

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, 4th December, 2018 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillors C Sampson (Chairman), Miss L Bambridge, Mrs C Bower, A Bubb, Mrs S Fraser, G Hipperson, T Parish 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:

Sarah Dennis – Partnership and Funding Officer

Chris Durham – Operations Manager

Lorraine Gore – Deputy Chief Executive

Honor Howell – Assistant Director

Nathan Johnson – Public Open Space Manager

Claire Thompsett – Operations Manager

By Invitation:

Rachael Williams – Learning and Engagement Officer, Stories of Lynn

EC67: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Collop, M Hopkins, M Taylor and J Westrop.

EC68: **MINUTES**

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

EC69: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

EC70: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC71: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

There was none.

EC72: **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

EC73: **WW1 PROJECT**

Rachael Williams, Stories of Lynn Learning and Engagement Officer presented the Panel with information on the World War 1 Soldiers Remembered project. A copy of her presentation is attached.

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

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge commented that she had attended one of the days and thought it was excellent. She commented that all the children were engaged and the characters and activities which were available had been very well put together. She congratulated Rachael Williams.

Councillor Hipperson explained that his daughter was involved in the event as one of the characters and she had commented that the presentation and organisation of the event had been excellent. He congratulated Rachael Williams on the event.

Rachael Williams thanked the Panel for their comments. She explained that this was a good way to get children interested and for their interest and learning to continue in the classroom. She provided examples of some of the follow up work completed by children after the event.

Rachael Williams encouraged Councillors to come and have a look around Stories of Lynn.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health, Councillor Mrs Nockolds commended the work which Rachael Williams had carried out and was pleased to announce that funding had been made available to extend her contract for another year.

RESOLVED: 1. The Panel noted the presentation.
2. The Panel congratulated Rachael Williams and all those involved in the successful project.

EC74: **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME - CHANGE OF CRITERIA**

The Partnership and Funding Officer presented the report which proposed a change to the criteria on eligibility to apply to the Council's small grants scheme. The report sought approval to include

Community Interest Companies and Social Enterprises to the list of organisations eligible to apply.

The Chairman thanked the Partnership and Funding Officer for her report. There were no questions from the Panel.

RESOLVED: Members supported the proposal to amend the Borough Council's Financial Assistance Scheme criteria to allow Community Interest Companies and Social Enterprises to apply for funds.

EC75: **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

Claire Thompsett, Operations Manager presented the Panel with information on the 2018 grass cutting season. A copy of her presentation is attached.

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

Councillor Mrs Bower thanked the grounds maintenance team for all the work in Hunstanton and the Anglia in Bloom achievements. She commented that she knew that they were short staffed and had other constraints, but they went beyond the call of duty in Hunstanton and had advised the Parish well.

Councillor Hipperson asked if officers had looked into co-operating with Parishes and individuals in assisting to maintain areas. Nathan Johnson, Public Open Space Manager commented that this was something that officers could look into. They did already actively work with partners such as Freebridge Community Housing and Norfolk County Council and could include Parishes and individuals in this as well.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson explained that in her area it had been a bad start to the year and she had been disappointed, however the service had improved. She acknowledged that the conditions at the beginning of the year had been challenging and there was a shortage of staff. The Public Open Space Manager confirmed that the teams around Fairstead had been short staffed and resources had to be shared round.

Councillor Parish commented that he would like to see more green corridors in the Borough. The Public Open Space Manager commented that if Parishes identified areas where this would be appropriate they should contact the grounds maintenance team who could adjust the areas which were cut.

The Leader, Councillor Long asked for information on the machinery which was used and how it coped with different weather conditions. It was explained that the machinery was on a ten year rolling

replacement programme. In 2016 flail mowers were introduced and these were easier to adjust, lift and raise. Prior to this it was difficult to deal with long grass, but the flail mowers could deal with a variety of different lengths and conditions.

The Panel was informed that at the beginning of the season a lot of areas were waterlogged, which meant that the machinery could not access some areas as they would just sink in the mud.

Councillor Bubb asked if cuttings could be collected and removed. He commented that sometimes if it was windy cuttings could blow about, or if it was wet they could clump up and prevent growth underneath or raise the height of the verges. The Public Open Space Manager explained that cuttings were collected and removed in formal areas, but not anywhere else. He explained that to collect and remove cuttings would result in additional costs for removal and disposal and it would take up extra time.

