

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, 9th April, 2024 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT: Councillor S Collop (Chair),

Councillors P Devulapalli, (Vice Chair), M Bartrum, P Bland, R Bearshaw, A Bubb
(Substitute for P Kunes), R Colwell (Substitute for J Ratcliffe), C Crofts
(Substitute for H Humphrey), S Lintern (Substitute for A Bullen),
S Sandell and A Ware,

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor A Beales, Massingham with Castle Acre Ward
Councillor M de Whalley, Gayton and Grimston Ward
Councillor J Moriarty, Priory Ward
Councillor J Rust, Springwood Ward

Officers:

Stuart Ashworth- Assistant Director
Duncan Hall- Assistant Director
Andy King- Senior Housing Manager
Ged Greaves- Climate Change Manager
Luke Brown – Senior Planning Officer

By Invitation:

Niki Parks- Norfolk County Council
Vanessa Reeve- West Norfolk Community Transport (WNCT)
Julian Patterson- Lynx Buses
Graham Smith- Lynx Buses

EC85: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bhondi, Bone,
Bullen and Ratcliffe

EC86: MINUTES

RESOLVED: The Minutes from the meeting held on 27 February 2024
were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

EC87: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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Cllr Colwell declared an interest as a County Councillor for Gaywood South in relation to the bus transport item.

EC88: **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

EC89: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor D Heneghan (on Zoom).

EC90: **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

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Item of business 10, Climate Change Update brought forward on the agenda to that published to item 9 at request of Councillor de Whalley.

EC91: **UPDATE ON THE BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND Q&A SESSION WITH BUS OPERATORS - 40 MINUTES**

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The Panel received an update from Niki Parks from Norfolk County Council as follows;

The Bus Service Improvement Plan had been awarded £49.5 Million for improvements to the service which included bus priority scheme, junction improvement, traffic flow improvement, improving waiting facilities at stops, maintenance of King's Lynn Bus Station, additional bus routes and links to medical services.

The Panel received updates from the representatives from WNCT and Lynx buses as follows;

As part of Bus Service Improvement Plan, both Lynx and Go to Town buses were offering £1.50 cap on fares for a Single Journey in King's Lynn and 25% off weekly, monthly and group tickets. Service being provided as part of Improvement Plan would be commercially sustainable.

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below;

Councillor Colwell asked if there are plans for a bus to go through Gaywood and then onto St James' Medical Centre, and if there were plans for buses to start earlier and finish later for residents to commute to work.

Vanessa Reeve from West Norfolk Community Transport for referred to Reffley and Wootton Services were running.

Monday to Friday buses starting at 7.07 am for commute to work, and 7.30 pm last bus although numbers for buses in evenings were low so there were unlikely to be later ones as the service not sustainable. He confirmed there was a bus to Marsh Lane for the St James' Medical Centre requiring a short walk to it.

Councillor Colwell asked consideration a bus to directly outside the St James' Medical Centre to be considered.

Councillor Sandell asked if bus routes from rural areas could be considered to tie in with rail service time.

Julian Patterson from Lynx Buses explained that the that bus timetable had been revised in 2018 however train times were then changed.

The Chair asked that bus timetable boards and bus stops be in the same place at the bus stop. She also asked the procedure for enforcement when cars parked in bus stops and suggested that more buses be put on during Festival Too.

Niki Parks undertook to investigate if a Traffic Regulation Order was in place for the stop, if not to address what needed to be done to resolve the issue. She also confirmed that Timetables would be part of the Improvement Plan.

Julian Patterson advised free buses were put on in 2015 for Festival Too however issues with antisocial behaviour and driver's work schedules not permitting work next day.

Councillor Lintern asked if there were any plans for the south of King's Lynn.

Niki Parks answered that gold bus stops would be fitted with QR codes across all of the county which included Downham Market and there would be an accessibility upgrade for rural bus stops. Bus stops upgraded in rural areas have to be moved depending on risk assessments and available land.

