

Cabinet



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Friday, 27 September 2024

A meeting of the **Cabinet** of North Norfolk District Council will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices on **Monday, 7 October 2024 at 10.00 am.**

At the discretion of the Chairman, a short break will be taken after the meeting has been running for approximately one and a half hours

Members of the public who wish to ask a question or speak on an agenda item are requested to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. It will not always be possible to accommodate requests after that time. This is to allow time for the Committee Chair to rearrange the order of items on the agenda for the convenience of members of the public. Further information on the procedure for public speaking can be obtained from Democratic Services, Tel:01263 516010, Email:emma.denny@north-norfolk.gov.uk.

Anyone attending this meeting may take photographs, film or audio-record the proceedings and report on the meeting. Anyone wishing to do so should inform the Chairman. If you are a member of the public and you wish to speak on an item on the agenda, please be aware that you may be filmed or photographed. This meeting is live-streamed: [NNDC eDemocracy - YouTube](#)

Emma Denny
Democratic Services Manager

To: Cllr W Fredericks, Cllr L Shires, Cllr T Adams, Cllr A Brown, Cllr H Blathwayt, Cllr C Ringer, Cllr J Toye, Cllr A Varley and Cllr L Withington

All other Members of the Council for information.
Members of the Management Team, appropriate Officers, Press and Public



If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance
If you would like any document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact us

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A G E N D A

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES

1 - 8

To approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9th September 2024.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

To receive questions and statements from the public, if any.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

9 - 14

Members are asked at this stage to declare any interests that they may have in any of the following items on the agenda. The Code of Conduct for Members requires that declarations include the nature of the interest and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (see attached guidance and flowchart)

5. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

To determine any other 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

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

To receive oral questions from Members, if any

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 - 28

The following recommendations to Cabinet were agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 20th September:

1. Homelessness Task & Finish Group (chaired by Cllr Dr V Holliday)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED to support the following recommendations to Cabinet:

that the Council

(A) To prevent homelessness

expands its homelessness service prevention work to undertake such work at an earlier stage along with multi agency support, on an invest to save basis, to seek to reduce the number of people going into temporary accommodation and the costs of that to the council that should include

1. increasing the awareness and risks of homelessness in the local communities, on the value of prevention for homelessness and that early intervention requires people to ask for help before it becomes too late

2. increasing its communication work which should include Parish and Town Councils and should also provide support to Councillors to enable them to help signpost those people who need housing help
3. increasing the range of interventions to help people especially on benefit support and with financial viability assessments

(B) Managing homelessness

Explores how it uses partner, charity, and voluntary organisations to create a series of outreach hubs and front-line services in North Norfolk for homelessness to create a network of advice and support including appropriate partner organisation(s)

(C) Housing allocation

Considers the viability of a support match scheme to match younger residents who need accommodation into a home with an older resident(s) that needs assistance in a similar way to the scheme in Cornwall [Supportmatch Homeshare - Cornwall Council](#)

(D) Increase housing supply

1. Continues to encourage its Councillors to work within their local communities to seek to find additional plots of land that can be used for new affordable housing schemes
2. As a medium-term solution looks at setting up an investment partnership to provide affordable local housing for local people at social, discount and market rent. We would recommend the model used by Cambridge City Council and Gravesham Borough Council who set an investment partnership with the Hill Group on a 50:50 basis
3. Explores the use of Solo Haus one bed housing where additional temporary accommodation for single people is required

(E) Increase affordable house building/supply

1. Undertakes an audit of shop fronts away from primary retail areas and empty units above and behind shops to assess their potential for conversion to residential usage or renting out rooms
2. An affordable housing conference be set up to encourage Parish and Town councils to create neighbourhood plans that include allocations for community led development for local people and encourages community land trusts to come forward with affordable schemes in rural exception sites
3. Continues to seek from Norfolk County Council a minimum 50% return of the extra Council tax that will be received from the new extra second homes premium and that the money the Council receives is ringfenced for affordable housing

4. Responds to the Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework on the definition of affordability
5. Explores the potential to use Better Society Capital/National Homelessness Property fund 2 funding for 3-to-4-bedroom properties

[National Homelessness Property fund 2 | Better Society Capital](#)

(F) Increase/sustain Private rental tenancies

1. Explores the model of using a local estate agency to set up a Council letting agency and also looks at whether homelessness prevention grant could be used to bring empty properties back into use
2. Encourages the new government to continue the previous government's work on introducing an appropriate licencing scheme for all short-term lets
3. Continues to engage proactively with private landlords and considers whether setting up a Landlords Forum would be beneficial with an introductory conference type session including mortgage brokers, lenders, insurance companies as well as landlords and housing associations to explore solutions to the issues Landlords are experiencing

(G) Reducing Long Term Empty Homes

1. Continues to have an Empty Homes Officer as a permanent role
2. Considers how to increase engagement with the Town and Parish Councils on the number of long-term empty properties in their areas
3. Continues to investigate whether funding could be found to refurbish empty properties for people in housing need

(H) Sustain social tenancies

1. Continues to investigate with registered providers on the reuse of sheltered housing and to seek fewer age designated homes
2. Continues to have a strategic discussion with the registered providers on potential disposals that may occur over the next few years
3. Encourages registered providers to ensure sufficient target hardening is provided in Domestic Abuse cases

