

Confirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Thursday, 27 October 2022 at 6.30pm**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Keith Robinson

Other Members present:

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Mick Richardson, Councillor Letitia Smith

Officers present: Lewis Boudville (Transport, Infrastructure & Parking Services Manager), Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hedgley, Councillor Lynch and Councillor Topping.

Councillors Richardson, Cooper and Daly attended as substitutes for Councillors Hedgley, Lynch and Topping respectively.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions

The Chairman welcomed and thanked Councillor Brooks - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport who gave a brief verbal presentation in relation to the Civil Parking Enforcement aspect of his portfolio. Councillor Brooks highlighted that work had been progressing in this area following the introduction of new legislation in April 2020 but there had been delays due to the pandemic which meant the on-street patrols started on 25 May 2020 and off-street patrols started on 2 November 2020. He explained that there had been more non compliance since patrolling started, with over 13,300 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in 2020/21, 21,400 in 2021/22 and so far this year over 14,100 PCNs had been issued.

Councillor Brooks stated that a number of errors with on-street signage had been identified which were causing issues with enforcement but, as signage was a County Council responsibility, it was difficult to resolve this quickly but it was progressing. It was noted that the signage in off-street car parks was also being refreshed, to make signage look neater and tariff information last longer.

Councillor Brooks also referred to the thirty-minute free parking sessions which were very popular, although he acknowledged that this meant there was a relatively short dwell time in towns. The possibility of extending the free time period was raised, but he stated that parking charges in the district were reasonable already.

Scrutiny Committee members raised several on-street parking issues and the Cabinet Member responded that, although civil enforcement were spread thinly across the district, they would be sent to areas where issues of non compliance had been identified. In response to a query, he added that new permit schemes for homeowners were also being reviewed but again this required the involvement of the County Council.

The Cabinet Member also gave a presentation in relation to the Transport and Infrastructure aspect of his portfolio. Councillor Brooks stated that work was ongoing to improve car parks, by increasing space size and adding more cycle parking. He also referred to a number of large infrastructure projects taking place including the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft, improvements along the A12 and a village bypass related to Sizewell C and further projects such as the East West Rail link were taking shape.

In relation to Transport East, Councillor Brooks confirmed there was now a regional Transport Strategy in place and government funding for a further three years. Whilst there was little that could directly be done due to the money required, Transport East, with its partners, will provide transport solutions for the integration of rail and bus services making rural mobility more carbon neutral.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Brooks and his officer for their attendance at the Committee.

The Chairman then welcomed and thanked Councillor Smith - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism who gave a brief verbal presentation in relation to the tourism aspect of her portfolio. It was noted that spending and employment in the tourist sector was higher in 2021 than in 2020 but was still not at 2019 levels. There were a number of challenges for tourism locally and

nationally, and it was still too early to see the full impact the cost of living crisis was having on tourism in the area but she would report back to Members on this.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Council had directly invested in a number of physical assets to support the visitor economy, including the Eastern Edge Beach Huts, East Point Pavilion and the Kitchen@Felixstowe which had all been completed in the last year. In response to questions regarding the Eastern Edge Beach Huts, the Cabinet Member stated that she would liaise with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development to confirm the number of beach huts sold and the reason they did not have felt roofs. She explained that the Council was also working with a number of partners to develop the tourism sector through the Destination Development Plan, funding hospitality skills training, marketing and advertising, and support of local festivals.

Clarification was sought on how the impact of Sizewell on the tourism industry could be mitigated and if any data was collected and the cost and impact of not only Sizewell but the interconnectors and generators etc on tourism was considered as part of the Strategic Plan Delivery Board's deliberations. The point was made that local people who worked in the tourism industry needed to live locally to where they worked and it was queried if Housing colleagues were aware of the importance of affordable housing particularly in prime tourism areas. The Cabinet Member stated that she was sure they were but would get a response from colleagues on both these matters and report back.

The Cabinet Member also gave an update in relation to the grants aspect of her portfolio including those grants available by leisure operators to provide health and lifestyle opportunities and connect with communities. With regards to grants themselves, both individual community grant schemes and Community Partnership grant processes were successful, and always oversubscribed, but could always do with wider promotion. There was a monitoring and evaluation process in place and some successful projects in individual Community Partnership areas were rolled out across the district. Where the monitoring process was not followed the team did then look at whether those groups should receive funding in the future as this was important. Councillors own Enabling Communities Budgets were generally well used, but slightly less had been allocated this year than expected which could be due to concerns around cost of living.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism report back to the Committee on the following:

- Why do the Eastern Edge beach huts have no felt on the roof?
- How many beach huts have been sold?
- In terms of tourism, how do we mitigate the impact of Sizewell?
- Will data be collected on and do we look at the cost and impact of Sizewell, the interconnectors and generators etc on tourism as part of the Strategic Plan Delivery Board's deliberations?
- Can/do we impress on housing colleagues the importance of affordable housing to support local jobs, especially in prime tourist areas?

- What is the impact on the local tourism industry due to increased living costs?
- How are we promoting grants through ESC?
- How are small grants monitored?

5 Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

The Chairman reported that the Cabinet Member Scrutiny Session for the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, ICT and Commercial Partnerships had been moved from 17 November 2022 to 15 December 2022. He also reminded the Committee that the scheduled 20 April 2023 meeting would now be an informal review meeting as a formal meeting could not be held during the Pre Election Period.

Following on from the decision at the last meeting to hold an extraordinary Committee meeting to scrutinise the governance arrangements of the Council's LATCos, it was noted that a date for this would be circulated to Members shortly once arranged.

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm.

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Chairman