

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, 1st May, 2018 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn**

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

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor I Devereux, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Councillor B Long, Leader of the Council

Councillor Mrs E Nockolds, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health

Officers:

Mary Colangelo, Electoral Services Manager

Sarah Dennis, Partnership and Funding Officer

Lorraine Gore, Executive Director, Finance

Ray Harding, Chief Executives

Honor Howell, Assistant Director

By Invitation:

Natalie Jode, Creative Arts East

EC97: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs Fraser.

EC98: **MINUTES**

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

EC99: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Moriarty declared an interest in EC105: Community Car Schemes as he was a volunteer driver for the Castle Acre scheme.

EC100: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC101: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor John Collop – EC107.
Councillor Moriarty – EC104, EC105, EC106 and EC107.
Councillor Parish – EC104.

EC102: **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

The Chairman explained that he had received correspondence relating to the Community Car Scheme item. Relevant issues would be dealt with as part of the Agenda item and he would contact the individual after the meeting to deal with any outstanding matters.

EC103: **CREATIVE ARTS EAST**

Natalie Jode from Creative Arts East delivered a presentation, as attached. She explained that the charity was based on arts and community development and worked with a range of communities and organisations across the County.

She explained that in West Norfolk a financial contribution was received from the Borough Council through a Service Level Agreement and the Council received regular reports. She explained that Creative Arts East had worked with 22 community groups in West Norfolk and work was also being carried out with the Council through Alive Leisure to look at arts and audience development.

The Chairman thanked Natalie Jode for her presentation and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith, it was explained that communities chose their performances and benefitted from subsidised ticket sales. Community performances included traditional theatre, plays of books, world music and shows aimed at children and young people. Natalie Jode explained that programming work did also look at less traditional work and this usually had increased subsidy to get people interested.

Natalie Jode explained that a Community Touring Manager put together a programme of shows and then community representatives would be invited to choose which performances they would like to bring out into their community.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge referred to the results of the project in 2012/2013, she explained that lack of transport and funds were highlighted as reasons for not being able to access the arts in rural areas. She asked if more up to date information was available and if these were still factors in preventing access to the arts in rural areas. Natalie Jode explained that rural communities could choose to become involved with Creative Arts East, and as long as funds were available, they could participate. She agreed that it would be good to revive the project which looked at models of participation, but this was

carried out through Arts Council funding and further funding options would need to be looked at to carry out a similar project. Natalie Jode commented that the impression she got from working out in the community with people were that issues regarding lack of transport and funds were still current.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge, asked Natalie Jode how Creative Arts East promoted themselves. Natalie Jode explained that there were a lot of longstanding communities which were involved and engagement work was carried out. She explained that work to raise the profile of the group was being looked at and new groups were joining all the time. She explained that there was only so much subsidy that Creative Arts East had, so they had to be careful about raising and meeting expectations.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health, Councillor Mrs Nockolds commented that her portfolio included financial assistance and she had been involved in agreeing the Service Level Agreement with Creative Arts East. She commented that they did good work in West Norfolk and communities often wanted to continue the work that Creative Arts East had started, for example some communities had then gone on to purchase their own projectors so that they could continue with community cinema offers etc. The Portfolio Holder explained that the arts contributed towards the health and wellbeing of the residents of the Borough which was important. She also reminded the Panel that Lily had been awarded funding for Social Isolation and this could involve working with Creative Arts East.

The Chairman thanked Natalie Jode and Creative Arts East for the work carried out in the Borough. He encouraged Members to spread the message of the opportunities available for communities through Creative Arts East as appropriate.

Natalie Jode commented that Members were welcome to contact her to attend and participate in programming and community events.

RESOLVED: The Panel be kept updated as appropriate.

EC104: **PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION COSTS - UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the Cabinet report which proposed to pass on the full costs of uncontested Parish Council Elections to the Parish Councils concerned, both at the four-yearly Parish Council Elections as well as any Casual Vacancies in between. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that Legislation permitted any expenses incurred by the Borough to be passed on to the Parish.

The Electoral Services Manager reminded the Panel that previously the Council had agreed to charge Parish Councils for contested elections.

