

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, 10th October, 2017 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillor C Sampson (Chairman),
Miss L Bambridge, A Bubb, Mrs S Collop, Mrs S Fraser, G Hipperson,
T Smith, M Taylor, Mrs J Westrop and Mrs M Wilkinson

Portfolio Holders

Councillor I Devereux – Portfolio Holder for Environment
Councillor A Lawrence – Portfolio Holder for Community
Councillor B Long – Leader of the Council
Councillor Mrs E Nockolds – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health

Officers:

Martin Chisholm – Business Manager
Lorraine Gore – Executive Director
Honor Howell – Assistant Director
John Hussey – Operations Manager
Nathan Johnson – Public Open Space Manager

By Invitation:

Dorothy Bryant – Total Transport – Norfolk County Council
Kristen Jones – Total Transport – Norfolk County Council
Ben Colson – West Norfolk Community Transport

EC40: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Whitby.

EC41: **MINUTES**

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

EC42: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

EC43: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC44: MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

Councillor Bird – all items
Councillor J Collop – EC48
Councillor Parish – EC48
Councillor Pope – all items

EC45: CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Chairman had received two pieces of correspondence relating to EC48 and would bring them to the attention of the Panel when the item was discussed.

EC46: TOTAL TRANSPORT

Kristen Jones and Dorothy Bryant from Norfolk County Council attended the meeting and provided the Panel with a presentation on Total Transport (as attached). It was explained that Total Transport was a Department for Transport Funded Project with the aim to establish more joined up approaches to transport, explore ways of working across sectors and allow communities to deliver better transport in rural areas.

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

In response to a question it was explained that issues with bus services could be fed back to the bus operators as appropriate. In response to a question regarding how people would be aware of the project if they did not have internet access, it was explained that once the tool was up and running ways to promote the tool would be looked at, for instance promoting the tool through the Norfolk County Council's call centre and through GP Surgeries etc.

A link to the tool would be available on the Norfolk County Council website. The service could also be accessed by telephone and leaflets to publicise the telephone number would be created and distributed.

The Business Manager informed the Panel that the aspiration of the project was to create a 'one stop shop' for information on transport providers within the locality. Anyone could access the information, which would be kept up to date.

In response to a question, the Panel was informed that the project focussed on transport schemes rather than buses, but issues with bus services which had been reported could be looked at as part of the study.

The Leader, Councillor Long stated that there would be a benefit in having a central point of contact for finding out information on transport provisions. He felt that a lot of people may rely on family and friends for transport and asked if there was a way to log these on the system to show that there may be a lack of alternative travel options. It was explained that the system had lots of different categories so that lots of information could be pulled off from the system and gaps in service provision could be identified.

In response to questions it was explained that the project would mainly focus on journeys which were funded by the public purse, but transport schemes which were not funded could also be included. The system would be able to look at key destinations such as Hospitals, GP Surgeries, Supermarkets etc. and the time it took to get to the destinations. It was explained that the system would include pickups from within the County, however it was acknowledged that some journeys would cross County borders.

Norfolk County Council had been awarded £300,000 of funding from a central pot of £7.6m and details of the successful bids were available on the gov.uk website.

The Chairman thanked the officers from Norfolk County Council for attending the meeting and asked that the Panel be kept up to date on progress as appropriate.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the information and requested to be kept up to date as appropriate.

EC47: **WEST NORFOLK COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

The Chairman welcomed Ben Colson, Trustee of West Norfolk Community Transport to the Meeting. The Panel was provided with information on the work of West Norfolk Community Transport and the services they provided (as attached).

The Chairman thanked Ben Colson for his presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question, Ben Colson explained that to use dial a bus you needed to become a Member of West Norfolk Community Transport, which was free to join. Once you were a Member you were free to call up for the bus as long as the journey was not already served by a public transport route. The provision was available to people with mobility issues and disabilities.

Councillor Bird addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He explained that a project had recently been launched in Snettisham to start a club for lonely and less ambulant residents of the Village. He felt that West Norfolk Community Transport was a great benefit to

projects such as these. He thanked West Norfolk Community Transport for the service they provided which benefited local communities.

Councillor Hipperson asked if consideration was given to unsuitable routes, for example narrow or poor road surfaces. Ben Colson felt that he knew the roads well and consideration was given to the most appropriate vehicle for the route. He reminded those present of the Government Legislation for accessibility and the requirements for low level buses.

