

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held by video link on **Tuesday 26 January 2021** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Cllr S Riley – Chairman

(Cllr A Adams was in the Chair for the first part of the meeting)

Cllr A D Adams	Cllr S I Holland	Cllr M L Murrell
Cllr N J Brennan	Cllr C Karimi-Ghovanlou	Cllr G K Nurden
Cllr P E Bulman	Cllr K S Kelly	Cllr S M Prutton
Cllr S J Catchpole	Cllr D King	Cllr N C Shaw

Cllr T Mancini Boyle also attended the meeting.
Amanda Murr, Head of Community Safety, Norfolk County Community Safety Partnership was also in attendance.

Also in attendance were the Assistant Director Governance & Business Support (Monitoring Officer), Assistant Director Individuals and Families, Governance Manager, Senior Governance Officer (SW) and the Democratic Services Officers (LA and JO).

In the absence of the Chairman the Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

218 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Harpley.

219 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, save for the following amendment:

Minute no: 216 - Greater Norwich Local Plan – Regulation 19, Pre-Submission Publication

~~Following a vote with 8 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention it was:~~

Cllrs: Adams, Brennan, Holland, Karimi-Ghovanlou, Kelly, Murrell, Prutton and Shaw voted in favour of the recommendation, Cllr Catchpole voted against the recommendation and Cllr Riley abstained. Therefore, the vote was carried with 8 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

Options (1 and 2)

- (1) To agree to publish the Greater Norwich Local Plan under regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012; and,
- (2) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning Authority to make any minor or factual corrections to the GNLP ahead of its publication.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the decisions made by Cabinet at its 12 January 2021 meeting corresponded with the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its 5 January 2021 meeting.

220 EARLY INTERVENTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Amanda Murr, Head of Community Safety at the Norfolk County Community Safety Partnership (NCCSP) gave a presentation on the NCCSP Strategy 2021-24 (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes).

The Committee was advised that the NCCSP was made up of a number of partners including; district councils, the County Council, Police, Probation, Youth Offending Team, Drug and Alcohol Action Team and the Fire Service.

Current priorities were addressing drug supply through county lines, domestic abuse and 'Prevent' (preventing extremism and radicalisation).

Members were asked to note that local priorities were also identified, as areas varied greatly and there were hotspots that required early intervention.

To deliver the proposed interventions £500,000 would be available upon the launch of the Strategy.

The Strategy included a number of Key Themes, these included: Building Resilient Cohesive Communities, Neighbourhood Crime, Reducing the Threat of Criminal Exploitation and Safeguarding Communities from the Harm of Abuse and Serious Violence.

In response to a query the Committee was advised that a dynamic response was provided to support victims of domestic abuse and to make them aware of services that could assist them. The lockdown had increased pressure on these services, but a lot of work was being put into domestic abuse prevention and especially ensuring that there was no duplication of effort. The Committee was also advised that the Council contributed £30,000 a year to support measures to counter domestic abuse.

In response to a question about abuse on social media Amanda Murr advised the meeting that this issue was dealt with by Norfolk Constabulary. However

she would look into the matter and provide a response to the Committee.

The public consultation on the Strategy would take place from 29 March to 12 April 2021, with the final sign off on 19 April 2021. Work was currently being undertaken on how the public consultation would be administered to ensure maximising public engagement with the process.

The Chairman thanked Amanda for her presentation.

Cllr S Riley in the Chair.

221 APPRENTICESHIPS AND NEW SCHEMES

The Assistant Director Individuals and Families introduced the report which set out the schemes of work the Council was progressing to support young people in apprenticeships and gaining skills and employment. This was an initial report and more in depth information would be brought to Members as the initiatives were developed.

Members were advised that young people (aged 18-24) had been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. On top of this a range of other factors also caused youth unemployment. These included: gaps between education and employment; lack of skills needed for work; employers preferring experienced staff and lack of quality vocational pathways.

Actions being taken by the Council to counter this trend include a 'Kickstart Programme', a Government scheme for 18-24-year olds, offering employers an incentive by paying wages for up to 25 hours a week for six months to employ a young person to give them vital skills for work. Currently the Council had 12 internal placements and had applied to be a Gateway employer to support small businesses work with the scheme. Currently around 20 businesses had applied for the scheme with around 24 placements being considered. Although Kickstart started in November 2020, delays due to resources by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) meant that placements were likely to commence in February 2021.

In addition the Council was working with the DWP to develop a programme to support young and older people who had become unemployed as a result of the pandemic. A member of the Housing Benefits Team had been placed on this programme and would be matched by a DWP Jobs Coach. Together they would identify and assist the recently unemployed get back into the workplace by utilising Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning Service and Registered Provider Housing Support, as well as the Broadland Choices Programme

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) advised the meeting that officers would be bringing back a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that provided more detail regarding the Apprenticeship Levy, which had focused on older apprentices historically at the expense of younger people. The Council aimed to provide young people with the knowledge and experience to get a job and was seeking to take a more consistent approach to how it managed internal apprentices across both authorities and tap into the Apprenticeships Levy in the most effective way; possibly by joining up with public sector partners to do this

Members noted that the original concerns of the Committee centered on the Apprenticeship Levy and the detrimental effect that it was having on the take up of apprenticeships.