Now the Council were looking at further savings and recouping costs. The Panel was informed that many other Councils already charged costs incurred for uncontested Elections and the amounts charged varied.

The Chairman thanked the Electoral Services Manager for her report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Long, explained to the Panel that this report had been presented to the Cabinet in April 2018. Councillor Moriarty had attended the Cabinet meeting under Standing Order 34 and had raised concerns that the item had not been scrutinised prior to its presentation to Cabinet. The item was therefore deferred by Cabinet so that it could be considered by the Environment and Community Panel.

Councillor Bubb commented that he did not think it was fair that all Parishes be charged the same amount for uncontested elections. He asked if it could be related to their precept or size and what would happen if the Parish did not have a precept. The Chief Executive commented that even though Parishes differed in size, the same amount of administrative work would have to be carried out by the Borough Council with regards to uncontested elections. He explained that Parishes set their own precepts and would need to have regard to potential charges for uncontested elections.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Long, commented that the size of the Parish may not necessarily be related to the amount of vacancies or elections. There were various reasons why there could be a Parish Council vacancy and an election required. He explained that the work carried out by Electoral Services up until the time that the election was uncontested was additional work and should be charged back to the Parish Council. He explained that in not all instances an Election would be required; Members could be co-opted onto the Council.

Councillor Hipperson queried how much the Council wanted to look after Parish Councils and he referred to Quality Parishes. The Leader of the Council explained that Parish Councils were standalone bodies in their own right and he felt that they should pay for their own democracy, which included uncontested elections.

Councillor Parish addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He explained that his Parish had a regular turnover of Councillors and often a by-election was not requested and Members were co-opted. It was clarified that there would be no charges introduced for the co-option process.

The Electoral Services Manager explained that at the last election 90 out of 102 Parishes were uncontested. The Electoral Services Team had to carry out a degree of work before they were uncontested and

she confirmed that the proposal was that Parishes be charged for the work up to that point.

Councillor Smith explained that his Ward was within an unparished area, but his Council Tax payers still had to pay for the cost of uncontested Elections as it was a charge currently borne by the Borough. He supported the proposals to introduce charging for uncontested elections.

Councillor Moriarty addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He explained that some of the questions that he had wanted to ask had already been covered by others and thanked the Panel for bringing the item forward for Scrutiny. He asked for clarification that if ten people did not request an election and the vacancy was filled by co-option, would this incur a charge. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that there would not be a charge for this.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel supported the recommendation to Cabinet as follows:

To confirm the proposal to charge Parish Councils for their own uncontested elections.

EC105: **COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME**

The Chairman explained that he had received correspondence relating to the Community Car Scheme which had been passed onto officers and relevant issues would be considered as part of their report. The Chairman would make contact with the individual after the meeting to address any outstanding matters.

The Executive Director referred to the presentation provided by Creative Arts East earlier on in the meeting and the links to lack of transport in rural areas. She also referred to the changes with Stagecoach and impacts that this could have.

She confirmed that there were no proposals to reduce or remove funding for the service, but to review its operation. The Executive Director explained that in 1999 funding had been received to assist in the setup of Rural Transport Partnerships, which was administered by a dedicated officer. It was explained that Community Car Schemes were not run by the Borough Council and presently the Borough Council funded six schemes. They were all funded slightly differently with some receiving grants and some putting in quarterly claims. It was clarified that the Borough Council checked the claims, but the administration work was carried out by the car scheme themselves.

The Executive Director explained that correspondence had been received from an individual relating to Community Car Schemes which had prompted this review. As part of the review a survey was sent to

all Parishes to ascertain details of any schemes they ran, the results of which were included in the report. The Executive Director highlighted that no Parishes, which currently did not have a scheme in place, had responded that they would like one to be introduced.

The Executive Director highlighted the recommendation as set out in the report. She explained that if the Council continued to fund schemes, a Service Level Agreement would be required along with evidence of sufficient Governance arrangements and the schemes would continue to be administered by the car schemes.

The Panel was informed that Norfolk County Council also funded some community car schemes and following discussions with officers it had been agreed that they could also administer payments to the schemes on behalf of the Borough.

