

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
Minutes of Proceedings of a Meeting of the County Council
held at County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich on Monday 9th June 2003

Mr N G Chapman in the Chair

Present:

Mr A Adams	Mrs A L King
Mr R Banham	Mr C B A Lloyd Owen
Mr J R Baskerville	Ms G P Loveday
Mr S Bett	Mr A J R Lockett
Mr A A Blyth	Mrs S M Matthews
Mrs H Bolt	Ms M McKay
Ms J Caldwell	Mrs R Monbiot
Mrs C Cant	Mr I A C Monson
Mr M R H Carttiss	Mr B Morrey
Mr M V Castle	Mr C M Mowle
Mr R M Clayton	Mr S P Murphy
Mr B J E Collins	Dr J A Norris
Mrs S A Cullingham	Mr W J Northam
Mr W Davison	Mrs T J Paines
Mr D M Dewgarde	Mr A J Panes
Mr J F B Donaldson	Ms H N Panting
Mr S Dorrington	Mr J H Perry-Warnes
Mr T East	Mr L G Randall
Mrs J Eells	Mrs B M Ravencroft
Mrs I E Floering Blackman	Mr R C Rockcliffe
Mr D B Forgan	Mr J D Rogers
Ms J R Fowler	Ms J Rooza
Mr J R Gretton	Mr D Rye
Mr A J Gunson	Mr M J Scutter
Mrs S C Gurney	Mr J A Sheppard
Mrs B M Hacker	Mr J R Shrimplin
Mr P J Harwood	Mr T B L Stickle
Mr G B Hemming	Mr M Taylor
Mr J A Holmes	Mr A D Tomkinson
Mrs D Hockaday	Mr A J Vincent
Mr H A S Humphrey	Mr T J Wainwright
Mr B J M Iles	Mrs C M Walker
Mr P Jimenez	Ms S J Whitaker
Mr R Johnson	Mr A J Wright
Mr C E Joyce	Mr R J Wright

Total present: 71

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Byrne, Ms Cameron, Ms Collishaw, Mr Armes, Mr Austin, Mr Jordan, Mr E Littler, Mr Mogford, Mr Turnbull and Mrs Ward.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2003 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following changes:

That Mr Cartiss be added to the Members present list.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

English Table Tennis Association National Team Championship Event

The Chairman informed the Members of the sporting success by the Norfolk County Council Staff Sports and Social Club. The "A" Team qualified for the English Table Tennis Association National Team Championship event, the Ormesby Cup.

At the final on 24th May they became English National Team Champions for 2003. The Chairman congratulated the Team on their excellent achievement and agreed to write to them to convey the wishes of the Council.

3. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Chairman pointed out that although detailed appendices to the draft plan were not included with the agenda papers as indicated in the report, copies had been made available in the Members Room, given to the Political Assistants and placed on the website.

The annexed report (4) by the Head of Policy was received.

Mrs King introduced the Plan stating that the document measured performance against targets laid down by central Government and set new targets. Education and Social Services both came under external scrutiny last year and these two reviews also formed part of a comprehensive review of the whole of the Council's performance which resulted in Norfolk being rated as a "good" Authority overall, achieving four out of five possible stars.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) had highlighted six key issues that the Council need to improve upon as follows:

- E-Government
- Performance Management
- Medium Term Planning
- School Places Planning
- Becoming a two-star Social Services Authority
- Waste Recycling

Action Plans were in place to address these areas, to hopefully, create a more streamlined authority and to achieve the aim of being rated an excellent council. The County Council were working with private, public and voluntary sectors in Norfolk and working across boundaries and in partnerships on many different levels.

Mr Castle stated that the document was more aspirational and less insular than in past years. It was recognised that support was needed from neighbouring

authorities and stakeholders in the region to help develop projects like the dualling of the A47 and the development of East Port. He stated that he was pleased with the plan and thought it was a good document.

Mrs King thanked Mr Castle for his endorsement of the Plan.

Council then considered the plan in detail.

Section 3

Economy -Page 25

Mr Rockcliffe said that he would like to see specific mention of bio fuels, diesels and ethanol as they were very useful.

Economy -Page 26

Ms Whitaker stated that as the cross country rail link from Norwich to Liverpool Street had been established some time ago it should not be shown as an achievement for the last year.