Niki Parks encouraged parishes to work with NCC to look at existing and new bus stops if needed in response to Councillor Bearshaw comment on work the parish council was doing.

Councillor Rust queried the cost of maintaining gold bus stops if they were re-chargeable.

Niki Parks advised that Bus Shelters were not put in unless agreement had been reached on maintenance.

Councillor Moriarty thanked the invitees for the time taken for providing update to the panel and asked what the plans were for refurbishment at King's Lynn Bus station. He referred to sustainability of development and the need to have bus services in operation to encourage their use as properties were built.

Niki Parks advised NCC would be maintaining the area, clean up, fixed screens and more cycle stands for it to become a travel hub. She offered to provide the plans. She also reminded members that the NCC could encourage use and provide service could not force their use.

Vanessa Reeve advised that WNCT were working closely with St James Health Service to understand times and needs. They currently offered dial a bus to link villages to King's Lynn. She informed members that further information was to be released on Friday.

Councillor De Whalley asked what could be done to improve diesel buses and to encourage the use of electric buses.

Julian Patterson answered in three years spent £3 million on euro 6 diesel buses to improve emissions. He reminded members that when traffic flowed it improved emissions. There were no plans for alternative fuel buses at the moment due to the cost and limitations on mileage.

Councillor Beales commented that it was good to see active maintenance of the Bus Station..

The Vice Chair asked about variation of prices and lack of direct route buses in rural areas such as Swaffham and Marham to Downham Market. She also asked what percentage of the budget had been used on King's Lynn & West Norfolk and whether green roofs been considered for bus shelters.

Niki Parks stated the price of the fare depended on the company and their cost of running the service. She agreed to look at the connectivity to Downham Market and surrounding areas. She explained that and the funding was not for the longer term so the pricing may change again after the funding ceased. It was noted that Lynx Buses had reduced their fares and offered discounts. £13 Million had been used and green roofs can be considered but maintenance down to parish.

Councillor Bubb referred to an issue with a bus shelter in Dersingham and asked how much of the budget was spent on Norwich.

Niki Parks responded that if Councillor Bubb provides specific details on the bus stop to her she would investigate further. She also confirmed that Norfolk County Council did not put any budget towards electric buses and was funded by the Government.

EC92: **CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE - 30 MINUTES**

[Click here to view the recording of this item](#)

The Panel received a Climate Change Update presentation from the Climate Change Manager, a copy of which is attached.

The Chair thanked the officer for his report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below;

Councillor Colwell commented that 24% of the area's carbon emissions was from Transport, he encouraged active travel along with the re-wetting of peat land.

The Climate Change Manager agreed and added that as we develop the detail of the updated strategy we can think about how transport and peat can be included. It was noted that most land is privately owned and it will be important to engage with landowners, farmers and other stakeholders.

The Vice Chair thanked the Climate Change Manager for the presentation and enthusiasm and asked for further explanation on the business expo.

The Climate Change Manager advised about the Expo event held in June 2022. The event was organised on the council's behalf by the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce involving a wide range of businesses and guest speakers to encourage net zero practices. It may run again if members agreed to its inclusion in the new strategy and action plan.

Councillor Beales, in referring to the issue of peat land commented on the level of agricultural schemes and re-wilding taking place in the borough. He drew attention to the need to maintain productivity within the country rather than importing goods.

Councillor De Whalley thanked the Climate Change Manager for the presentation and drawing attention to the challenges and opportunities before the council.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the update.

EC93: **CABINET REPORT - GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PREFERRED SITES - 30 MINUTES**

[Click here to view the recording of this item.](#)

Officers presented the report which explained that authority was needed to proceed with a further period of consultation on those proposed (allocated) sites for Gypsy and Traveller use. Evidence and feedback had been considered to identify the most appropriate locations to accommodate the identified need for Gypsy and Traveller provision.

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

Councillor Crofts made reference to the titles of the wards in the report which were not accurate. He commented on his previous experience as Chair of Upwell Parish Council and Small Lode which was one mile long and with a number of sites concentrated in one area. He asked if the allocated sites were the tolerated sites, then what is the situation with planning permission.

