

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Tuesday 17 July 2018** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mr D G Harrison – Chairman

Mr A D Adams
Mrs C H Bannock
Mr D Buck

Ms S J Catchpole
Mr J J Emsell
Mr R F Grady

Mr G K Nurden
Mrs K A Vincent
Mr D C Ward

Also in attendance were the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Emergency Planning Manager, Senior Community Planning Officer and the Committee Officer (JO).

David Allfrey (Highways and Major Projects Manager) at Norfolk County Council Highways and Lizzie Cooper from Highways England and Mark Frith from Mott MacDonald were in attendance for item 21 – Transport Provision and Sustainability.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Mr D Buck	24 – Time and Task Limited Panel – Neighbourhood Plans	Member of a Parish Council that had adopted a Neighbourhood Plan
Mrs K Vincent		Disclosable Pecuniary Interest as Director of a company involved in the development of Neighbourhood Plans

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Everett and Mr Tapp.

19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed two new Members to the Committee; Mr Everett and Mr O'Neill. Members were advised that Mrs Copplestone had been appointed as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and therefore was

no longer able to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

21 TRANSPORT PROVISION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Members received a presentation from officers from Highways England that provided an update on the improvements to be made to the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham (attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes).

The Committee was advised that a statutory consultation on the proposed improvements would take place between 10 September and 19 October 2018. The consultation would include a series of public information events, at Norwich, Acle, Blofield and Lingwood, which would include drive-through computer animations that would clearly show how the new road layouts would deliver the improvements. Members were requested to contact officers if they had any suggestions for additional events in the district.

The consultation would also include a number of information points and was suggested that one of these be located in Thorpe Lodge.

The timeline for the scheme aimed to have a Development Consent Order submitted in March 2019 and approved by July 2020, with works commencing in May 2021 and open for traffic by November 2022.

The improvements should create better access and safety for the local community, whilst providing better journey times for those using the A47.

The Committee was advised that the statutory consultation was a key opportunity for the Council, parishes and residents to respond to the proposed improvements and Members were requested to raise awareness of this and encourage as much feedback as possible during this period.

Members thanked Ms Cooper and Mr Frith for their presentation.

The Committee then received a presentation on the Western Link project (attached at Appendix 2 to these Minutes).

The Northern Distributor Road (NDR) (now Broadland Northway) had generally received positive feedback following its opening in March 2018. However, some concerns had been raised, particularly in respect of roundabouts. To address these issues monitoring by discreet video cameras would be taking place for a period of approximately six weeks. The data gathered would then be analysed to identify a programme of corrective works. It was emphasised that not all issues were the same; with some being linked to driver behaviour and unfamiliarity with road layouts, as well as signage. Different solutions would be required to address different issues and a targeted approach would be taken.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that newly planted trees were being watered in areas where it was safe to do so and further tree planting would be taking place along the Broadland Northway later in the year. If trees had been lost due to the recent drought they would be replaced.

Members were advised that the original consultation for the NDR in 2004 included an A47 connection west of Norwich, but a connection across the Wensum was eventually dropped despite calls for the 'Missing Link' to be delivered.

Following the completion of the NDR there had been renewed calls for the Western Link to be completed. This now fitted in well with the A47 improvements through Highway England Road Investment Strategy, the Local Development Order for a Food Enterprise Zone at Easton, the Local Plan Review and the decision by Norfolk County Council to make it one of three major infrastructure priority projects.

Options for the Western Link were now being reviewed, although there were still environmental challenges and work was being undertaken with Natural England and the Environment Agency to address these that could be factored into any proposed options. Work was also being carried out with Highways England, in areas such as traffic modelling, to provide data that would form a key element of the evidence base; alongside analysis of the consultation feedback. The consultation had received 1,728 online responses, 754 comments on the consultation map and 1,170 visitors to 11 consultation events

In response to a query from the Vice-Chairman, Members were informed that a tunnel under the Wensum was unlikely to find favour with statutory bodies, due to the environmental impact during construction, as well as the huge capital expense.

The County Council had a Member group overseeing the project and a Local Liaison Group from each parish was also actively involved in its development. It was emphasised that the project was distinct from the improvements to the A47 between Tuddenham and Easton and each would need to go through their own statutory processes and consultations.

A consultation analysis overview report had been produced with general themes, issues and a demographic analysis. A more in-depth, qualitative analysis of comments and responses would then be produced that would be considered as part of the options assessment work.

All previous options were being considered as part of this process and would be assessed using a Department for Transport Early Assessment Sifting Tool to comply with guidance.

It was intended to develop options for consultation by late 2018, with a preferred solution by March / April 2019.

Members were advised that a notional viaduct solution with some broad assumptions and a cost of £160m had been presented to the County Council's Environmental Development and Transport Committee in October 2017. This cost was likely to be higher than the actual scheme that would eventually be proposed. Discussions had not yet taken place with the Department for Transport regarding options for funding the scheme, although it was not considered that a toll road would be a viable option. As Norfolk County Council had a good reputation for delivering large schemes, a possible funding option might be through the Large Local Majors Transport Scheme. A realistic start date for this challenging project was 2022.

A Member requested that a progress update be provided for a meeting of Council later in the year.

22 RESILIENCE UPDATE

The Emergency Planning Manager advised the Committee that he was pleased to report that no major incidents had occurred in the district since he last provided an update in March 2018.

Most of his work over the period had consisted of ensuring that the Council's Business Continuity Plans were up to date and he had been working closely with the ICT and Facilities Manager on this, as many risks were now associated with Information Technology. The Emergency Planning Manager was also working with the Norfolk Resilience Forum on an updated Risk Register, which would be published shortly.

