

Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held at Riverside, Lowestoft on **Thursday, 8 March 2018 at 6.00 pm**

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members Present:

Councillors S Allen (Chairman), E Back, S Barker, G Elliott, T Gandy, T Goldson, L Gooch, P Light, J Murray, K Robinson, K Springall and N Webb

Other Members in attendance

Councillor L Coulam – Public Gallery

Officers present

K Blair (Head of Operations) and A Photi (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Councillors G Elliott, T Goldson and K Grant.

Late apologies were received from Councillor L Gooch.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 February 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO ANY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OR REPORTS OF ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET

There were no announcements on this occasion.

5 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES REVIEW

The Head of Operations presented the report which set out options for divesting and rationalising the estate of public conveniences, provided an update on progress and proposed the next steps.

In 2015, the Council commissioned a report to review the stock of Public Conveniences (PCs) across the district. The aim of the review was to seek to reduce the planned £2.4 million of expenditure over a five year period. This expenditure included the annual running costs of the facilities as well as the planned maintenance programme over the period. In 2015, the estate comprised of twenty-eight PCs.

Since 2015, progress had been made against the review, with ten facilities having been transferred to town and parish councils. A further four were under negotiation. This had released a saving on the cost of operating and maintaining the facilities of approximately £0.5m

The Head of Operations advised the Committee that although there was no statutory responsibility on Council's to provide PC facilities, they were provided in order to support the community and visitors.

There were various options to consider as a result of the 2015 review which included divesting the PC assets to town and parish councils, closure of the high cost facilities and investment into new facilities including consideration to paid facilities.

Members Questions

- **Regarding the assets transferred to Lowestoft Town Council (LTC), were LTC aware that the transfers had taken place.** The Head of Operations explained that LTC were fully aware and that the assets were listed on the Order. The Boulevard facility was yet to be concluded due to issues relating to the charitable land and conversations would be held with LTC to resolve matters.
- **Members sought clarification on where the assets listed were located.** The Head of Operations took Members through the list and Members were satisfied that all known assets had been incorporated.
- **Who was responsible for demolishing the decommissioned facilities?** The Head of Operations advised that it was the owner's responsibility to demolish decommissioned sites and that the Council would undertake this action for any which were under their ownership. The Chairman requested that a written update be provided at the next meeting on asset ownership so that the necessary demolition could be progressed.
- **A Member commented that the ageing population, families and visitors greatly relied upon PC's facilities. Did the Council have a statutory obligation to provide them?** The Head of Operations advised that there was no statutory responsibility to provide PC facilities.
- **Were the LTC and Oulton Broad Parish Council (OBPC) fully aware of their responsibilities with regards to PC's when the assets were transferred over to them?** The Head of Operations explained that the transferred assets were listed in the Order; however the Asset Management Team would conduct a review to clarify which assets were owned by which councils.
- **Members asked for clarification on the difficulties in transferring PC assets to Halesworth. Why were the assets not being transferred in the same way as LTC and Oulton Broad Parish Council?** The Head of Operations explained that Halesworth Town Council was already in existence; therefore asset transfer was not part of the original agreements as was the case with LTC and OBPC. The Council needed to consider how to make asset transfers easier for town and parish councils to manage going forward in order to support them in continuing to provide the facilities. Providing a single sum, as was the case with Oulton Broad Parish Council, could be adopted as a standard procedure.
- **A Member asked how the Committee could be assured that the necessary public consultation would take place with regards to future decision on the provision of PC's.**

NB Councillor Gooch arrived at this point in the proceedings at 6.35pm.

The Head of Operations advised that there were opportunities to make investments to offset the costs of providing the facilities which may involve borrowing. A business case

would be needed in order to proceed therefore the proper consultation would be part of the process.

A Member commented that if the public were asked to pay for the facilities, then they needed to be greatly improved.

Members commented that divesting the assets was placing the financial burden on smaller councils, and that support needed to be given to help share the burden and assist in their ongoing management.

- **Were councils obligated to keep the assets once they had been transferred?** The Head of Operations advised that they were not and could do with them as they saw fit.
- **A Member commented that there had been many discussions regarding new PC facilities since 2015 and investment for the future. How had this progressed?** The Head of Operations explained that the Asset Management Team had identified the costs of putting new facilities in various locations in Corton, Pakefield, Bungay, Beccles and Kessingland.

Members commented on the importance of providing modern, suitable facilities. Attention to detail was a significant aspect in the look and character of the town. The Chairman asked that the matter be expediently and quickly progressed, as the current facilities were not a good reflection on Waveney. The Head of Operations advised that a report would be brought before the Committee in the coming months with the options available, which would include significant refurbishment or replacement with chargeable modern facilities.

- **What was the most cost effective solution for town and parish councils?** The Head of Operations advised that investment into chargeable stand alone modular units would be a cost effective and manageable option as they were relatively low maintenance and self funding.
- **What role did the Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety have, with regards to the provision of PCs for the wellbeing of the community?** The Head of Operations explained that there was no legal responsibility for councils to provide PC facilities. When they were provided, there were no obligations as to the minimum number of facilities provided.

A Member commented that overall, transferring the assets had not resulted in savings as the Council had passed the cost on elsewhere.

Following the questions and answers session, it was:

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee would continue to endorse the strategy of divesting public conveniences, where parties were in agreement.
2. That discussion continued with town and parish councils on the potential for divestment.
3. That consideration be given to the basis of financial support for any transfer of assets – as outlined in point 5.2.

4. That the Asset Management team would carry out a financial appraisal of remaining WDC facilities to identify where lower maintenance facilities could lead to longer-term savings.
5. That the Asset Management Team would provide an update on the ownership of the decommissioned Public Conveniences to progress their demolition.

The Chairman commented that the issues surrounding PCs in the district needed to be resolved more swiftly and requested that a report be brought back to the Committee in a few months time to review the various options for their continued provision.

NB. Councillor Coulam left at this point in the proceedings at 7.17 pm.

6 CURRENT POSITION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview & Scrutiny Chairman presented the report which reminded Members of the Committee's Current Work Programme and asked Members to review and make comment on the proposed Work Programme for 2018/19.

Anglian Water

The Chairman advised that the correspondence inviting Anglian Water to attend the 14 June 2018 meeting had been drafted and would be sent out in the coming days. Members were advised to send in their questions no later than one month before the meeting which would be forwarded to Anglian Water Senior Officers for a written response in advance of the meeting. The questions and responses would form the basis of the discussion during the meeting.

Coastal Partnership East and the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project

The Chairman suggested that Coastal Partnership East and the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project be invited to attend a joint meeting of the Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council Overview & Scrutiny Committees on 5 July 2018. Members were all in agreement.

The Chairman would write to the relevant Members to coordinate a meeting of the working group.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2018/19

The Committee reviewed the proposed Work Programme for 2018/19 and collectively agreed the following changes in order to incorporate Anglian Water and Coastal Partnership East & The Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project into the schedule:

- Food and Health & Safety Service Plan to be presented as an Information Bulletin at the 6 September meeting.
- Waveney Norse Annual Progress Report to be moved to the 4 October meeting.
- Annual Partnership Report on Sentinel Leisure Trust to be moved to the 4 October meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the current position of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme, as set out in Appendix A to the report be noted.
2. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be noted subject to the discussed amendments.

The meeting was concluded at 7.30pm

Chairman