The Chairman, Councillor Sampson referred to a recent incident when the nozzles on a weed sprayer had been pointed incorrectly and had killed some of the grass on the verges. The Public Open Space Manager explained that the team was aware of this incident. The work had not been carried out by the Borough and officers were in discussion with the organisation which had carried out the work to ensure that this did not happen again.

Councillor Mrs Fraser provided an example of an area in her Ward which had endangered Lady Smock growing on it. She asked if some of the area could be left uncut to allow it to continue to grow. The Operations Manager explained that if Parishes made contact with the Grounds Maintenance Team, they could amend the areas which were cut as appropriate. It was explained that the Team relied on information and intelligence from Parish Councils and Members.

The Chairman, Councillor Sampson suggested that an article could perhaps be published in the Members Bulletin to encourage Parishes and Members to make contact with the Grounds Maintenance Team should they have any special requests.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health, Councillor Nockolds commented that the Grounds Maintenance Team worked hard and were proud of their work. She acknowledged that resources were an issue, but the team tried to accommodate all reasonable requests. She referred to the recent success that the Borough had had in the In Bloom campaigns and thanked the teams for all their hard work.

The Chairman, Councillor Sampson asked if it was alright for individuals to cut areas which were adjoining their own property. The Public Open Space Manager explained that this was not a problem; however issues such as insurance needed to be considered.

Councillor Hipperson asked if foreign bodies in long grass caused issues with the machinery. It was explained that the team pre-checked the area before mowing and the machinery usually just spun off and cut through any obstructions.

The Chairman commented that it would be beneficial to establish an Informal Working Group to look at the open space areas in the Borough where ownership was not known. He explained that there were some areas in the Borough which were not maintained as no one had taken responsibility for them. He suggested that the Informal Working Group could bring together the Borough Council, Freebridge Community Housing, Norfolk County Council, Parishes and individuals to look at the pieces of grass and sort out any anomaly areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health acknowledged that there were some issues with land ownership but commented that the Council did not have the resources available to undertake additional cuts. She also explained that Parishes and Councillors had been provided with maps of their ward with ownership details.

Councillor Hipperson commented that the maps were very helpful and commented that they had helped in the past to identify who was responsible for a certain area.

The Leader, Councillor Long asked the Panel to consider the benefits of establishing an Informal Working Group. He suggested that if Parish Councils or Ward Members were aware of any specific areas which were not being maintained because ownership was unclear, they should draw this to the attention of the Public Open Space team. He also explained that Parishes could raise funds, through their precept, to fund grounds maintenance if required.

Councillor Mrs Wilkinson commented that Fairstead was unparished and there were areas of grass which were in different ownership. She commented that she would be interested in serving on the Informal Working Group.

RESOLVED: 1. The Panel noted the update and agreed with the current grass cutting schedule.
2. A report be presented to the next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel with details of the potential Informal Working Group.

EC76: **UPDATE FROM THE DISABILITY CHAMPION**

Councillor Mrs Fraser provided an update on her Disability Champion role. A copy of her presentation is attached. Councillor Mrs Fraser explained that the Disability Champion role had been created following the disbandment of the West Norfolk Disability Forum and she started in the role in January 2018. The Panel was provided with information

on some of the successful projects she had been involved in and the 'Yes I Can' event, which had been well attended with 59 organisations taking part.

Councillor Mrs Fraser commented that she was working with the Communications Team and getting the message out on Social Media. She commented that she enjoyed the role and hoped to continue doing more work and helping people.

The Leader, Councillor Long, thanked Councillor Mrs Fraser for all her hard work. He highlighted that the Champion role was not a paid position. He congratulated Councillor Mrs Fraser and commented that she should be proud of her work.

The Assistant Director commented that the Corporate Web Team could assist with getting information on the Borough Council's website about the Disability Champion Role. She also commented that she felt that the 'Yes I Can' event had been really well publicised.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Bambridge suggested that an article could be sent to Norfolk County Council for possible inclusion in their Norfolk Matters Magazine which would assist with promoting the role.

RESOLVED: 1. The Panel noted the update.
2. The Panel thanked and congratulated Councillor Mrs Fraser on her achievements.

EC77: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC78: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on Tuesday 22nd January 2019 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm