

Scrutiny Committee

Members of the Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr G Minshull (Chairman)
Cllr V Clifford-Jackson (Vice Chairman)
Cllr B Bernard
Cllr B Duffin
Cllr J Hornby
Cllr J Rowe
Cllr R Savage
Cllr T Spruce
Cllr J Wilby

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

This meeting will be live streamed for public viewing via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzciRgwo84-iPyRlmsTCIng>

If a member of the public would like to attend to speak on an agenda item, please email your request to democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk, no later than 5.00pm on Monday 12 October.

Agenda

Date

Wednesday 14 October 2020

Time

9.30 am

Place

To be hosted remotely at:
South Norfolk House
Cygnets Court
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2XE

Contact

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Website: www.south-norfolk.gov.uk

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting,
please let us know in advance

Large print version can be made available

AGENDA

1. To report apologies for absence and to identify substitute members;
2. Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972. Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency;
3. To Receive Declarations of Interest from Members;
(Please see guidance form and flow chart attached – page 4)
4. Minutes from the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held 9 September 2020;
(attached at page 6)
5. Future of Community Grants; (report attached – page 14)
6. Scrutiny Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda; (attached – page 20)

Working style of the Scrutiny Committee and a protocol for those attending

Independence

Members of the Scrutiny Committee will not be subject to whipping arrangements by party groups.

Member leadership

Members of the Committee will take the lead in selecting topics for and in questioning witnesses. The Committee will expect members of Cabinet, rather than officers, to take the main responsibility for answering the Committee's questions about topics, which relate mainly to the Council's activities.

A constructive atmosphere

Meetings of the Committee will be constructive, and not judgmental, accepting that effective overview and scrutiny is best achieved through challenging and constructive enquiry. People giving evidence at the Committee should not feel under attack.

Respect and trust

Meetings will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and trust.

Openness and transparency

The Committee's business will be open and transparent except where there are sound reasons for protecting confidentiality. In particular, the minutes of the Committee's meetings will explain the discussion and debate, so that it could be understood by those who were not present.

Consensus

Members of the Committee will work together and, while recognising political allegiances, will attempt to achieve consensus and agreed recommendations.

Impartial and independent officer advice

Officers who advise and support the Committee will give impartial and independent advice, recognising the importance of the Scrutiny Committee in the Council's arrangements for governance, as set out in the Constitution.

Regular review

There will be regular reviews of how the overview and scrutiny process is working, and a willingness to change if it is not working well.

Programming and planning

The Scrutiny Committee will have a programme of work. Members will agree the topics to be included in the work programme, the extent of the investigation to be undertaken in relation to resources, and the witnesses to be invited to give evidence.

Managing time

The Committee will attempt to conclude the business of each meeting in reasonable time. The order of business will be arranged as far as possible to minimise the demands on the time of witnesses.