(I) Prevention of/provision for victims of Domestic Abuse

1. Explores how partner organisations can be used to help with homelessness prevention especially in domestic abuse cases that would include tenancy support by the Registered Providers and spreading awareness to Parish and Town Councils and Councillors

2. Asks the new Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner whether the offer of scoping out a pilot that moves out the perpetrator in domestic abuse cases rather than the victim is still valid

2. REPORTING PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27 DELIVERY AGAINST ACTION PLAN 2023-24 AND ACTION PLAN 2024-25 - TO END OF QUARTER 1 - 30 JUNE 2024

Overview & Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet:

That more detailed information be provided within the action plan that would include delivery dates where possible and success criteria to give a greater understanding of the progress being made against each of the RAG targets

8. **SHERINGHAM ENABLING LAND**

29 - 36

Executive Summary	<p>A sale of surplus land adjacent to The Reef, Sheringham was agreed following an extensive marketing period. A legal agreement outlining the purchase conditions was made with the purchaser and since this time planning consent that was funded by the purchaser has been obtained and other conditions satisfied.</p> <p>Following the 15th April 2024 Cabinet report, the purchaser has been establishing mechanisms in order to satisfy the last remaining condition. Subsequently, a proposal has been submitted by the purchaser for the Council to consider. Officers have considered the proposal and provided a summary of alternative options to enable the Council to make an informed decision regarding the next stage of the disposal.</p>
Options considered	Alternative options have been considered and can be found in exempt Appendix B.
Consultation(s)	Corporate Leadership Team Eastlaw for legal advice
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet resolve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To grant a further extension to the legal agreement as outlined in the exempt appendix, and alongside this, • For Officers to explore demand for the site as outlined in the exempt appendix.
Reasons for recommendations	To generate a capital receipt.

Background papers	Cabinet papers Sheringham Enabling Land 2 nd March 2020 and 15 th April 2024
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Wards affected	Sheringham
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr, L Shires
Contact Officer	Renata Garfoot. Asset Strategy Manager. Renata.Garfoot@North-Norfolk.gov.uk

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To pass the following resolution:

“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.”

10. PRIVATE BUSINESS - SHERINGHAM ENABLING LAND EXEMPT APPENDIX

37 - 42

The following item of business is exempt – ‘Sheringham Enabling Land – Appendix B’ for the following reasons:

Information in this appendix involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A (as amended) to the Local Government Act 1972.

This paragraph relates to:

Para 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:

The information is commercially sensitive, relating to commercial options being considered by the authority. Releasing this information would be likely to have a prejudicial impact upon third parties as well as the Council in obtaining best value.

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 9 September 2024 at the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 10.00 am

Committee

Members Present:

Cllr W Fredericks (Deputy Chair)	Cllr L Shires
Cllr T Adams (Chair)	Cllr A Brown
Cllr H Blathwayt	Cllr C Ringer
Cllr J Toyne	Cllr A Varley
Cllr L Withington	

Members also attending:

Cllr K Bayes, Cllr C Cushing, Cllr N Dixon, Cllr Dr V Holliday, Cllr M Taylor

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive, Director for Resources / S151 Officer and Assistant Director for Finance, Assets, Legal & Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)

21 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8th July were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None received.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr L Shires declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 – Recommendations from Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party - North Walsham West Development Brief. She said she was a resident of North Walsham and a member of North Walsham Town Council.

24 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

25 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised members that they could ask questions during the meeting as matters arose.

26 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman invited Cllr N Dixon, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to speak. He outlined the recommendations in detail.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr J Toye and

RESOLVED to support the following recommendations:

1. East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Recommended that the Council –

(A) Request the East of England Ambulance Trust to provide

(1) the mapping of CFRs in North Norfolk to establish where any gaps in the numbers of volunteers are

(2) communication materials for members of the council to use when talking to their respective Parish and Town Councils about the co-responding and the role of CFRs

(B) the Council

(1) works with the Norfolk Ambulance Trust to help promote its Campaign on Community First Responders and co responding by signposting members of the public towards the Ambulance Trust's Community First Responders <https://www.eastamb.nhs.uk/join-the-team/volunteering-and-volunteers/community-first-responders>

(2) encourages the members of the council to talk to their respective Parish and Town Councils on the importance of the work being done by Community First Responders with the aim of increasing the understanding of these roles and seeking to achieve more volunteers to apply for these roles

2. North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone

'To update the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 12 months time on the impact of the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative and learning from this, to establish a set of evaluation criteria, including baselines, that can then be used for similar projects in other towns in North Norfolk.'

27 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PLANNING POLICY & BUILT HERITAGE WORKING PARTY

Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement introduced this item. He said that he welcomed the completion of the Wells Neighbourhood Plan. Regarding the North Walsham Development brief had been modified to reflect the Inspector's comments.

The Chairman requested that a link to the Development brief could be published alongside the minutes.