The Chairman noted that the Levy needed to be addressed, as it had led to a 21 percent reduction in apprenticeships starts between 2016/17 and 2018/19. He requested that a paper setting out some clear statistics on this matter be brought to the Committee, so that the Council could feed back to Government the detrimental effect the Levy had had on apprenticeships. He also requested that the Committee be updated on the work with partners on apprenticeships, with a focus on helping small businesses who could struggle with the bureaucracy involved with recruiting an apprentice.

In response to a question about support for apprentices who had had the period of their apprenticeship reduced, the Assistant Director of Individuals and Families advised the meeting that this was due to Government legislation, but it was something that the Council could explore further to understand whether this had been detrimental or could in fact reflect the needs of the modern workplace. The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support added that internal apprentices in the One Team were matched to the training or qualification for their role, so the length of apprenticeship would match the time it would take to gain that qualification. Extensions to apprenticeships had also been given, if it was taking longer than expected to gain the qualification.

Members were advised that the apprenticeships needed to be looked at holistically and that a update to the Committee in March could look at all aspects of the issues and concerns that had been raised by Members.

In answer to a query about the use of Carrowbreck, it was confirmed that it had provided excellent training, not just in formal qualifications but in interview techniques and transferable skills for the job market, that were sadly lacking in the careers advice being provided by schools. It was hoped that after the pandemic training would recommence at Carrowbreck.

In respect of the Kickstart scheme, the Assistant Director Individuals and Families advised the meeting that the number of placements required to become a Gateway employer had reduced from 50 to 30, so the Council now

met this criteria. Other Gateway employers were the County Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norwich Chamber of Commerce, so there was good coverage locally. Members were informed that the Economic Development Team were preparing for a huge push to publicise the scheme at its launch.

It was confirmed that there were no trades, such as plumbers or electricians, in the first tranche of Kickstart placements, but it was hoped that these would be attracted to the scheme as it was developed. It was also confirmed that there was a whole range of apprenticeship schemes available and that colleges were also accessing this funding.

In response to a query about engagement with schools at an earlier age, as well as with business and trade bodies, the Assistant Director Individuals and Families confirmed that the Council was intending to do a lot more to engage with schools, but would probably not be able to actually go into them until September 2021. In respect of external bodies more engagement was planned to promote apprenticeships.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support advised the meeting that key priorities and objectives in respect of apprenticeships would be set out in the more in-depth report that would be brought to the Committee at its 30 March 2021 meeting.

AGREED

1. to welcome the report and to note that the report being brought to the Committee in March would include an analysis of the Apprentice Levy and the effect that Government policy has had on the take up of apprenticeships; and
2. that the report would also set out the overall approach being taken by the Council to support and promote apprenticeships, including working with partner organisations.

222 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman went through the Committee's Work Programme and the following was noted:

- The Apprenticeships report (Minute 221 refers) would be brought to the 30 March 2021 meeting.
- A Community Safety Update would be presented to the Committee following the signing off of the Norfolk County Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2021/24.

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- The Committee would be invited to comment and provide feedback on initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of residents at the 30 March 2021 meeting. This would be used to inform the Provision of Leisure Principles report that would be going to Cabinet in June.
- A company had been commissioned to re-survey the bridges owned by the Council and was expected to report back in April. Therefore, the Bridge Maintenance Reserves report scheduled for the 30 March 2021 meeting would be deferred to the June meeting, to allow a more comprehensive report to be brought to the Committee
- The Housing Allocations Policy would be reviewed by the Committee six months after its 1 April 2021 implementation date.
- A date for the next meeting of the Staff Turnover Time and Task Limited Panel would be arranged following the meeting.
- In response to the email sent to parish and town councils requesting topics for scrutiny, Sprowston Town Council had suggested the following topic for the Committee to consider:

Production of a guidance document on the process for when town and parish councils should get involved with developers and the planning authority to ensure they have the opportunity to participate in discussions about the allocations of public open space.

The Committee **AGREED** that this item would be placed on the Work Programme and considered in due course.

- The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development would be meeting the Programme Director - Better Broadband for Norfolk on 10 February 2021. Depending on the outcome of the discussions the Portfolio Holder might be invited to update the 30 March 2021 meeting regarding broadband coverage. The Chairman would determine this matter in due course.
- Updates on the Norfolk Sustainable Water Management Strategy and from the 18 January 2021 meeting of the Boards Internal Drainage Board would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

A Member proposed scrutinising public consultations to investigate how they could be improved to generate greater public engagement. Arrangements would be made for the Member to meet with the relevant responsible officer and the Senior Governance Officer to discuss undertaking a TOPIC analysis of the item.

The meeting closed at 11.55am.