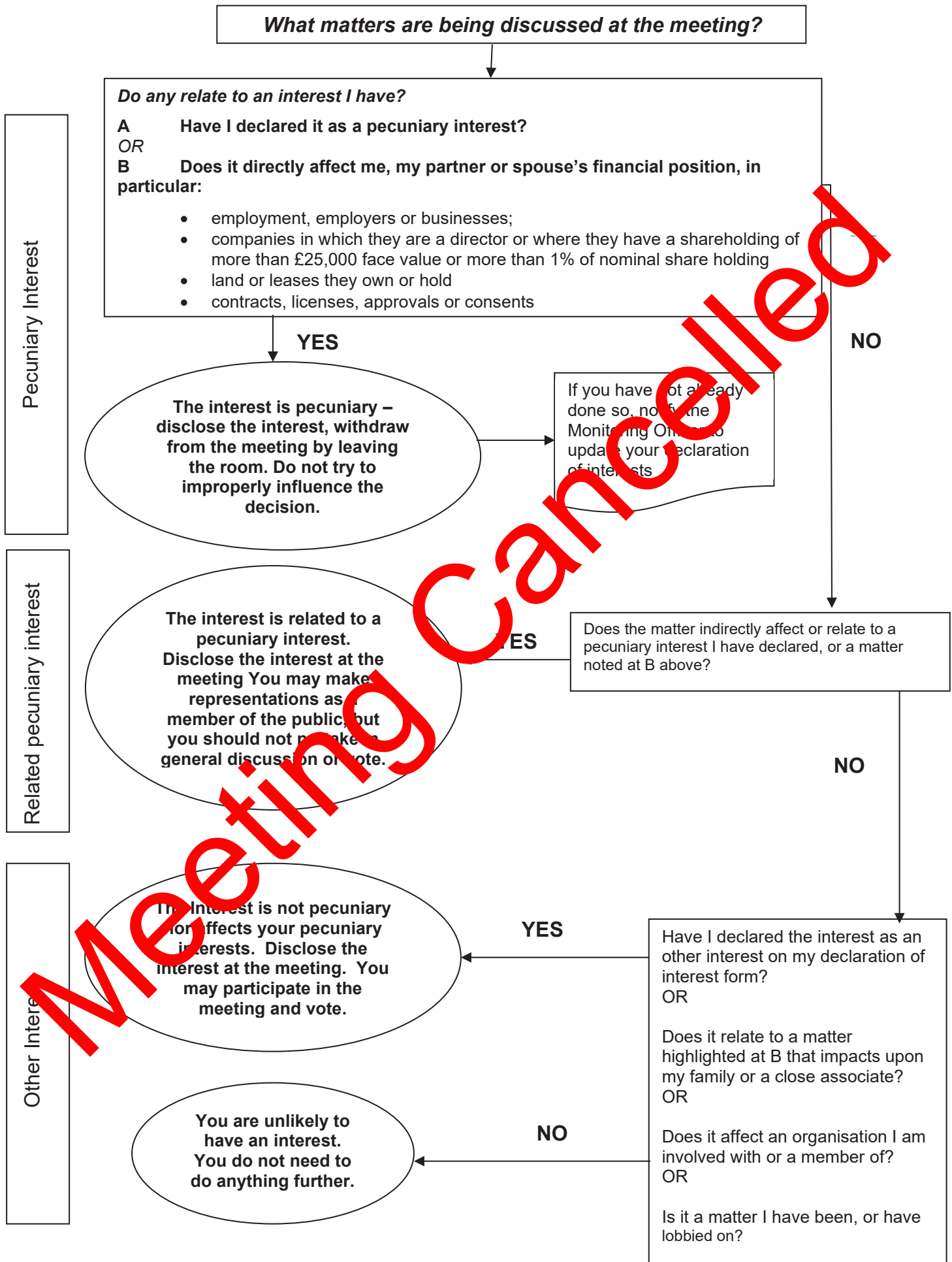
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

When declaring an interest at a meeting Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting. Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.

<p>Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.</p>
<p>Does the interest directly:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position? 2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner? 3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council 4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own 5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in <p>If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.</p>
<p>Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1.5 above?</p> <p>If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but you should not partake in general discussion or vote.</p>
<p>Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.</p>
<p>Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.</p>

**FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF.
PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST
INSTANCE**

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF





SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council, held on Wednesday 9 September 2020 at 9.30am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: G Minshull, V Clifford-Jackson, B Duffin, S Nuri-Nixon, J Rowe, R Savage and J Wilby

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: B Bernard, J Hornby and T Spruce
Cabinet Member Present: Councillor: Y Bendle

Officers in Attendance: Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) (E Hodds), Chief of Staff (H Ralph), Assistant Director Finance (R Fincham), Assistant Director Individuals and Families, (M Purschouse), Democratic Services Manager (C White) and the Senior Governance Officer (S Utting)

1271 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr V Clifford-Jackson declared that she was a trustee of Voluntary Norfolk.

1272 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 5 August 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

Minute No: 1269 – Review of Market Towns Confidence Campaign

The Chairman advised the meeting that officers would be reporting back on the Committee's suggestions regarding the Market Towns Confidence Campaign, at the next meeting on 19 November 2020.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the following recommendation made by the Committee at the last meeting:

That Cabinet considers future free parking in the Council's car parks during the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to encourage continued local support of the Market Towns.

He asked the Committee to note that charges had been re-introduced on 7 August 2020 and that he had been advised by officers that one of Wymondham car parks had been extremely busy and that having discussed this matter with the Portfolio Holder, and without any supporting evidence to the contrary, he doubted that Cabinet would consider going back to free parking at this point.

In the light of this the Chairman, therefore, recommended withdrawing the recommendation.

A Member noted that the pandemic was a very fluid and fast moving situation and that Cabinet should ensure that it could be flexible and make decisions on matters such as this outside of the normal cycle of meetings, if necessary.

The Portfolio Holder for Better Lives confirmed that with the increase in coronavirus cases and the possibilities of further lockdowns Cabinet would keep this issue under review.

AGREED

To withdraw the following recommendation to Cabinet:

That Cabinet considers future free parking in the Council's car parks during the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to encourage continued local support of the Market Towns.

1273 REVIEW OF COVID 19 RESPONSE

The Chief of Staff introduced the report, which covered three key areas of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. the governance arrangements put in place to support the Council's response;
2. the support provided to residents and businesses; and
3. the financial implications of the coronavirus.

The Council had been a key member of the County-wide response to Covid-19 through the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF), which was the overarching body for a whole range strategic and operational response groups.