It was proposed by Cllr A Brown, seconded by J Toye and

RESOLVED to approve

1. Wells Neighbourhood Plan:

In order to comply with the statutory timeframe, the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party recommends to the Leader to make a delegated decision on behalf of Cabinet, that having been subject to successful local referendum;

a. The Wells-Next-The-Sea Neighbourhood Plan be made (brought into force) as part of the statutory Development Plan for North Norfolk in accordance with section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) as soon as practical and within the 8 week statutory time frame and no later than 30th August 2024;

b. The issuing of the Decision Statement

2. **NW West Development Brief** (updated report attached)

Members are asked to recommend to Cabinet that:

a. The Development Brief is endorsed as a material consideration in order to assist in the development and determination of applications in relation to the emerging site allocation, Land West of North Walsham (NW62/A)

and

b. Prior to Cabinet, authority to make further minor changes to the Development Brief is delegated to the acting Planning Policy Manager.

28 DELEGATED DECISIONS FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 2024

The Chairman introduced this item. He explained that it was a statutory report.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr J Toye and

RESOLVED

To receive and note the report and the register of decisions taken under delegated powers.

29 REPORTING PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27 DELIVERY AGAINST ACTION PLAN 2023-24 AND ACTION PLAN 2024-25 - TO END OF QUARTER 1 - 30 JUNE 2024

The Chairman said that there was an error for point 38 (page 50). It should state 'the Customer Services Manager is reviewing current provisions and continues to look at opportunities to deliver more efficient customer interactions for both the customer and the Council. A fuller review process will be delivered across the summer months as part of the ongoing service reviews.'

He then explained that the retention of the second homes council tax premium remained 'red' due to the delay in the legislation being passed.

Other areas where actions were out of the Council's control included the waste strategy and bank hubs.

Moving through to 2024/2025, he highlighted key actions which were currently 'amber' such as the Local Plan, increasing biodiversity in open spaces, the preparation of an Active Environment and Play Park Strategy and the provision of

3G pitches in several towns.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED

To note the report

30 BUDGET MONITORING P\$ 2024 - 2025

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced this item. She said that the forecast deficit was set out on page 55, together with the reasons for it. She then referred to Cllr W Fredericks, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Benefits as a lot of the additional financial burden related to the increased cost of providing temporary accommodation to homeless families across North Norfolk. She went on to say that savings were being monitored closely – particularly the £250k that were yet to be identified.

She thanked officers for their hard work in achieving savings and grappling with the additional pressures.

Finally, the drop in interest rates would impact on income generation and this was set out in the report.

Cllr Fredericks then spoke about the impact of homelessness and the rise in costs for providing temporary accommodation. She said that the greatest financial challenge was the temporary accommodation bill. Homeing households was a statutory duty and there was not set budget for this. Several factors had increased the number of homeless households, including a reduction in the supply of private rental properties available, domestic abuse and overcrowding. A lot of work had been undertaken trying to assist people before they became homeless but the reality was that it was an increasing problem. She added that she was speaking about North Norfolk residents. Work continued with housing associations and developers to provide homes in the long-term. In conclusion, Cllr Fredericks said that the district council had to fund the bulk of this support and savings were being made across non-statutory services to try and meet the rising costs.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their hard work in supporting struggling households. He added that councils across the country were facing similar pressures. He then said that he wanted to propose the following amendment to recommendation 4 (in italics) rather than identifying a specific location:

4. Seek approval of full Council to include an addition to the capital programme in 2024/25 to *the extension and enhancement of the car parking offer in the District, at a location to be identified* and that this is funded from revenue (car park income) (as explained in paragraph 5.6).

Cllr C Cushing said that it was good news that the savings that were yet to be identified were on track to be achieved. He referred to the forecast £1m deficit and he asked what work was underway to identify further savings and when members may be updated on this. Cllr Shires said that officers were working on savings and income generation and there were service reviews underway. She said that her aim was to report this in the next Budget Monitoring report.

The Director for Resources was invited to speak. She said that service reviews were being carried out. Some were already underway, including a review of the car park management contract. The budget position was being closely monitored and every step was being taken to reduce the level of deficit and vacant posts were being reviewed to see if they needed to be retained – particularly where they had been unfilled for some time. A lot of the pressure on the Council's finances was due to demand led factors such as temporary accommodation but everything was being done to look at ways of increasing income to mitigate this. All savings being put forward by managers were being considered.

Cllr Cushing asked when the next Budget Monitoring report would be presented to members as this was likely to have crucial information. The Director for Resources said it would be presented to the November cycle of committee meetings.

The Chairman said that local government had reached a critical point and the Government's budget announcement in October was awaited.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED to recommend the following to Full Council:

- 1) Seek approval of full Council to include a budget of £300k for borrowing costs in 2024/25 and that this be funded by using the Treasury Management Reserve (as explained in paragraph 4.8).
- 2) Seek approval of full Council to include an addition to the capital programme in 2024/25 to *the extension and enhancement of the car parking offer in the District, at a location to be identified* and that this is funded from revenue (car park income) (as explained in paragraph 5.6).

31 SAVINGS - PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Chairman introduced this item. He said that the Budget Monitoring report had set out the context regarding financial pressures and there were now a number of considerations regarding the Council's estate and the public conveniences were part of this wider review. He said for some of the sites, the decision was straightforward regarding future ownership. In some cases, the Council did not own the building but operated the facilities on behalf of the community or local businesses. In others, the usage was a factor, especially where it had dropped to a very low level, particularly during the winter months. There were also examples of the facilities no longer suiting the needs of the location.

