

Cllr Christopher Cushing

Fakenham Lancaster North District Council Report – 28th February 2024

1. Urban Extension

A148 Roundabout

- NNDC have successfully bid to carry over the previous NCC funding (£900k) and NNDC match funding of the same amount (minus monies already committed) into this financial year.
- In addition, Martyn Fulcher, Director for Place, has submitted a bid for DLUHC funding amounting to £1.4m, with the support of NCC officers who actively assisted with this. If this is successful, the collective funding should be sufficient to cover the entire cost of the infrastructure.
- In any event, all efforts are being made to commence work this autumn and Martyn is working with the Project Manager at NCC to bring this to fruition. A planning application has recently been received to assist with bringing forward the roundabout works which heightens the chances of this being started this year. Martyn is meeting regularly with the developer, their agents and NCC to ensure progress is being made.

Nutrient Neutrality

- Martyn is exploring potential opportunities for NNDC to purchase land which could be converted to wetland and therefore used to mitigate Natural England's nutrient neutrality requirements in the Wensum catchment area which covers Fakenham. This would require NNDC to expand its asset strategy, but this is an option they are open to considering.

2. FLASH Project - Swimming Pool & 3G Artificial Pitch

- I attended the first meeting of the FLASH Project Steering Group. I questioned the remit of this, and it is clear it is not a decision-making body as I would expect a project Steering Group to be. Instead, it is a key stakeholder consultative body which can influence decisions.
- Last week I attended a Group Leaders' meeting with Tim Adams, Leader of the Council and Steve Blatch, the Chief Executive. He said to me that there is a concern at NNDC that some members of the Town Council are being less supportive of the project than anticipated. I responded by saying that I know most members of the Town Council reasonably well and do not believe they would want to do anything that would jeopardise the building of the new swimming pool and pitch.
- I note the FLASH project is being discussed at the 28th February FTC Full Council. I hope that this is fully endorsed and allay any fears at NNDC so that the development can proceed.

3. Sustainable Community Fund

- The NNDC annual budget was reviewed and approved at its Full Council meeting on 21st February. There was a predicted budget deficit of £1.5m.
- To close this gap, the council has looked for additional savings. One of these is scrapping the Sustainable Communities Fund, which costs £130k annually. This gives small grants up to £15k for small bodies across the district. A Conservative amendment to try to save this, which was supported by the Independent Group, was voted down by the Liberal Democrats. This is a shame as it's a fund that has benefitted Fakenham in the past. It particularly helps parishes which struggle to raise funds for small projects.

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