A number of Council officers heavily supported this work, including the Managing Director who chaired the Tactical Coordination Group and the Director for People and Communities who co-chaired the Community Response Delivery Group. The leadership role that officers took on during the response meant that the Council was well placed to influence and lead the County response, as well as respond to local needs. A key lesson from this, however, was the need to consider resource options and substitutes to ensure the long-term resilience of officers to both support the County and direct the Council response.

Internally, at the start of March an officer Pandemic Strategic Group was set up, which initially met on a daily basis to update on progress, review government policy changes and NRF directives and which in turn oversaw the activities of three Working Group cells covering Governance, Community Response and Business and the Economy.

Overall, it was considered that the Council had been quick to set an organisational governance framework to coordinate its operational response to the pandemic.

The Assistant Director – Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) informed the meeting that the Leader and the Managing Director had discussed standing up the Emergency Committee in mid-March and following the announcement of the Prime Minister on the 23 March 2020, the Managing Director decided to convene the Committee, with its first item of business being to review its Terms of Reference.

A review of the Terms of Reference was important, as previously it had been envisaged that the Emergency Committee would be convened in the recovery phase following a disaster. Covid-19 pandemic brought a different challenge and it was key that the Committee continued to allow officer delegations to be in place to enable operational continuity, whilst drawing to itself the powers of Full Council and Cabinet. The decision to stand down the Emergency Committee would be at the discretion of the Managing Director, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Leader. Licensing and Development Management (with a small membership) would be convened if required, but all other Committee meetings, were suspended.

The first two meetings of the Emergency Committee were held via Skype for Business, but it soon became more appropriate to use Zoom, which allowed meetings to be live streamed via YouTube.

Key items considered by the Emergency Committee were:

- Financial Implications of COVID
- Business Grants and Hardship Fund
- Economic Recovery Plan
- Leisure Services Recovery Plan
- Review of Portfolio Holder Responsibilities and Policy Committee's

Members were asked to note that the Council rapidly went back to the normal Committee timetable, which was much quicker than many Councils across the country. It was suggested that if the Emergency Committee were to be reconvened the frequency and demands of these meetings, both formal and informal might need to be reviewed.

When lockdown formally commenced the senior management team were split between the House, the Lodge and working from home, to maintain cover at each site and build an element of resilience through home workers should either site be badly affected by the virus. All office-based staff were allocated a primary site and would no longer be travelling between sites.

The Council moved almost overnight from 71 percent of staff working in the office, to about 12 percent, with the remainder being provided with the equipment to work from home. Display Screen Equipment assessments were also encouraged to ensure that staff working from home had a suitable environment.

Zoom had been rolled out to all staff, which allowed team, as well as the committee, meetings to be held in the virtual environment. This new way of working had already begun to be embedded in the organisation and real benefits were being seen for both for staff, customers and Members.

As the pandemic continued staff welfare had been a key focus; with a number of staff wellbeing surveys conducted, the launch of the A to Z wellbeing campaign and a mental health first aider scheme.

A Member noted the excellent response by the Council to the pandemic and commended officers on their work. She noted that working from home could have major benefits for the work/life balance of staff and also that Zoom meetings could make Council meetings more accessible and create a better understanding of the work of the Council and Members.

A Member suggested that in future these reports should contain a timeline in order to give a better understanding of the actions taken. He also noted that there were a confusing number of groups under the NRF and he questioned how coordinated the response through so many different bodies had been.

It was also suggested that the Emergency Committee had been set up to make a rapid local response to a disaster, not a long term pandemic and it was questioned if this had been the appropriate response to the situation and that Cabinet should have instead taken on these additional powers. It was also questioned if the decision to stand down the Emergency Committee should have been given to the Managing Director.

The Portfolio Holder for Better Lives confirmed that Cabinet had been kept fully informed of the decisions taken and activities being overseen by the Emergency Committee. She also wished to place on record her thanks to staff and Members for their commendable response to the pandemic.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) advised Members that drawing the powers to Cabinet had been considered, but it was decided that the Emergency Committee, with a revised Terms of Reference, was a more suitable body to respond to the crisis as it enabled cross party working and the ability to draw into the Committee the right skills and experience. The only area that might be looked at again was how swiftly the Council had returned to a full Committee programme, which had placed a strain on officer resources at a time when the recovery phase was still active.

The Chairman noted that whilst there had been considerable suffering during the pandemic that had also been benefits, in areas such as housing the homeless and identifying people who were suffering loneliness, who might never have come to the Council's attention.

A Member noted that since staff were working from home phone response time had improved at the Council. She also noted that a small group like the Emergency Committee was the right sort of body to respond to fast moving Government directives and suggested that Members should be surveyed on whether they had found the Emergency Committee to be the right body to deal with the crisis.