The Chairman then spoke about Weybourne, where there was no sewage connection to the public conveniences and it was very hard to maintain to a suitable standard and the cost of upgrading it was very high. Regarding Stalham, he said that the intention was to replace this in the future. The location no longer worked for the town and it was hoped to relocate it to the car park at some point. He went on to say that some sites were in locations where there was no income stream for the Council and it made sense to look into the option of transferring them to a partner to operate if possible. He then said that it was not the case that they were not needed but that the best approach would be for another party to operate them. He assured members that there was no intention to immediately start closing toilets but said that the Council was keen to start discussing options with interested stakeholders and representatives from the affected communities, with the aim of keeping them open.

He then spoke about the winter closures, mainly in coastal locations but also the Broads. For some, such as Wells, Cromer and Sheringham there was nearby provision that would meet the wintertime demand. Overall, it was hoped to realise about £100k of savings, although there were some contract considerations regarding the Serco cleansing contract.

In conclusion, the Chairman said he hoped he had explained the situation fully. He invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance to comment. Cllr Shires said that the Council was looking to work with partners to ensure that the facilities remained open. The financial pressures which were impacting on housing provision for homeless families in the district meant that all options needed to be considered. She added that the review was in the very early stages and it would be coming back for further consideration later in the year. She acknowledged that it could adversely affect some areas in the district but all options would be considered to ensure that the impact was minimal and where possible, a smooth transition to a partner was put in place.

The Chairman invited members to speak:

Cllr M Taylor, Local member for Stalham, said that he and Cllr Bayes both understood the budgetary pressures that the council was facing and his comments took these into account. That said, as local members for Stalham, they were both disappointed to see the proposals come forward, as the community had been campaigning for years to see more investment in the town and this sought to remove an asset. He added that no proper progress had been made towards putting replacement facilities in place. If it had, then as local members, they may feel more comfortable with what was being proposed. He commented on the lack of consultation to date and said that he hoped that there would be engagement with local businesses. He went on to say that there may be an opportunity for the town council to take on the facility but there had not been time to speak to them or local business owners yet. In conclusion, Cllr Taylor said that he would like to see more progress on the proposals for a replacement facility before a decision to close the current site was taken as he would not want Stalham to be the only town in North Norfolk without a public toilet.

Cllr K Bayes, local member for Stalham, said that he agreed with Cllr Taylor's comments and he shared his concerns regarding the lack of consultation and he hoped to see more engagement with business owners in the coming weeks.

Cllr Dr V Holliday spoke as the local member for Weybourne. She said that she also accepted the need to address the budget deficit but felt that there were less punitive ways to achieve this. She added that it was understood that the facilities at Weybourne beach would be removed at the end of September and she asked for clarification on this. She also asked if enough had been done to address the vandalism that had taken place on the site. Even in Winter, people continued to walk the coastal path and with no facilities at Weybourne, it would present real challenges. She concluded by saying that local residents would welcome discussions with the Council to find a way forward.

Cllr P Fisher, local member for Wells, said that the number of visitors to the town and beach did not really drop off in the winter months. In addition, there was a children's play area behind the Beach Road toilets and it would be a disappointment to see them being closed. He asked if any toilets were closed that clear signage was erected directing people to the nearest alternative. The Chairman agreed that clear signage was important. He said that there were some challenges regarding

dilapidated signs in various locations but it was not always provided by the District Council. He said that in the long term, the Council would wish to invest in improving some of the key locations, particularly where there was a bus interchange such as at Wells and Hoveton. The Council would continue to seek to access national funding where possible.

Regarding Weybourne, the level of vandalism and abuse of the facility was so high that staff were having to work very hard to ensure that they could remain open. In addition, the cost of building a service connection was just too high and the impact of coastal erosion remained a concern. That said, discussions with the parish and town councils for both Weybourne and Stalham were welcomed and they had been contacted.

He went onto say that public consultation was not being carried out but this was the start of the engagement process with local stakeholders and it was hoped that no facilities would be closed.

Cllr N Dixon said that he welcomed the indication from the Leader that this was in the early stages in the process. He endorsed the comments made by the local members for Stalham and was encouraged by the promise of investment in the future but would like to see much more supporting evidence about what that may look like. Cllr Dixon said that option 3 – the transfer of all sites to parish and town councils, needed a lot more work before it was a realistic proposition. Some of the toilets on the list were in strategic positions, albeit remote, on the Broads and he would like to see time invested in terms of option 3 to see how it might progress in terms of viability. The Chairman replied that Cabinet were not supportive of either transferring or closing all of the toilet facilities. He added that he sympathised with the views of the members for Stalham and said that it was very much hoped that a new facility could be provided there.

Regarding Walsingham, he said that he had spoken to the local member and discussed the demands placed on the toilet facilities during peak pilgrimage times. However, it was an example of a location where there was no adjacent facility to provide an income stream to support the toilet provision.

Cllr W Fredericks, Deputy Leader, said that she wanted to comment on the wider budget situation. She said that many residents may query why council tax had been raised earlier in the year if the Council was now thinking of closing some facilities. It was important to remember that the district council only retained 8% of council tax income and it was hard to maintain everything on a relatively small income stream. Toilets were not a statutory service and hard decisions had to be made about where to focus spending – particularly when so many households were struggling. The Chairman added that the council tax increase only generated an additional £250k.