Councillor Pope addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He asked if consideration had been given to asking Parish Councils for donations towards West Norfolk Community Transport. It was confirmed that donations had been received in the past.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Long reminded those present that West Norfolk Community Transport received grant funding from the Borough Council. He also reminded those present of the difficult financial situation facing the Council and the tough decisions that needed to be made. He hoped that grant funding would continue going forward as he appreciated the work that West Norfolk Community Transport did. He explained that in the future the organisation may be able to sign up to the Local Lottery which could result in additional funds being available.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the update.

EC48: **PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Public Open Space Manager and Operations Manager presented the report which presented the findings of the Informal Working Group for Public Toilets which had been established by the Environment and Community Panel with the remit of reviewing the provision of public toilets in the Borough. The proposals were set out in part two of the report.

The Chairman read out two letters which he had received relating to the proposals, as follows:

- Correspondence from Michael Ruston from Hunstanton Coastal Community Team which was a request to keep the Old Hunstanton block of toilets open as it was in a tourist area.
- Correspondence from Downham Market Town Council which stated that their agreement to take on the Wales Court toilets was dependent on refurbishment of the toilets prior to transfer.

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

Councillor J Collop addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He supported the proposal to reinstate seven day opening at the toilets in Ferry Street. Councillor Collop explained that the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee had discussed the King's Lynn facilities and the Committee had supported the continued opening of the Broadwalk and Management Building toilets in the Walks but considered that as the Walks was a Borough-wide facility the cost of this should not be included in King's Lynn Special Expenses. Councillor Collop stated that he was opposed to the proposed closure of the Gaywood Toilets. He felt that the surrounding area was vibrant and an important area of shopping and stated that shopkeepers did not like people coming into use their toilets during the trial closure of the public toilets. He referred to the recommendation from the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee that the Gaywood toilets could be demolished, however they should be replaced with new facilities.

Councillor Pope addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He spoke in favour of closing the Gaywood public toilets and agreed that the Walks toilets were a Borough-wide benefit and should therefore not be charged to King's Lynn Special Expenses. He was also concerned that the refurbishment of the Wales Court, Downham Market toilets would be a significant cost to the Council.

Councillor Bird addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. In response to a question from Councillor Bird, it was confirmed that there were no plans at this stage to introduce any 'pay to use' toilets. Investigations on introducing pay facilities had been carried out and would require huge financial investment. Councillor Bird referred to the Old Hunstanton toilets and felt that it was unlikely that a small Parish Council like Old Hunstanton would be able to take on responsibility of the toilets. He asked if consideration had been given to transferring the toilets to the Coastal Community Team. Councillor Bird stated that lots of money was being invested in Hunstanton and felt that it would be a retrograde step to spend money on developing the resort and then taking away a well-used facility which was used by visitors and tourists. He referred to the adjacent lifeboat station which raised money by opening to the public and collecting donations. Councillor Bird also referred to the nearby beach huts, which had no other toilet provision. He asked that consideration be given to asking beach hut owners to contribute to the facilities or give consideration to establishing a Community Interest Company.

Councillor Parish addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He explained that Heacham Parish Council would like for the toilets to remain open as Heacham was a tourist resort. He referred to the proposal from Heacham Sports and Social Club to take over the toilets, put in a new doorway and refurbish. He explained that he had received correspondence from the Heacham Sports and Social Club that their intention was to close off the public access to the toilets so that they were for the sole use of the Social Club. The Public Open Space

Manager explained that he had been told that public access would remain and he agreed to investigate.

Councillor Hipperson explained that ideally he would like all public facilities to remain open and for the provision in the Borough to be increased. He suggested that a Policy be put in place to keep all facilities open.

Councillor Bubb commented that he did not support the closure of the toilets at Old Hunstanton. He stated that the adjacent Car Park was owned by a nearby hotel and asked if a contribution could be sought from them. Councillor Bubb referred to the vandalism of the Gaywood toilets and he asked that if the toilets were to be demolished and rebuilt, they should be rebuilt in a different location.

Councillor Smith explained that he had suggested to the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee that the Gaywood toilets be demolished and rebuilt. He agreed that an alternative location would be preferable so that vandalism was less likely. Councillor Smith also commented that the Old Hunstanton Toilets should remain open.

Councillor Mrs Collop raised concern that the Informal Working Group had not met to consider the proposals and the results from the trial period. The Chairman explained that on 23rd November 2016, when the recommendations from the Informal Working Group were presented to the Environment and Community Panel the Panel resolved that a further report would be brought back to the Panel in due course, which was the report which was being considered today. The recommendations from the Panel would then be subject to a future report to Cabinet.