A Member noted that the Council's response showed the vital importance of local government, in terms of local knowledge and expertise, but noted that it had been

resource intensive both physically and financially and she wondered if there would ever be any recompense for Council Tax payers.

In response, the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) emphasised that the response to the pandemic had shown the calibre of staff and the benefit of engaging with partners and that the learning derived from this working had far outweighed the financial costs.

The Portfolio Holder for Better Lives added that a major benefit of engaging with partners was the amount of invaluable first hand data that was made available directly to the Council.

The Assistant Director – Individuals and Families took the Committee through the Community Response section of the report.

The community response approach had been to focus on older and more vulnerable, residents by utilising the Help Hub and over 4,000 volunteers to identify and help those people in need.

The Help Hub team was currently dealing with a 25 percent increase in workload in supporting residents affected by Covid-19 and housing and benefits staff were dealing with a 50 percent increase in demand. Staff were also watching out for the possibility of an increase in evictions due to the coronavirus. One of the main lessons learned from the pandemic was how effectively communities could respond to a crisis and staff would be taking this forward for the future.

The Committee wished to record their thanks to staff in the Help Hub and Community Teams for their hard work during these difficult times.

The Portfolio Holder for Better Lives noted that homelessness would be an ongoing problem, as the fallout from the pandemic unfolded.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that recruitment of staff for the Housing and Benefits Teams to cope with the increase in workload was being looked at and a Member briefing on housing and benefits related issues would be held at the end of the month.

Members were also advised that a new number had been set up for the Norfolk Vulnerability Hub that linked all the Help Hubs across the County, so that residents could be forwarded directly to their own district council for assistance.

A Member observed that leaflet distribution at the start of the pandemic had not been as quick as it should have been and that there had been a lack of consultation with local Members in respect of the rearrangement of streets in market towns to adapt to social distancing measures. He also asked if the Council was using the track and trace system to address the pandemic.

In response the Committee was informed that a new track and trace scheme was being implemented tomorrow and Community Connectors had personally contacted all 67 staff at Banham Poultry who had contracted the coronavirus, which had contributed to a considerable amount of knowledge about the hardship some people were facing and how the Council could assist them.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the Committee that Covid-19 had the potential to have a very significant financial impact on the Council and therefore was closely monitored.

Central Government had provided the Council with significant additional funding received in three tranches of £55,000, £1.3m and £200,000, to support services during the crisis.

However, a key risk was the potential loss of income of up to £2m from the closure of the leisure centres, although it should be noted that the Government had recently announced that it would be launching an Income Recovery Scheme which would provide the Council with 75 percent of its lost income. A report would be taken to the November Cabinet to provide a further budget update.

Members were reminded, that the Council had been prudent and had significant reserves, so remained in a position to support residents through the pandemic.

In response to a query, the Assistant Director of Finance confirmed that the funding from Government was currently covering the Council's costs, however if there was a second wave and a further lockdown it would have a considerable further effect on the Council's income. Investment income had been low for some time and had not been affected by the pandemic. In respect of the local government pension scheme, there was a three yearly review of the pension scheme, which would look at contributions made by local authorities. It remained to be seen if the contribution from South Norfolk would increase.

The Assistant Director of Finance confirmed that despite the loss of income from the Leisure Centres the money from central Government meant that the Council should not need to use its reserves to fund services this year and would have a fully balanced budget.

In response to a suggestion that a cost/savings analysis of staff working from home be conducted, the Assistant Director of Finance advised Members that there had been clear examples of increased productivity from staff working from home. For example, the increase in the number of Housing Benefits claims being processed by staff in the benefits department.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) advised that flexible and agile working were central to the ethos of One Team working for two Councils, outcomes and output are the key deliverables for staff and ensure that services are delivered in the most effective and efficient way.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the meeting that on 24 March 2020 the full continuity response for Finance and Revenues had been invoked, which meant that officers could focus on the priority areas identified as essential.

In respect of debt collection, it was recognised that some residents were in financial difficulty, due to the pandemic, so it was decided to suspend recovery

action including in relation to overpaid Housing Benefit reminders, which also reduced the workload on the Housing Benefits Team.

An emphasis had also been placed on allowing staff to make a judgement on deferring Council Tax payments on a case by case basis, according to individual circumstances.

Debt collection had now restarted, although the court service had not yet started. It was stressed, however, legal action was only taken as a last resort.

Overall, there had been a slight reduction in collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates, but they were holding up well in comparison with a number of other local authorities.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director Individuals and Families advised the meeting that although Member Grants allocation had a deadline of the end of the year there was an argument that this should be extended or rolled over due to the coronavirus. Members were also informed that there were plans to hold two Zoom meetings for community groups in the autumn to identify further funding pots.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the meeting that mandatory business grants had been very successful. Payments had been made quickly to those eligible businesses where the Council held the relevant bank details, other businesses were required to submit claims, so that the Council could obtain their bank details and assess their claims.