The Senior Planning Officer responded that unauthorised or tolerated sites that did not have planning permission will be formalised where a direct need from the sites has arisen.

Councillor Crofts stated that the NPPF stated that there shouldn't be a high number of sites in one area and should not cause concern to other residents, he asked why there was such a high allocation in Small Lode.

The Senior Planning Officer advised that the number of sites proposed sites had been reduced in the Outwell/ Upwell area following consultation feedback.

Councillor Crofts stated families concerned were the same family and therefore would not be available for the open market. That Senior Planning Officer stated there was a direct need for those existing families on existing sites and the Council is seeking to make provision for these families.

Councillor Bearshaw asked made reference to unauthorised sites and questioned why they were now being permitted. The Assistant Director answered that material circumstances must be considered and planning circumstances into account before enforcement. The Senior Planning Officer added that once the local plan was updated this would make it easier to take action on unauthorised sites.

Councillor Lintern asked for confirmation that once The Local Plan had been adopted that any sites which were set up illegally would be enforced.

Assistant Director explained that it would be easier to enforce unauthorised sites not in the local plan.

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

1. Endorses the revised Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Proposed Sites and Policy document, the Gypsy and Traveller Site Assessment Document, the associated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment for consultation.
2. Delegated Authority be granted to Portfolio Holder for Development and Regeneration and Assistant Director- Environment & Planning, to include minor amendments as required to consultation.

EC94: **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY REVIEW - 30 MINUTES**

[Click here to view the recording of the item.](#)

Duncan Hall, Assistant Director introduced the Homelessness Review. This document precedes the forthcoming Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which has to be published every five years. It was intended to publish the reviewed strategy by Autumn 2024.

The Homelessness Review provided an overview of homelessness experience and provision in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. It looked at:

- The current and future levels of homelessness in the borough,
- The available provision of services for people experiencing or facing homelessness,
- The ability of such services to meet current and future demand.

The Senior Housing Manager gave a presentation on the Homelessness Review as included with the minutes.

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

In response to Councillor Bearshaw's question: the starting point for the collation of council data was April 2019 –when a new computer system was introduced – running through to the end of June 2023.

The Vice Chair asked if we could communicate and work alongside GP's/Practices for them to identify homelessness. It was agreed networking with services to identify homelessness was essential. The Senior Housing Manager agreed to include GPs and other public/private bodies in the development and implementation of the strategy.

The Vice Chair asked how the King's Lynn Night Shelter fitted in with the strategy, to which the Senior Housing Manager advised that the Night Shelter was a first stage accommodation provider for someone sleeping rough/ homeless before sustainable accommodation was found. The Council worked closely with the night shelter to develop this service.

Councillor Colwell asked why the council was reluctant to take and use Night Shelter data. He suggested additional support for trauma training be provided. The Assistant Director explained the Night Shelter had been in the process of changing its method of operation for two to three years. The difference in numbers was because the methodology for determining the Council's figures and the annual rough sleeping snapshot count were prescribed by central government. A new role had been created to look at the council's data in more depth.

Councillor Rust commented that the council was working with the Night Shelter and reminded members that ending rough sleeping was linked to the provision of housing which the council was taking a lead with via the housing companies.

Councillor Lintern referred to the Night Shelter's planning application and crime and disorder plan comments made, which she felt reflected the Borough Council departments' need to work together.

RESOLVED: The Panel supports recommendations as set out below;

1. The Panel endorsed the findings of the Homelessness Review to support and inform the work of the newly emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029.
2. The Panel agreed that the Homelessness and Housing Delivery Task Group continued to operate and receive detailed information and updates and monitoring of the strategy.
3. The Panel agreed the revised Terms of Reference for the Group.

EC95: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

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.

Councillor Bubb was advised to complete form for item relating to review of Crematorium being added to Work Programme.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC96: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on **4th June 2024 at 4:30pm** in the **Town Hall, King's Lynn**.

The meeting closed at 7.16 pm