasions to try and pass the assessment. He sought further clarification on the uptake on learning British Sign Language as mentioned in the report.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed the reason with bringing the three attempts on the Knowledge Test was to ensure drivers were learning and understanding the conditions rather than just taking the test several times in the hope of passing the assessment. He added in regard to British Sign Language this was a recommendation in the Department of Transport guidance however this was not being adopted by the Council.

Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing commented he was impressed with the working relationship between Members of the Trade and Officers.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

That Council approves the new hackney carriage and private hire procedures and conditions document.