The Government had encouraged business grant payment to be carried out as quickly as possible, so there had been limited checks that the businesses qualified for the grants. There were now extensive post payment checks being undertaken to ensure that all of those in receipt of the grant were valid and to ensure that any money was returned, if not. Approximately ten such cases were currently being looked at in South Norfolk.

Discretionary Business Grants had proved more difficult to administer, as a criteria had to be decided upon before they were allocated. The Council had been given £1.5m for the Discretionary Grant Fund and had explored pooling the money for a Norfolk wide scheme, but it was decided by the end of May that this would not be the best approach.

In response to a query regarding newly formed businesses, who had not qualified for mandatory business grants, the Committee was informed that Cabinet had recently agreed to contribute £150,000 to the Covid-19 Fighting Fund, which would go towards a pot of around £7m that would also support businesses. There was no further money on top of this at that moment; however the Council would continue to lobby Government for more assistance.

The Chief of Staff advised the meeting that in July the Council had endorsed the Recovery Plan, which was based around a six point plan based on three key themes: the economy, communities, organisation and governance.

A report that captured an update of the Delivery Plan, as a result of the impact of Covid-19 on Council plans would be taken to the next meeting of Cabinet.

The Chairman noted that one of the key elements of the Recovery Plan was to support every business, which would include those recently started businesses that might not have qualified for mandatory grants.

The Committee confirmed its approval of the key learning from the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic and requested that the key point regarding home working be expanded to reflect Members' comments.

It was also requested that consideration should be given to the resource impact of the Emergency Committee and the most effective future governance mechanisms to support the Council response in the most efficient and impactful way.

RESOLVED

To

1. Note the response of the Council to support the District's communities and businesses during the Covid 19 pandemic; and
2. Endorse the key learning identified in the report and confirm the Committee's recommendations regarding future action.

1274 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

The Committee noted the Work Programme and Cabinet Core Agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 10.50 am.)

Chairman

Future of Community Grants

Report Author(s): Kerrie Gallagher
Communities Senior Manager
kgallagher@s-norfolk.gov.uk

Portfolio: Cllr Yvonne Bendle, Better Lives

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to review how and why the Council issues community grants, and to put forward proposals for change.

Recommendation:

1. The Committee is asked to endorse officers to take proposals to Cabinet on a new approach to community grants which include:
 - Changes to the member-led Ward grant system
 - Changes to the Community Action Fund
 - Development of a whole council approach to community funding

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council delivers several grant schemes which are accessible to the community, based on building capacity and infrastructure. These schemes include the Member's Ward grants, the community action fund (CAF), the go for it grant, as well as community transport. Whilst community transport is a grant-based scheme, it has a different focus to others mentioned and will be the subject of a separate report at a later date.
- 1.2 All community grants at the Council are discretionary, there is no statutory requirement for this work. At a time when Councils budgets (and other funding bodies) are under pressure, we need to ensure that future community grant schemes have a clearly defined role in supporting the prevention agenda to

reduce demand on current and future council services by building capacity and infrastructure within the community to allow our residents to help themselves and each other.

- 1.3 Due to the current pandemic many community groups have been placed on hold, which has resulted in a loss of income. However, many of our community groups have really stepped up and out of their comfort zones to support those impacted by the COVID crisis, by providing volunteers and support to residents in need. It is an appropriate time to review our grants to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our communities.
- 1.4 This report outlines proposals to review the current community grant scheme to overcome some of the challenges currently faced in its effective delivery and its impact on our communities.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Building community capacity is much bigger than simply providing the community with funding for projects. We utilise an asset-based approach to community development which seeks to build on what is already present in our communities; mobilising individuals and groups to come together in order to realise and develop their strengths. Quite often groups and residents who contact the Councils are looking for support to gain the skills and tools needed to be able to run their own schemes and are not looking for funding. The communities team deal with approximately 262 contacts every year to support with a wide range of issues, which includes finding funding sources.
- 2.2 There are a wide range of potential funding sources for communities to tap into, beyond what the Council can offer. One of the key functions of the communities team is to look for other funding sources to make the Councils money go further. It is easy to look at using our funds first as a 'quick win' and whilst this is popular, it is not always the most appropriate. Where members actively engage with the communities team, we often see better outcomes for the community group and are able to maximise the funding available.
- 2.3 The current community grants we provide are as follows:
 - Community Action Fund (CAF) – up to £15,000 for bigger projects which is allocated by a panel following a period of application. Total budget £50,000 per year (although additional funding has been granted this year).
 - Members Ward Grant - £1,000 allocated per member to support projects which benefit ward residents. This can be spent on up to 10 individual projects per ward member. Total budget £46,000
 - Go for it grants – this fund offers up to £300 to groups to identify and develop new ideas without the requirement to be a formalised group. Total budget £10,000.
- 2.4 The CAF Panel has been inundated with applications for the past few years, with more funding applied for, than the budget available. The window for groups

to apply for funding is limited, and so many groups miss out because they need funding at a different time of the year.