Cllr Dr V Holliday asked whether there would be a consultation with the parish council before the facility at Weybourne was closed. Closure was currently scheduled for the end of the month so time was limited. The Chairman replied that he couldn't commit to delaying the timeline but reassured Cllr Holliday that discussion with the parish council would take place as soon as possible.

Cllr Shires said that she wanted to change the recommendation slightly so that option 1 included that Cabinet was looking to work with Town and Parish councils.

The Chief Executive clarified that the preferred recommendation should set out that full and winter closures for some facilities were progressed whilst including a

reference to engaging with town and parish councils and other interested stakeholders regarding the possible transfer of some sites. This would allow for a flexible and open approach. He added that this was the first report of a number coming forward in the next few months as the Council sought to balance the budget for 2025/2026.

Cllr H Blathwayt sought advice on whether he should abstain from voting as some of the sites were in the Broads and he was Chairman of the Broads Authority.

It was proposed by Cllr L Shires, seconded by Cllr T Adams and

RESOLVED that

Option 1 - Full and winter closures is progressed by officers, for the least well used and most aged sites in terms of management or maintenance, to include discussions with town and parish councils and other interested parties, regarding possible transfer of sites, where there is a particular context for doing so.

Cllr H Blathwayt abstained.

32 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

33 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 10.58 am.

Chairman

Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
 - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative, close associate; or
 - c. a body included in those you need to disclose under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2**

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter **affects** your financial interest or well-being:
 - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

10. Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must make sure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of your interest.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the

	<p>councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council —</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land and Property	<p>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.</p> <p>'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.</p>
Licenses	<p>Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer</p>
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)—</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the council; and</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were</p>

	spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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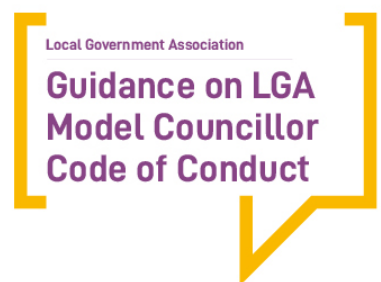
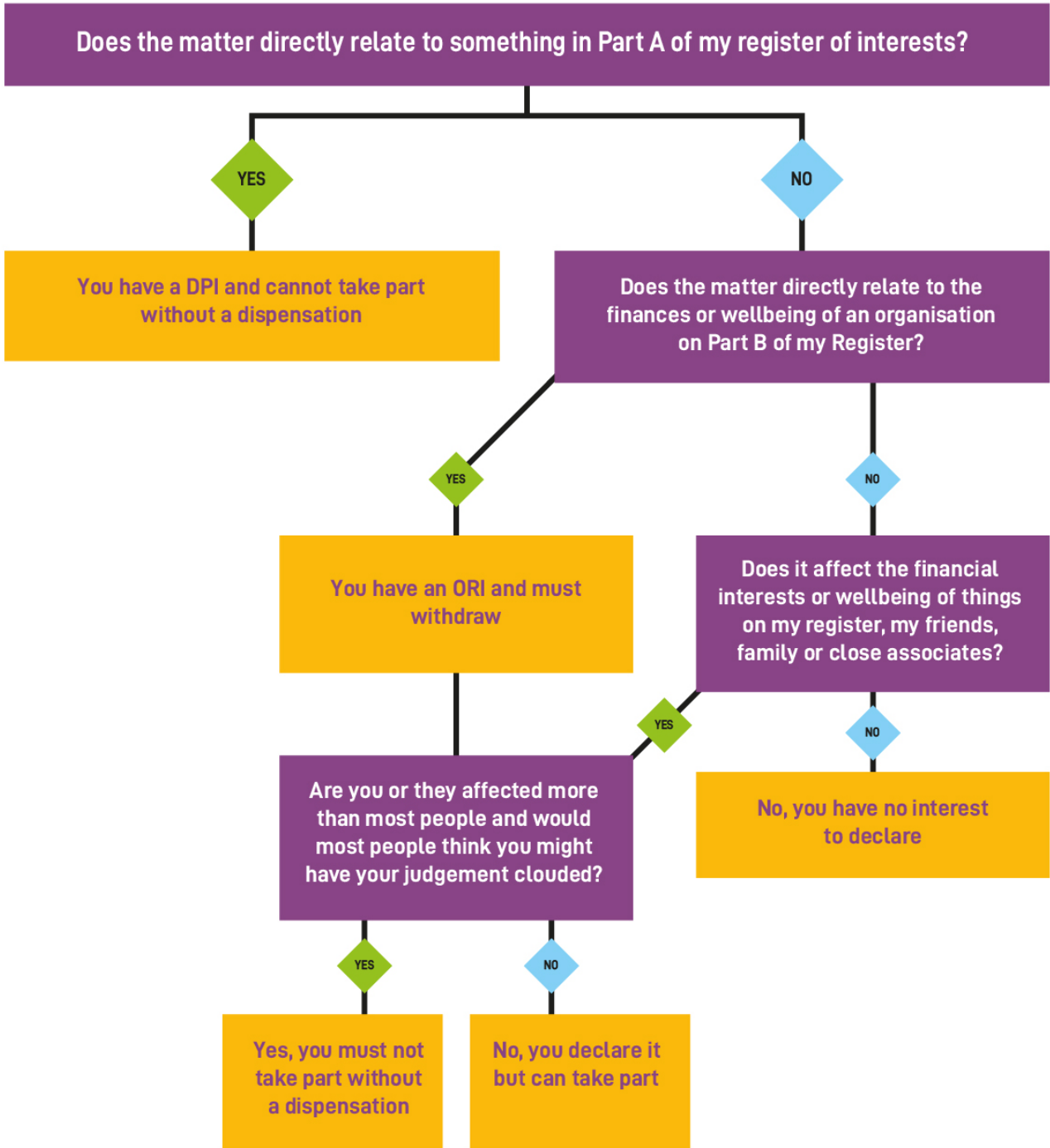
* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:

