

**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, 16th July, 2024 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn**

**PRESENT:** A Bullen (Chair)  
Councillors T Barclay, P Bland, D Heneghan, A Kemp and P Kunes

**Portfolio Holders**

Councillor M de Whalley, Gayton and Grimston Ward  
Councillor S Ring, The Woottons Ward  
Councillor J Rust, Springwood Ward

**Officers:**

Paul Billington, Interim Assistant Director - Alive West Norfolk  
Honor Howell, Assistant to the Chief Executive  
Nikki Patton, Housing Strategy Officer  
Andy King, Senior Housing Manager  
Richard Cooper, Housing Data Analysis  
Martin Chisholm, Assistant Director Operations and Commercial

EC13: **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING**

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**RESOLVED:** In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Bullen was nominated as the Chair for this Environment and Community Panel Meeting.

EC14: **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Collop, Devulapalli and Sandell.

EC15: **MINUTES**

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**RESOLVED:** The Minutes from the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the meeting.

**EC16: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**EC17: URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none.

**EC18: MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

There was none.

**EC19: CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

**EC20: CABINET REPORT- HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY**

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The Housing Services Manager introduced the Strategy to the Panel and advised that all Local Authorities were required by law to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy every five years.

The Senior Housing Manager gave a presentation to the Panel on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a copy is attached.

The Senior Housing Manager advised the timeline of the strategy which included a review which was conducted in the autumn and winter of 2023/24 and published in April 2024. He added as part of the timeline, the draft strategy was completed in July 2024 and therefore was on track. The Senior Housing Manager explained to the Panel sessions had been held to encourage input from Council employees, Local Partners, Public Survey and people with lived experience of homelessness, with a total of 118 individuals contributing.

The Senior Housing Manager highlighted to the Panel the Key Strategy Aims were prevention, intervention, accommodation, recovery, and system support/service culture. He highlighted the values and behaviours included in the strategy which were dignity, transparency, flexibility, collaboration, and empowerment.

The Chair, Councillor Bullen thanked the Senior Housing Manager for the presentation and the detail of the Strategy produced along with all the work involved.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rust thanked all the Housing Team for their hard work and by ending homelessness person by person and putting them at the heart of the strategy.

Councillor Kemp commented that the report was ambitious and included detail in depth. Councillor Kemp asked if the Strategy included more help for people renting in the private sector along with if there were any plans for help with mortgages and if the Borough Council would be a guarantor for rent. She further asked if the Strategy included improved access to mainstream health services.

The Senior Housing Manager responded to Councillor Kemp's questions. He advised the Strategy focused on improved partnerships with the private sector. He commented guaranteed rents could be considered with an effective scheme. The Senior Housing Manager stated regarding mortgages, this was not a trend currently but if this became a further issue then it would be investigated further. He commented further regarding the working relationships with the private sector which included Citizen Advice Bureau and Inclusion Health.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rust added Shelters and Citizen Advice Bureau were already existing services which helped with managing tight budgets and the Borough Council provided the 'Beat the Bills' scheme.

Councillor Kunes asked if the Council provide accommodation for customers where the properties do not have restrictions, for example pets or smoking allowed.

The Senior Housing Manager clarified Housing First provided a service for people who were unable to progress in a hostel environment or settings where there were extensive restrictions. He added Housing First worked with support accommodation providers to provide accommodation to ensure there was no negative impact.

Councillor Kemp sought clarification if Care Leavers had been identified in the Strategy.

The Housing Services Manager provided assurance that there was already policies and frameworks in place in relation to Care Leavers and needs have been identified however policy allocation was being reviewed.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Rust referred members to the Care Leavers Covenant which highlighted what the Council would be doing for Care Leavers, and this overlapped existing policies.

The Chair, Councillor Bullen commented that it needed to be recognised that the Borough Council were addressing the issues with Homelessness and Rough Sleeping and working hard to end homelessness one by one.

The Senior Housing Manager elaborated further that ending homelessness was the overall goal on the horizon and the strategy works towards that.

**RESOLVED:** That the 2024-2029 Strategy is adopted and that the role of the Environment and Community Panel group - Homelessness and Housing Delivery Task Group in overseeing the delivery of the Action Plan within the strategy was endorsed.

EC21: **CABINET REPORT- ALIVE WEST NORFOLK ARRANGEMENTS**

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The Corporate Governance Manager/ Assistant to the Chief Executive presented the report on Alive West Norfolk Arrangements.

The Corporate Governance Manager/ Assistant to the Chief Executive outlined the aspirations of Alive West Norfolk and that the post five year start up remained challenging. The report concluded that Alive West Norfolk required subsidy from the Borough Council. She highlighted the need and requirement to invest in improvement of facilities in Lynnsport, St James pool or Oasis pool however there was no capital.

She outlined the recommendations to Cabinet in the report and explained the governance and operations of Alive West Norfolk were recommended to be returned to in-house management with the management and structure to be determined following the appointment of the new Chief Executive. She confirmed to the Panel the options which had been considered as part of the review.

The Corporate Governance Manager/ Assistant to the Chief Executive explained the complexity to administer Alive West Norfolk and the static levels of activity and visit levels. She explained the key elements to the Panel such as all of the Alive West Norfolk Staff being on the Borough Council terms and conditions already therefore further costs would not be incurred.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Governance Manager/ Assistant to the Chief Executive for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Kemp endorsed the recommendations and agreed Alive West Norfolk would be more profitable in-house. She asked what consultation would be taken and what action would be taken to include and encourage people without surplus income.

The Interim Assistant Director Leisure, Arts and Lynnsport clarified consultation had been taken with users and non-users and encouraging young people to exercise. He confirmed he was still awaiting the results from the survey. He added in regard to value for money there has been continuous financial pressures in recent years and this had led to price rises for the customer at the same time as the quality of the facilities had gone down. This resulted in perceptions of reduced value for money amongst users. If facilities were improved this would increase income and give the council more flexibility on pricing policies.

Councillor Heneghan confirmed that due to the number of gyms in the area, she looked forward to seeing the result of the survey and hoped work was done to prioritise what it was that users wanted. She endorsed Alive West Norfolk to come back in-house.

Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ring commented that the detail of the report demonstrated the need for Alive West Norfolk to be brought back in-house. He highlighted to the Panel these facilities do not go well in a business together. He highlighted in the next four to five years what the Council could deliver and return in profit. He made further comment that the Council was fortunate to own these facilities and added that the Council could provide an efficient service with bringing Alive West Norfolk in house and to deliver and identify Health and Wellbeing opportunities.

The Chair, Councillor Bullen referred to the report and asked about the 10% activity being down since Covid and what the contributions were.

The Corporate Governance Manager/Assistant to the Chief Executive advised there were a number of factors including people being reluctant to return to areas that could be high risk areas and also lack of disposable income due to increase in energy bills. She added there were a variety of causes and difficult to specify.

**RESOLVED:** The Environment and Community Panel supports the report and recommendations to Cabinet.

EC22: **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST**

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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 Kunes asked for the CO2 Audit to be added and enquired further about the Climate Change Informal Working Group.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC23: **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on

**3rd September 2024 at 4:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall.**

**The meeting closed at 5.52 pm**