- 2.5 Feedback has been received about Members Ward grant which tells us that several councillors struggle to spend the money, whilst others feel they need more available to them. The whole budget has been consistently underspent over the last three years, the average being a 15% underspend.
- 2.6 The Go For It grant scheme continues to be a very effective tool to engage with groups in the inception of their ideas, to provide them not only with seed funding, but also advice and guidance to get their projects off the ground. Anecdotally we know that the success rate of groups which start out with a go for it grant is high.
- 2.7 We have a clear purpose in the ground rules for community grants, in terms of reducing demand on services, supporting inclusive growth and promoting health and wellbeing. However, this is interpreted in many different ways by the community and members, it is also challenging to track the impact that grants have.
- 2.8 Evaluation of the impact of community grants is incredibly difficult. The more preventative a grant is, the less precise an evaluation to its effectiveness can be. This difficulty can lend itself to grant bodies in general awarding funding to projects that are dealing with demand management, rather than true prevention and long-term capacity building. However, whilst future evaluation shouldn't be led by 'bean counting', officers are working to tighten up the evaluation process to ensure we can demonstrate the effectiveness of a community grant programme.
- 2.9 Incomplete applications can take time to process; often additional information must be sought by officers or members of the CAF panel to enable effective decision making.
- 2.10 Currently there is little interconnection between community grants and CIL (community infrastructure levy). CIL funding can provide communities with funding related to growth to provide community infrastructure. The CAF also provides smaller amounts of funding for infrastructure, which could potentially duplicate resource.

2. PROPOSED ACTION

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the following proposals to revise our community grants package. The proposals look to implement changes to our member-led grant system, following feedback from members and our communities, which will also support our community groups post COVID.
- 3.2 These proposals will look to address the underspend that we have seen over the last few years, providing a more flexible approach and ensuring we have the

right mechanisms in place to work closely with communities to target our resources where it is needed the most.

- 3.3 The approach needs to ensure we move away from a money centred approach to a problem-solving approach. Members and officers need to work together more, within our communities, to identifying what the problem is we are trying to address with each allocation of funding. By identifying what the problem and solution is, we will be more likely to effectively measure the impact of our intervention. Officers will work to review how we measures the impact of community grants for future recommendations.
- 3.4 The new approach should embed itself within the health and wellbeing strategy which will help support a revised evaluation process, enabling us to track the aim of the funding request, with strategic goals, to support reporting of the added value our funding provides.

3.5 Single member led funding stream:

- 3.5.1 The fund opens at the beginning of the financial year and remains until all the money is gone or until March 1st. It is allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- 3.5.2 Funds are accessed by completing a form which is jointly populated by the community group and the Ward member. This format encourages greater partnership working between the community and the member, placing greater emphasis on the community helping themselves. It also ensures that the community who are potentially benefiting from funds can fill in details such as bank details, reducing the amount of duplication and room for error in the current system.
- 3.5.3 Authorisation to allocate funding remains unchanged with the Member who has authority to sign off budget spend in their own ward.
- 3.5.4 The funding stream would be accessible to all Members to apply for, with a limit of how much they can be awarded in a single year from £50 to a proposed cap of £2,000 which could be spent over single or multiple projects. The total amount of grant funding available does not change. This means that some Members may not access any community funding if there is little demand in their Wards, and that others can access more than they can presently in any given year if demand is there.
- 3.5.5 More emphasis on the naming and branding of the scheme to support promotion of its existence, and to encourage the community in being proactive in applying for it - thus supporting the work members currently undertake to promote the grants available.
- 3.5.6 This promotion could particularly work well in areas where local intelligence or data suggests we have issues that need addressing, encouraging awareness

of the issue and applications from community groups who can address them. This way we can ensure our funding supports 'need' and not 'want'.

- 3.5.7 The single funding stream would be based upon the existing ground rules for accessing member-led funds. The purpose of these changes would be reinforced to make the funds more accessible in areas where they are needed, to meet the council's objectives to reduce demand on long term services and encourage inclusive growth and health and wellbeing in our communities.