Councillor Mrs Collop informed the Panel that she had sought the opinion from representatives from the Gaywood Library and Tesco's on the temporary closure of the public toilets. She explained that the Library had said that their costs had gone up as there had been an increase in usage of soap, toilet roll and cleaning materials etc. and the toilets had to be cleaned more frequently. Councillor Mrs Collop stated that shopkeepers had also noticed an increase in people using their facilities, even if they were not buying anything. She commented that she had also spoken to the Security at Tesco's who had indicated an increased workload.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson commented that she would like both sets of the toilets at the Walks to remain open, but not to be charged to King's Lynn Special Expenses as they were a benefit to the whole Borough.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge commented that the closure of the Gaywood toilets had been mentioned at a recent meeting of the Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel. She explained to the Panel that the Library was closed on Wednesday. She had also heard that the cost to the Library in maintaining the toilet had increased and the

Library staff had to clean the toilets. The Vice Chairman referred to the proposal to keep Holme toilets open as they were on the Norfolk Coastal Path, she felt that the same reason should apply to keeping the Old Hunstanton toilets open.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Long reminded those present of the overall financial position of the Council. He explained that a budget reduction programme had been submitted to Government in order to receive a three year Government funding programme. The budget reduction programme included a raft of measures in order to achieve savings. He explained that all the 'quick wins' had already been made and now it was time for the difficult decisions. He asked that, if the Panel were to recommend that facilities remain open, they needed to determine where alternative savings could be achieved in order to fund the continued opening of public toilets.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community, Councillor Lawrence, reiterated the comments regarding the financial position of the Council. He thanked the Informal Working Group and the Environment and Community Panel for their recommendations and acknowledged the concerns raised by Members of the Panel. He explained that trials had been carried out where appropriate, for example the Ferry Street toilets had been closed on a trial basis, but it was now proposed that they be reopened. Councillor Lawrence referred to the costs that would be involved in demolishing and rebuilding the Gaywood toilets and asked the Panel to consider how it would be funded.

The Panel was informed that the recommendations from the Panel would be included in a future report to the Cabinet.

Councillor Mrs Collop suggested that to offset some of the cost of the Gaywood toilets, one of the sets in the Walks could be closed.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson commented that the Gaywood Library toilets were the staff facilities and she did not feel that it was fair on the staff that the toilets were opened up for public use.

Councillor Smith asked that consideration be given to a public works loan which could be used to fund the demolition and rebuilding of the Gaywood toilets and then charged to Special Expenses. The Leader, Councillor Long stated that this could result in a large increase in Special Expenses, which in turn could trigger a Referendum because of the increase in Council Tax.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1. Public Conveniences located in or close to borough car parks, transport hubs or resort/tourism locations, to remain open and be maintained as per current arrangements.

2. Ferry Street, King's Lynn toilets to revert back to seven day opening, due to being located adjacent to car parks.
3. One set of the Walks Toilets to be closed and officers to provide detail to Cabinet on the cost savings to be achieved depending on which set was closed.
4. The savings achieved from closing one set of toilets at the Walks to be used to keep the Gaywood public toilets open.
5. The set of toilets at the Walks which are to remain open to be included as a partial charge to King's Lynn Special expenses and a partial charge to the Borough.
6. Wales Court, Downham Market transfer to the Town Council once refurbished to a traditional standard.
7. Memorial Field, Downham Market include as a charge to special expenses.
8. Howdale, Downham Market complete closure with a view to demolition.
9. Heacham Village, transfer to Heacham Sports and Social Club was supported only if the facilities would remain open to the public.
10. Old Hunstanton, toilets to remain open for the next twelve months whilst possible funding options were explored.
11. Holme to remain open and maintained as per current arrangements, due to facilities being located close to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve and the gateway to the AONB along with being on the North Norfolk Coast Path and at the end of Peddars Way.

EC49: **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the Panel were reminded that an eform was available on the Intranet which could be completed and submitted if Members had items which they would like to be considered for addition to the Work Programme.

The following items suggested for addition to the Work Programme:

- Houses of Multiple Occupation. It was requested that this item be considered at the Panel's next meeting.
- Begging and Buskers in King's Lynn.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC50: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on **Wednesday 6th December 2017 at 6.00pm** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.**

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