The County – Page 24

Dr Norris said that he totally subscribed to the comments made about the impressive state-of-the-art Archive Centre.

Section 11

Reserves and Provisions – Page 65

Ms Whitaker queried the table showing reserves and provisions as all three years compared were headed 2001-02.

Mrs King gave her assurances that this would be amended.

Goal 1 – Increasing the Achievement of Norfolk School Children

Mr Scutter said that the document acknowledged the fact that there remained gaps at Key Stage 1 along with attendance. Mr Scutter asked if the Administration was doing all that it could to ensure their aims were not in jeopardy through lack of funding?

Mr Harwood said that care should be taken over how figures were presented and that many of the teacher redundancies were actually transfers between schools.

Mr Rockcliffe, in the absence of Mr Byrne, stated that all efforts possible were being made regarding funding for next year.

Mrs Floering Blackman said that there was no mention of children with Special Educational Needs (SENs) and she felt that this was a substantial oversight. Dr Norris also referred to the absence of any references to gifted and talented children.

Mr Rockcliffe referred to Goal 1 on page 35 and Key Action 1.5 on page 79, which

referred to the provision of support in order to improve special schools which were causing concern and to reduce the number of schools causing concern over the next 5 years by 20% per annum. He further stated that gifted and talented children were part of SEN provision and had been accommodated in the Plan.

Ms McKay said that Post 16 education take-up had been highlighted in the Audit she did not see this as a goal in the document and strongly felt it needed to be included.

Mr Rockcliffe said that 16 plus education was a key aim for the Administration.

Goal 2 – A thriving Norfolk Economy

Mr East spoke of the need for improvements to the infrastructure to support business and referred to the Regional Planning Panel's decisions to water down the A47 proposals. He said that thought should be given to neighbouring districts being involved with Norfolk's campaign to get the whole of the A47 dualled. He said that it was better that councils joined forces rather than act in isolation.

Mrs King said that a call-in of the Regional Planning Panel's decision was being pursued. A letter had been sent on 6th June to all Members of the East of England Regional Assembly. Mrs King hoped the call in would be heard at a Regional Assembly meeting on 29th June. Mrs King was pleased that there was all party support for the call-in. Mrs King felt that there would be no problem in obtaining support from other local authorities for the call-in.

Mr Tomkinson agreed that the dualling of the A47 and the development of East Port was vital to the Norfolk Economy as it would be a gateway to Europe. It was also stressed that the A17 should not be forgotten either. Mr Tomkinson was currently writing to economic development officers in Peterborough regarding the link road.

Mr Gunson said that he was pleased that the campaign to dual the A47 had all party support and that the Eastern Daily Press were bringing the matter to the forefront of the public's awareness.

Goal 6- Protecting and Enhancing Norfolk's Environment

Regarding whole settlement strategies, Mrs Hockaday felt that there were safeguards in the Norfolk Structure Plan, but as the Structure Plan would not exist in the future a balanced approach would be needed and she was disappointed that this was not reflected in the Best Value Plan. Extra housing estates were being tagged onto the fringes of Wymondham and she was concerned that regulations allowed planners to take over without any referral to the Community Strategy. Mrs Hockaday also spoke of the need for an integrated working and for leadership from the County Council.

Mr Banham agreed that settlement strategies were very important and accepted there would be a need to take account of them.

Mr Gunson said that he had a great deal of sympathy for Mrs Hockaday in her Concerns about Wymondham but that it was beyond the responsibility of the

County Council. The onus was on the District Council to prepare a strategy to take into account the balance of needs in South Norfolk. He said that South Norfolk District Council had only just adopted a Local Plan for 2006 and as it had been prepared in 1997 it did not include a whole settlement strategy. It was noted that when the planning bill was introduced there would be no guarantee that the strategies would remain as there are.

Mrs King said that there were concerns over providing the right number of houses and agreed that it was important that the right balance be achieved.

Mrs Floering Blackman said that on page 44 it should read "North Coast AONB", not "North Norfolk AONB". She also felt that the brief of countryside management could be widened to include continuing to work effectively with the farming community.

Mrs Floering Blackman also suggested adding a new goal stressing the need at all times for a balance to be struck between economic development and the environment.