3.6 Community Action Fund

- 3.6.1 The CAF could accept applications for between £2,001 and £10,000 – a change from the current system which is from £1,000 to £15,000.
- 3.6.2 Where projects need over £10,000 of investment there could be greater emphasis on utilising the Community Infrastructure Levy. If this proposal was endorsed, officers from the communities' team, planning and economic development would work together to identify how this would work.
- 3.7 The CAF panel currently meets once a year (and once more if there is unspent allocation) which creates pressure on members and community groups to submit applications to a Council deadline, and not when the project is ready. This also creates an intense workload for a short period of time for the communities team and committee services. A possible change to this would be a more regular CAF meeting, for example four times a year. With fewer applications per panel, this would give more qualitative time for preparation and discussion. The CAF panel is also well placed to take advantage of online meetings to further increase its efficiency.
- 3.8 The go for it grant will remain unchanged at this time – as cited above it is a very effective tool in kickstarting worthwhile community activity.
- 3.9 For both member ward and CAF grants, where funding is required by a project, the Council needs to reinforce an approach to seek other funding sources first, before using our own limited funds. This approach does not diminish the Council's role in funding but enhances our role as a place shaping organisation and not a funding body.

3.10 Infrastructure projects

- 3.11 For applications over £10,000, projects tend to be more based on physical infrastructure rather than human resources. Working closely with the planning and economic development teams, there is opportunity to create a whole council approach to funding, by linking together community grants and CIL to provide the appropriate funding stream and support. Communities see themselves as one, therefore the Council needs to work together as one team to identify the right route for funding applications. This could include supporting loans to communities on future CIL money.

- 3.12 It is proposed that officers work together to identify opportunities to create a flexible whole Council approach to community grants and CIL funding.

4 OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The current arrangements could be kept in place. Whilst this would still ensure money goes out to communities, the current systems is inefficient and results in underspend in certain areas.

5 ISSUES AND RISKS

- 6.1 Resource Implications: there is no requirement for extra resources to implement changes.
- 6.3 Legal Implications: None
- 6.4 Equality Implications: None
- 6.5 Environmental Impact: None
- 6.6 Crime and Disorder: Community capacity building and cohesion contributes to safer communities.
- 6.7 Risks: None

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.3 The Councils grant scheme has supported a wide range of communities over the years, with the Council having a strong reputation for community support. By reviewing how we deliver the grant function for the Council we can more effectively support the work within the community to support local community projects

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to endorse officers to take proposals to cabinet on a new approach to community grants which include:

- Changes to the member-led Ward grant system
- Changes to the Community Action fund
- Development of a whole council approach to community funding

Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme

In setting future Scrutiny **TOPICS**, members are asked to consider the following: **T**imely – **O**bjective – **P**erformance – **I**nterest – **C**orporate Priority

- T** Is this the right **time** to review this issue and is there sufficient **officer time** and resource to conduct the review? What is the **timescale**?
O What is the reason for review; do officers have a clear **objective**?
P Can **performance** in this area be improved by input from Scrutiny?
I Is there sufficient **interest** (particularly from the public)? The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny.
C Will the review assist the Council to achieve its **Corporate Priorities**?

Date of meeting	Topic	Organisation / Officer / Responsible member	Objectives
14 Oct 2020	Community Grants	Assistant Director – Individuals & Families; and Portfolio Holder for Better Lives	The Committee to consider and review the proposed changes to the Community Grants process and make any recommendations to Cabinet, which will consider this at its meeting on 2 November 2020
19 Nov 2020	Market Towns update – Confidence Campaign	Assistant Director – Economic Growth; and Portfolio Holder for Stronger Economy	Scrutiny Committee to receive an update on the consideration of their suggestions to officers at the meeting held on 5 August 2020, particularly regarding engagement with traders. Members to also consider the new Market Towns Strategy.
	ASB & Crime	Assistant Director – Individuals & Families; and Portfolio Holder for Clean & Safe Environment	The Committee to consider and review the Council's approach to anti-social behaviour and crime, and ensure that our community is safe. Partners to be invited, including the Police. Members make any recommendations to Cabinet.
21 Dec 2020	2021/22 Strategic Plan with the Delivery Plan	Chief of Staff & all cabinet members	For members to review the draft 2021/22 Strategic Plan with the Delivery Plan and make recommendations as appropriate.
27 Jan 2021	<i>No items scheduled</i>		
11 Feb 2021	2021/22 Budget & Longer-Term Financial Strategy	S151 Officer; and Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources	Scrutiny Committee to consider the Council's 2021/22 budget and the recommendations of Cabinet. Members to also formulate a recommendation to Council regarding the budget for consideration at its meeting on February 2021.
25 Feb 2021	<i>To be held in the evening of a call-in only</i>		
31 March 2021	Early Help Approach	Assistant Director – Individuals & Families; and Portfolio Holder for Better Lives	The Committee to consider and review the Council's Early help Approach and the future model and make any recommendations to Cabinet. Partners in the Hub to also be invited to attend the meeting.