- a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- b) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) any body directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)



Homelessness Task and Finish Group

Executive Summary

The Task and Finish Group met eleven times to gather evidence from a number of internal and external witnesses to help the group formulate its recommendations. The Group would very much like to thank all those witnesses for their time and have very much appreciated their openness and the time and effort each witness put into providing information.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up the Task and Finish Group to look into the causes and relief of homelessness in the district and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its findings.

It became clear from multiple witnesses that the level of homelessness in the district was tied to the associated problem of the lack of housing supply in North Norfolk and the group choose a remit to seek to try to answer two fundamental questions –

1. How can the number of people who become homeless within North Norfolk be reduced?
2. How can the amount of suitable accommodation in North Norfolk be increased/prevented from decreasing?

Without doubt the Housing team and other staff in People's Services have done a huge amount of work already in this field and have achieved a great deal. To reduce homelessness both its causes and as well as improving the existing housing supply needs to be addressed. We have found there may be some additional measures which we think would have a positive impact. The group has spoken to other local authorities who have tried alternative interventions, and other organisations who offer a different perspective, and we think we have come up with a blend of suggestions which may require time and effort to be successful, but which are worth considering.

The group's approach has been to seek potential solutions and each recommendation is one that seeks improvement rather than necessarily innovation.

All are based on either successful schemes taken by other local authorities or suggestions from partners or suggestions from specialists in their field as a way the Council could reduce the level of homelessness in North Norfolk.

We recognise and wish to express our thanks to all the Council staff in People Services who work with such dedication to help people who are often at times of crisis in their life. The surge in numbers of people needing help as the Cost-of-Living crisis has deepened puts extra additional burdens on those staff who are at times working with difficult cases and we would like to see the council do all it can to reduce those numbers.

The recommendations are presented in a priority order where there are multiple items under a heading for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and ultimately the Cabinet to consider. The Group recognises that there are significant revenue and capital implications for some of the recommendations that require careful thought.

However, it is not just about reducing the financial burden on the council but the pain that it causes those people affected and the effect this has on our local communities. There was no indication from any of the witnesses we interviewed that the level of homelessness in North Norfolk was expected to drop in the near future. As Cornwall Council said about its affordable housing plans – it is not just about building homes...but about building communities.

Recommendations that the Council

(A) To prevent homelessness

expands its homelessness service prevention work to undertake such work at an earlier stage along with multi agency support, on an invest to save basis, to seek to reduce the number of people going into temporary accommodation and the costs of that to the council that should include

- 1. increasing the awareness and risks of homelessness in the local communities, on the value of prevention for homelessness and that early intervention requires people to ask for help before it becomes too late**
- 2. increasing its communication work which should include Parish and Town Councils and should also provide support to Councillors to enable them to help signpost those people who need housing help**
- 3. increasing the range of interventions to help people especially on benefit support and with financial viability assessments**

(B) Managing homelessness

Explores how it uses partner, charity, and voluntary organisations to create a series of outreach hubs and front-line services in North Norfolk for homelessness to create a network of advice and support including appropriate partner organisation(s)

(C) Housing allocation

Considers the viability of a support match scheme to match younger residents who need accommodation into a home with an older resident(s) that needs assistance in a similar way to the scheme in Cornwall

[Supportmatch Homeshare - Cornwall Council](#)

(D) Increase housing supply

- 1. Continues to encourage its Councillors to work within their local communities to seek to find additional plots of land that can be used for new affordable housing schemes**
- 2. As a medium-term solution looks at setting up an investment partnership to provide affordable local housing for local people at social, discount and market rent. We would recommend the model used**

by Cambridge City Council and Gravesham Borough Council who set an investment partnership with the Hill Group on a 50:50 basis

3. Explores the use of Solo Haus one bed housing where additional temporary accommodation for single people is required

(E) Increase affordable house building/supply

1. Undertakes an audit of shop fronts away from primary retail areas and empty units above and behind shops to assess their potential for conversion to residential usage or renting out rooms
2. An affordable housing conference be set up to encourage Parish and Town councils to create neighbourhood plans that include allocations for community led development for local people and encourages community land trusts to come forward with affordable schemes in rural exception sites
3. Continues to seek from Norfolk County Council a minimum 50% return of the extra Council tax that will be received from the new extra second homes premium and that the money the Council receives is ringfenced for affordable housing
4. Responds to the Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework on the definition of affordability
5. Explores the potential to use Better Society Capital/National Homelessness Property fund 2 funding for 3-to-4-bedroom properties