Mr Banham said that the wording regarding the North Coast AONB would be amended. He further stated that there were already close ties with the farming community and there was great awareness of ways that farming land was used and the Rural Task Force should take the views on board. He further stated that there needed to be an awareness of the pressures put on the environment.

Ms Rooza said that she wholeheartedly supported Mrs Floering Blackman's comments and further felt that the County Council needed to work in Partnership with Carbon Reduction (CRed) to reduce pollution, stop energy waste and enhance the environment.

Mr Banham said that making waste work for the people of Norfolk was the bedrock of the County's policy and the Council would be looking at a system where energy too could be fed back to the people of Norfolk. Mr Banham confirmed that the County were in full partnership with CRed.

Goal 8 – and Efficient and Responsive Council

Mr Iles asked how much in money terms had the County saved through Best Value.

Mrs King stated that money had been saved by only having 2 Best Value Reviews this year as opposed to 40 previously. A considerable amount would be saved but Mrs King did not know the actual figure at this time, although a running total would be given on the Service Development Committee agenda each time.

RESOLVED to

- i) approve the final draft of the 2003 Best Value Performance Plan.
- ii) To authorise the Leader to make minor changes and additions to the 2003 Best Value Performance Plan as detailed in Paragraph 3.1 subject to appropriate Cabinet Members and Party Leaders being given the opportunity to comment.

4. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 19th MAY 2003

Proposals for the New Dereham Library – Paragraph 7

Mrs King reported that a site had been found and that there was a good deal of interest in the project.

Mr Wainwright stated that he felt that Dereham Library extending its opening hours seemed to be at the expense of Lazar House and Bradwell Library. He felt that the situation should be looked at once more with a view to keeping Bradwell Library open. He said that Bradwell had a higher population than Dereham.

Mrs Paines felt that consideration should be given to naming the new Library after Leslie Potter, who was a former County Councillor and Chairman of the Council and one who had taken a very keen interest in the achievement of a new library for Dereham.

Mrs Hockaday said that Wymondham Library was only a third of the size of what it should be for the size of the population and sought reassurances that the funds needed to rebuild it would be a first call on the 2004/05 capital programme.

Mr Hemming said that there was a large community in Poringland without a library and hoped that Poringland had not been forgotten.

Mrs Walker stated that she hoped that keeping Bradwell Library open would be reconsidered.

Mr Murphy stated that he was delighted with the proposed new landmark Library in Dereham. He further stated that the reasons for the closure of Bradwell Library had been reconsidered since the original decision was made and the matter was taken back to the Cabinet but the original decision still stood, as, although the arguments had been listened to, the Library was poorly used. There would be a mobile library in the area of Bradwell for one day each fortnight and local members had been asked about suitable locations.

Mr Murphy said that the naming of the Library would be considered in the future. With regard to the Wymondham Library, problems with finding a site had been on going for sometime but officers were still actively looking for a site in Wymondham. Funds for the project would come out of the Capital Budget.

Mr Murphy was pleased that the opening hours in Martham and West Flegg had been increased. He further stated that he was aware of the plea for library in Poringland .

Referenda for Regional Assembly – Paragraph 10

Mrs King said that she was pleased that the Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to have a discussion on this item. Mrs King pointed out that the letter regarding the referenda soundings was received at the County Council on 14th April and could not therefore have been considered at the Cabinet meeting held on 7th April.

Mr Castle stated that there was already in existence an East of England Regional Assembly but not a directly elected regional assembly and felt that it was a shame that the Cabinet felt that the public should not have a vote on the matter.

He said that there was no directly elected accountability on some services and that many were managed by quangos which were not desirable. He also felt that the referendum would not cost too much as it could be combined with elections already taking place next year.

Mrs King said that it was not known how many elected members the region would have and it would be unwise to hold a referendum until the facts were known and at this stage public knowledge was not sufficient. It was also inappropriate to put money into a large project when money was scarce in other areas.

Mrs Hacker said that she was disappointed at the way the decision was taken and felt that a regional assembly would happen eventually so it would be better to talk about them rather than closing down discussions.

Norfolk Minerals Local Plan Review Inspector's Report – Paragraph 18

RESOLVED to agree the adoption of the revised Norfolk Mineral Local Plan.