Date of meeting	Topic	Organisation / Officer / Responsible member	Objectives
Sept 2021	Environment Strategy	Environment Manager and Portfolio Holder for Clean & Safe Environment	Scrutiny Committee to review the effectiveness of the Strategy and assess whether outcomes have been achieved. To make recommendations as appropriate.

Meeting Cancelled

Date	Topic	Responsible Officer	Resolution and Recommendations	Progress	Outcome
5 Aug 2020	REVIEW OF MARKET TOWNS CONFIDENCE CAMPAIGN	Assistant Director of Economic Growth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To note the contents of the report; and To recommend that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Officers consider the suggestions put forward by the Committee and provide feedback at a future meeting in six months' time. Cabinet considers future free parking in the Council's car parks during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to encourage continued local support of the market towns. 	<p>Officers are currently reviewing this and will report back to the Committee on 19 November 2020</p> <p>Recommendation withdrawn at mtg on 9 Sept 2020. Officers to keep watching brief, and will report as above</p>	Members were able to review the work undertaken in order to support the reopening of businesses in the Market Towns. This will enable the Council to effectively respond to a future second wave of the virus, which could lead to further lockdowns. In addition, the review allows lessons to be learned and ways of working adapted accordingly.
9 Sept 2020	REVIEW OF COVID 19 RESPONSE	Assistant Director Governance and Business Support, Chief of Staff, Assistant Director Finance, Assistant Director Individuals and Communities	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>To</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Note the response of the Council to support the District's communities and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic; and Endorse the key learning identified in the report 	<p>No further action necessary</p> <p>No further action necessary</p>	<p>The Committee was able to assess key areas of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the governance arrangements put in place to support the Council's response; the support provided to residents and businesses; and the financial implications of the coronavirus. <p>The report provided the key learning that officers had identified and members were able to endorse these without the need to make further recommendations.</p>

CABINET CORE AGENDA 2020/21

Date	Key	Title of Report	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holder	Exempt?
2 Nov	N	Housing Standards Enforcement Procedure	Leigh Booth	Yvonne Bendle	N
	N	Municipal Bonds Agency	Debbie Lorimer	Josh Worley	N
	N	Best in Class Housing Offer	Mike Pursehouse Richard Dunsire Victoria Parsons	Yvonne Bendle	N
	K	Zone 4 Building Lease	Spencer Burrell/ Debbie Lorimer	Lisa Neal	E
	N	Community Grants	Kerrie Gallagher	Kay Mason Ellig	N
	N	Review of Reserves for SNC and BDC	Rodney Fincham/ Madeleine Bussell	Josh Worley	N
	N	Budget Update Report	Rodney Fincham	Josh Worley	
	N	Q2 Strategic Performance, Finance and Risks	Mennie Wiles/ Sinead Carey	Josh Worley	N
	N	Diss OPE	Mark Heazle	Yvonne Bendle	N
	N	Planning Enforcement Review	Helen Mellors	Lisa Neal	N
7 Dec	N	Procurement Options	Rodney Fincham	Alison Thomas	N
	N	Housing Standards Empty Homes Policy and other Discretionary Enforcement Options	Kevin Philcox	Yvonne Bendle	N
	N	Consultation followed by adoption of CAA and Boundary Amendments for Burston, Fensholt, Gilling, Thorpe Abbots, Winfarthing and Wramplingham Conservation Areas	Chris Bennett	Lisa Neal	N
Council Meeting 14 December 2020					
11 Jan	N	Future Community Help Hub Approach	Kerrie Gallagher	Yvonne Bendle	N
	N	Recycling Facility	Simon Phelan	Michael Edney	N
	N	ASB and Crime	Mike Pursehouse	Michael Edney	N
	Y	Greater Norwich 5-Year Investment Programme	Phil Courtier	John Fuller	N
	Y	Review of Bawburgh Temporary Stopping Place for Gypsies and Travellers	Kevin Philcox/ Leigh Booth		

Date	Key	Title of Report	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holder	Exempt?
		Leisure – Transformation	Simon Phelan	Alison Thomas	N
8 Feb	N	Q3 Strategic Performance/Finance and Risks	Mel Wiles/ Sinead Carey	Josh Worley	
	N	Community Transport	Kerrie Gallagher	Yvonne Bendle	N
15 Mar	N	Community Wellbeing Offer	Dan Goodwin/ Simon Phelan	Yvonne Bendle	N

Key decisions are those which result in income, expenditure or savings with a gross full year effect of £100,000 or 10% of the Council's net portfolio budget whichever is the greater which has not been included in the relevant portfolio budget, or are significant (e.g. in environmental, physical, social or economic) in terms of its effect on the communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

Meeting Cancelled