[National Homelessness Property fund 2 | Better Society Capital](#)

(F) Increase/sustain Private rental tenancies

1. Explores the model of using a local estate agency to set up a Council letting agency and also looks at whether homelessness prevention grant could be used to bring empty properties back into use
2. Encourages the new government to continue the previous government's work on introducing an appropriate licencing scheme for all short-term lets
3. Continues to engage proactively with private landlords and considers whether setting up a Landlords Forum would be beneficial with an introductory conference type session including mortgage brokers, lenders, insurance companies as well as landlords and housing associations to explore solutions to the issues Landlords are experiencing

(G) Reducing Long Term Empty Homes

1. Continues to have an Empty Homes Officer as a permanent role
2. Considers how to increase engagement with the Town and Parish Councils on the number of long-term empty properties in their areas
3. Continues to investigate whether funding could be found to refurbish empty properties for people in housing need

(H) Sustain social tenancies

1. Continues to investigate with registered providers on the reuse of sheltered housing and to seek fewer age designated homes
2. Continues to have a strategic discussion with the registered providers on potential disposals that may occur over the next few years
3. Encourages registered providers to ensure sufficient target hardening is provided in Domestic Abuse cases

(I) Prevention of/provision for victims of Domestic Abuse

1. Explores how partner organisations can be used to help with homelessness prevention especially in domestic abuse cases that would include tenancy support by the Registered Providers and spreading awareness to Parish and Town Councils and Councillors
2. Asks the new Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner whether the offer of scoping out a pilot that moves out the perpetrator in domestic abuse cases rather than the victim is still valid

Recommendations in Detail

Further information about our recommendations is detailed below.

(A) To prevent homelessness

expands its homelessness service prevention work to undertake such work at an earlier stage along with multi agency support, on an invest to save basis, to seek to reduce the number of people going into temporary accommodation and the costs of that to the council that should include

1. increasing the awareness and risks of homelessness in the local communities, on the value of prevention for homelessness and that early intervention requires people to ask for help before it becomes too late
2. increasing its communication work which should include Parish and Town councils and should also provide support to Councillors to enable them to help signpost those people who need housing help
3. increasing the range of interventions to help people especially on benefit support and with financial viability assessments

We understand that the homeless service would like to do more prevention work in identifying the cohort of people who need help and getting them the help they need at earlier stage, and we strongly support this approach and would like to see early intervention opportunities and homelessness prevention interventions explored along with multi agency support, that prevent homelessness (and repeat homelessness).

It is understood that a research report by Heriot Watt and Cardiff University and supported by Homeless Link is due out in May 2024 entitled Preventing homelessness a route map to local solutions which will look at prevention options at a range of stages from intervention to crisis and emergency stage homelessness which may provide some useful information for the council to look at.

It is though difficult for the service to do this whilst it is inundated with crisis cases and dealing with temporary accommodation. We would like to see the Council's reserves being used to create the capacity to undertake this work on an invest to save basis with the aim of reducing the number of people reaching crisis point and then needing support. The housing costs alone of providing temporary accommodation for an average two-bedroom household going into temporary accommodation are now close to £30,000 PA without staffing and additional costs. So, any work to prevent people needing temporary accommodation will bring future savings to the council.

We heard that financial help is particularly needed on what benefits are available and helping people with their financial viability assessments.

We heard from a number of organisations about the importance of getting the public and parish and town councils to not only understand how people can become homeless and to change their perceptions of those people but also that help can be at earlier stage before it reaches the crisis stage, and the help can be more effective and cheaper for the council when it is.

Rethinking and reframing the Council's language – and who says it (is it better coming from other organisations?) – can also lead to honest and realistic discussions where local people are more easily able to recognise themselves or people they know in conversations about homelessness risk and housing instability, how it can be prevented, and what steps they can take to play a part in resolving their own challenges.

The Council does some of this work already, but it would be good to have a coordinated campaign especially with a multi-agency approach to spread the key messages and we would encourage the council to run such a campaign over a 3-to-6-month period as soon as it can.

(B) Managing homelessness

Explores how it uses partner, charity, and voluntary organisations to create a series of outreach hubs and front-line services in North Norfolk for homelessness to create a network of advice and support including appropriate partner organisation(s)

We heard from a number of organisations about the disjointed nature of support for people across North Norfolk due to its geography and lack of suitable public transport. Other authorities have set up a network of organisations that people can go to albeit in urban areas that are easier to access.

It is important that the support in local communities builds from the existing networks of active, known and trusted organisations that already have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by local people and how best to embed local solutions to ensure they last in the longer term.

The council did establish some warm hubs so a principle of how this could work is possible. We would hope that this could be extended and include charity and local organisations who we heard wanted to help. We would encourage the council to seek out funding from local organisations especially some businesses who might feel it is something worthwhile to contribute to.

We were impressed by the Homelessness Charity Emmaus, Norfolk and Waveney ([Homelessness Charity - Emmaus Norfolk & Waveney - About Us](#)) and the approach they took to help formerly homeless people in giving them support and meaningful work opportunities. They are currently based in Ditchingham as a secular, sober community that can include people with complex high needs. They are currently expanding to reflect the growing need for their services.