National Driver Improvement Scheme – Paragraph 20

Mrs Hacker felt that this was a good idea but asked if the County Council were doing enough with its own drivers and staff to set an example to the general public.

Mrs King said that a lot had been carried out by the County Council to improve driving, including risk assessments and training but the County Council could still benefit further from the Scheme.

Banham Marshalls College Independent Special School – Paragraph 31

Mrs Caldwell asked if Mr Mowle could give an update to Members concerning the level of tuition given to pupils from the College as a letter had been received from the mother of a child querying the level her child was receiving.

Mr Rockcliffe said that the information remained confidential but the situation was being closely monitored. Alternative provision was being made for pupils and officers were working tirelessly to ensure there was adequate provision for them.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD JUNE 2003

Report of the IT Procurement Working Group – Paragraph 4

Mrs Hacker stated the Working Group had carried out an excellent piece of work and hoped that it would be widely read.

RESOLVED to refer the recommendations to the Cabinet for consideration.

6. REPORT OF THE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH MAY 2003

Dr Norris said that it was clear that Norfolk was in the vanguard of the health overview and scrutiny committees in the country. He said that they promised resources for health overview and scrutiny that had not yet been received and that the Committee remained unfinanced except for the Cabinet's generosity. The

present arrangements were very cost effective but it should not be necessary to rely on only 2 officers for support.

Dr Norris referred to the powers of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which he said did not need to seek County Council's approval. The constitution gave powers to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which other committees did not have. The powers included the ability to require health organisations to appear before the Committee.

Ms McKay said that it would be useful for all Members to have a breakdown of all the Committees' powers.

RESOLVED to note the report

7. REVIEW PANELS

Social Services and Review Panel

Member Champion for Children and Families – Paragraph 6

Ms Panting stated that she had only made informal enquires with the District Councils about appointing a member champion in each of them and she asked that either the Cabinet Member for Social Services or the Leader of the Council write formally to the District Councils to ask them to consider appointing member champions.

Mr Mowle said that he was happy to support Ms Panting's suggestion and would send a letter to the District Councils as soon as possible.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. REPORT OF THE PLANNING (REGULATORY) COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23rd May 2003

RESOLVED to note the report.

9. REPORT OF THE NORWICH HIGHWAY'S AGENCY COMMITTEE – MEETING HELD ON 21ST MAY.

RESOLVED to note the report.

10. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES 2003/04

The annexed report (6i) by the Chief Executive was received.

The following Labour Group appointments were noted:-

Education and Cultural Services Review Panel

Mr W. Davison (Libraries, Museums & Records)

Mr P. Harwood (Education)

Mrs S. Cullingham

Mr P. Hacon

Mr J. Sheppard

Social Services Review Panel

Ms J. Fowler
Mr A. Lockett
Mrs H. Panting
Mrs C. Walker
Mrs C. Ward
Ms S. Whitaker

Planning and Transportation, Waste, Environment & Economic Development
Review Panel

Mr M. Castle (Planning & Transportation)
Ms G. Loveday (Waste and Environment)
Ms M. McKay (Economic Development)
Mrs T. Paines
Mr M. Taylor
Mrs C. Ward

Fire & Community Protection Review Panel

Mr C. Armes
Mr A. Blyth
Mrs C. Cant
Mr A. Lockett
Ms M. McKay
Mr T. Wainwright

Corporate Affairs Review Panel

Mr J. Holmes (Personnel, Finance, Property & Corporate Affairs)
Mrs T. Paines
Mr T. Wainwright (Commercial Services)
Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
Ms C. Cameron
Mr J. Holmes
Mr B. Morrey
Mr A. Panes
Ms S. Whitaker

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Mrs C. Cant
Mrs H. Panting

Standards Committee

Mr J. Sheppard

Service Development Committee

Ms C.M. Cameron

Investment Committee

Mr J. Holmes

Planning (Regulatory) Committee

Mr C. Armes

Mr A. Blyth

Mr J. Donaldson

Mr C. Joyce

Mr A. Panes

Panel of Substitutes

Mr W. Davison

Ms G. Loveday

Mr P. Hacon

Ms S. Whitaker

Police Authority Representatives

Mr J. Donaldson

Mr B. Morrey

Mrs C. Walker

Spokespersons are indicated in italics.

The meeting closed at 12.10 am

CHAIRMAN