The Panel was also requested to consider any relevant criteria for journeys under the scheme and what the Borough would fund.

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

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge asked about the Borough Council checking process. The Executive Director explained that the car scheme carried out the administration work and would do necessary checks that the journey had taken place and mileage incurred. The Borough Council would then check the arithmetic and the claim would be authorised by a senior officer.

In response to a question from Councillor Bubb, it was confirmed that Parish Councils were bodies in their own right and had their own external auditors. Schemes receiving payments annually must demonstrate financial need each year and they did so by providing an income and expenditure account for verification.

Councillor Smith commented that he did not feel that criteria for journeys should be introduced. He did not want the scheme to be too prescriptive.

Councillor Devereux, Portfolio Holder for Development, commented that it would be essential for Parish Councils to have adequate governance arrangements in place and that the implementation of services could sometimes be challenging. He also commented that Community Car Schemes were an essential service for some communities.

Councillor Moriarty addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He explained that he was a volunteer driver for Castle Acre Community Car Scheme. He asked if the Council had approached West Norfolk Community Transport to see if they were interested in expanding their services. The Executive Director explained that discussions had been

held with West Norfolk Community Transport and they were not in a position to expand their service at the moment as they had just taken on some of the Stagecoach routes.

The Chairman commented that there was definitely a need for the scheme. He reiterated that the schemes were Parish Schemes and he did not think that the Council should introduce criteria for journeys. Schemes would need to be properly governed and accounted for.

Councillor Moriarty commented that sometimes the volunteers did not charge the additional mileage which was paid by the Borough Council. He also referred to waiting times during journeys and 'dead miles' which were the miles from drop off of the customer, to home.

Councillor Bubb asked how Norfolk County Council would issue payments for the scheme and it was explained that they would be set up on an automatic paying schedule.

The Panel considered the options as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: 1. The Panel supported the recommendation to continue to support the valuable community car schemes in West Norfolk and to maintain the budget at current levels. Subject to continued discussions with the Transport Manager at Norfolk County Council, it is recommended that community car schemes are administered by Norfolk County Council, as part of their Total Transport Plan, where more detail regarding routes can be considered.

2. The Panel did not want to introduce and criteria regarding eligibility and journey types.

EC106: **NORFOLK COUNTYWIDE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP SUB COMMITTEE**

Councillor Mrs Westrop presented her Outside Bodies report. She explained that no meetings had been held in the last year and she had registered her unhappiness with the relevant officers at Norfolk County Council.

Members present at the meeting raised their concerns that no meetings had been held and the Chairman requested that Councillor Mrs Westrop pass on their concerns to the relevant officers/Members and report back to the Environment and Community Panel.

RESOLVED: 1. The report was noted.

2. Councillor Mrs Westrop to pass on the Panel's concerns that there had not been any meetings and report back to the Environment and Community Panel.

EC107: **KING'S LYNN FOOTBALL CLUB**

Councillor Mrs Westrop presented her Outside Bodies report. She explained that meetings were interesting and the club was looking at how it could move forward. Issues of concern included the ownership and state of the pitch, raising funds for voluntary work and looking at qualifications for young players.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Collop, Councillor Mrs Westrop explained that she was not involved in the running of the private business and was not involved in lease negotiations.

Councillor John Collop addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34. He referred to lease negotiations. The Chairman commented that the update report being presented to the Panel was about the observational role that Councillor Mrs Westrop had and the Panel would not be discussing private business matters. Councillor John Collop commented that the Football Club was within his Ward so he had an interest in what was happening. He also asked if meetings were held with the Supporters Club. Councillor Mrs Westrop commented that her role was to look at the Community side of the operation and she was not involved in management related issues or the internal business operation of the club. She explained that she worked with the club on community development and related issues.

The Chief Executive confirmed that private business matters should not be considered by this Panel. Lease negotiations would involve the relevant officers and Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED: The report was noted.

EC108: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

The following items were raised for inclusion on the work programme:

- Youth West launch
- Food Hygiene Update

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC109: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on Tuesday 12th June 2018 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 7.52 pm