Work was ongoing to expand the number and type of Emergency Rest Centres in the district as most of those in Broadland were currently High Schools. Discussions were ongoing with the Diamond Centre in Sprowston regarding using it as a Rest Centre during emergencies. An exercise was also to be held at Hellesdon Community Centre in the autumn.

A Crucial Crew event run by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to teach year 6 pupils about safety and resilience, was held in May at The Space. Over 1,000 children attended the week-long event. The Emergency Planning Manager confirmed that he would forward Members any guidance that the Fire and Rescue Service produced regarding fire safety. He would also look into the Council issuing a joint statement with the Fire and Rescue Service about the dangers of arson, which would be especially timely over the summer holidays.

A proposal by the Environment Agency to reclassify some Main Rivers as Ordinary Watercourses (known as 'de-maining') and transfer maintenance

responsibilities to local authorities, but with no additional resources to accompany the transference of power, was recently rejected by the County Council's Environmental Development and Transport Committee.

In Norfolk, water supplies remained adequate despite the current dry spell and there was no imminent prospect of a hosepipe ban. The Heat Health Watch, a service designed to help healthcare professionals manage through periods of extreme temperature, was currently set at level 1 (summer preparedness).

The Norfolk Resilience Forum would be holding Exercise Springboard on 27 September at Blackfriars Hall. The exercise would focus on the recovery process after a major emergency, which was an area where local authorities in particular would have a significant role. If any Member wished to attend the all-day event they were requested to contact the Emergency Planning Manager.

The Emergency Planning Manager advised the meeting that the traditional route for establishing a Community Resilience Group was through a parish council, but he was increasingly trying to establish them through other local community groups, such as Home Watch, and Rotary Groups. A Member also suggested that Safer Neighbourhood Action Panels might be another group that would be interested in community resilience.

The Emergency Planning Manager confirmed that he would forward information to a Member who wished to write a report for her parishes on establishing a Community Resilience Group.

Members thanked the Emergency Planning Manager for his update.

23 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION RECORD UPDATE

The report presented a record and progress update on the Committee's recommendations made between September 2017 and May 2018. The monitoring of recommendations made against Cabinet reports was recorded separately in the Committee's Annual Report.

The Committee was asked to note the content of the recommendation record and highlight any outstanding recommendations they wished to be followed up or reported back to a future Committee meeting.

In response to a query, Members were advised that the Environmental Protection Manager (Special Projects) had been in touch with all the parishes concerned in respect of footway lighting provision and their responses would be included in her report, which would be presented to Cabinet later in the year.

It was also confirmed that the NEWS Joint Venture Company Update, to be presented to Cabinet in the autumn, would reference the recommendations made by the NEWS Time and Task Limited Panel.

AGREED

to note the contents of the record.

24 TIME AND TASK LIMITED PANEL – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

The report presented the findings of a Time and Task Limited Panel which had been convened to review the Council's Neighbourhood Plan process.

The Chairman of the Panel advised the meeting that this had been a very interesting review. The Panel had met with officers from the Spatial Planning Team to understand more about Neighbourhood Planning and had surveyed and met with various parishes in different stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

The Panel was pleased to note the excellent level of support provided by the Council, which was the top performing local authority with the most Neighbourhood Development Plans in the East of England. Therefore, there was little that the Council could do to improve the service, except possibly raise awareness amongst parishes of the level of support they could receive.

It was notable that there was a variety of groups drafting Neighbourhood Plans: some were parish councils, others used steering groups and some were working with local professionals, whilst others were working with paid consultants.

In response to a query, the Senior Community Planning Officer confirmed that parishes were made fully aware that a lack of a five year land supply in the district could affect Neighbourhood Plans. However, the Government had recently introduced a new incentive, which meant that Neighbourhood Plans which allocated sites for housing in local authority areas with less than a five year land supply, but more than three years supply, would not be regarded as out of date and subject to speculative development. This protection would only last for a period of two years from the date from when the Plan was made.

The Chairman noted that the Panel's recommendations would enhance what was already a high performing service and congratulated the Community Planning Team on their work.

AGREED

to endorse the following recommendations:

- (1) Spatial Planning Officers to review the agendas for Neighbourhood Plan Forum meetings to build in more workshop based sessions. Enabling Neighbourhood Plan Groups to share their expertise with each other and sessions are worthwhile to all types of groups – whether new or nearing the completion of their Plans.
- (2) To focus on explaining the planning process as a whole and how Neighbourhood Plans fitted within that. This could also mean discussing the possibility of pursuing other community planning tools if a Neighbourhood Plan was not the right tool to use for a particular community's needs.
- (3) Targeting more parishes to see if they would like to get involved in NPs or other community led planning initiatives.
- (4) Explore relationship with neighbouring districts and share good practice amongst colleagues.
- (5) Consider creating the Council's own bespoke guides / templates where a need was identified and if the opportunity presented itself share with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

25 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme and

RESOLVED:

to make the following amendments

- (1) Economy Updates would be moved to the September and March meetings to align with Performance Reports.
- (2) The following Performance Management Sub-Committee topics would be taken as Overview and Scrutiny agenda items:
 - Norwich Airport – Business Development (11 September 2018)
 - Tourism - Business Development (16 October 2018)

- Communications (13 November 2018)
 - Fees on DIY waste (29 January 2019)
- (3) The A47 Dualling Campaign item would be considered at the meeting on 21 August 2018.

The meeting closed at 11.36 am