(C) Housing allocation

Considers the viability of a support match scheme to match younger residents who need accommodation into a home with an older resident(s) that need assistance

Cornwall Council provides a scheme where elderly people on their own have a support match that works to find people to share properties at a reduced rent to help that elderly person with general health. [Supportmatch Homeshare - Cornwall Council](#)

They have so far provided 50 or 60 matches so far. However, the match needs to be highly vetted to ensure the right matches are being taken forward and that is easier at a higher-level authority.

We ask the council to consider this which would need close cooperation with Norfolk County Council social services and whether it will be possible to do this with a partner organisation.

(D) Increase housing supply

1. Continues to encourage its Councillors to work within their local communities to seek to find additional plots of land that can be used for new affordable housing schemes

The Council needs to find new parcels of land within the district to build new affordable housing schemes as there are more needed. Councillors know their local

areas who are the local landowners as well as have a relationship with their Parish or Town Council(s) and are in a unique position to help and lead local discussions.

Local Councillors are therefore encouraged to continue taking on this role and help to find new parcels of land that be used for appropriate development.

2. As a medium-term solution looks at setting up an investment partnership to provide affordable local housing for local people at social, discount and market rent. We would recommend the model used by Cambridge City Council and Gravesham Borough Council who set an investment partnership with the Hill Group on a 50:50 basis

We note that the Council's Housing Strategy presented to Cabinet in April 2024 said that it was not viable for the Council to set up its own Housebuilding Company.

However, the model used by Cambridge City Council and now by Gravesham Borough Council is of an investment partnership that allows for additional affordable homes to be built.

An Investment Partnership (IP) is a joint venture with a partner as a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP). The LLP would be 50:50 controlled by the Council and the partner it selects to work with.

Under the model, the Council can choose which scheme it wishes to invest in the IP. The Council, or the partner, can veto whether a scheme proceeds or not once it has been appraised. The Council retains control of the freehold of the land and its value as it can choose, or not, whether it requires the freehold to remain with the Council.

This model was started in 2017 between Cambridge City Council and the Hill Group. The Cambridge Investment Partnership is on-site building over 700 new council homes and completed eight developments. They are working to deliver at least 1700 new homes, including 1000 council homes, over the next 10 years. The Partnership is delivering the City's first Passivhaus-accredited council homes, a standard that follows rigorous construction methods and delivers the highest levels of energy efficiency and airtightness.

Gravesham Borough Council were donated eight Solo Haus homes as a part of the Hill's Foundation 200 initiative. Launched to mark Hill's 20th anniversary, Foundation 200 is a £15 million pledge to design and donate 200 modular homes to local authorities and homelessness charities by 2025.

The Gravesham report on this model is here - [Report \(gravesham.gov.uk\)](https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/reports-and-consultations/2024/04/24/gravesham-report-on-investment-partnership-model)

3. Explores the use of Solo Haus one bed housing where additional temporary accommodation for single people is required

Solohaus homes are safe, welcoming spaces built to the highest standards of sustainability, efficiency and safety with a 60-year life span. They were designed alongside homelessness charities and stakeholders to inform design, layout, light

and storage. The homes are designed for single occupation and come fully furnished and equipped ready for someone to move in to Solo Haus homes ([Solo Haus – An innovative approach to tackling homelessness](#)) and are mortgageable.

Cornwall Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Cambridge City Council, Ipswich Borough Council, the London Borough of Haringey and several housing associations in the East of England are using SoloHaus to support those that need it.

The evidence we heard was that using Solo Haus was cheaper than building new properties for temporary accommodation for one-bedroom properties and that included the costs of creating a site for multiple units together and connecting them up with utilities.

However, Solo Haus single units if bolted together become more expensive than new build.

There are usually neighbourhood objections to creating such a site and Cornwall Council had introduced a 24-hour licence on their sites that enabled them to move on anyone who was causing trouble within 24 hours. Added to this a maximum six-month tenancy could help to reassure neighbours to the site when seeking planning permission.

(E) Increase affordable house building/supply

1. Undertakes an audit of shop fronts away from primary retail areas and empty units above and behind shops to assess their potential for conversion to residential usage or renting out rooms

The Government on 22 July 2023 announced plans to boost its housing stock by making it easier to implement a change of use on empty shops. The idea was that by easing up the process of transforming empty retail units into residential dwellings the availability of housing in cities can be quickly boosted.

In North Norfolk shops are normally in protected frontages and the Council's policy is to keep them in retail usage when they are in the main shopping areas. However, in those areas away from the main retail areas there is greater scope and potential to enable conversions of shops where they have been proved to be empty and no longer commercially viable.

Planning rules for rooms above and behind shops are less stringent and it may well be allowed under permitted development rights to enable those rooms to be rented out.

We ask the Council to investigate both those circumstances and to consider what changes are needed in planning policy to allow shop owners to undertake these changes.

2. An affordable housing conference be set up to encourage Parish and Town councils to create neighbourhood plans that include allocations for community led development for local people and encourages community land trusts to come forward with affordable schemes in rural exception sites

CPRE Norfolk held a Rural Affordable Conference with parish councils (a number of whom are members of the Charity) six years ago to explore what could be done to increase the number of affordable homes that were available in the rural parts of North Norfolk.

They were interested in holding another conference and we recommend that they be asked to do so. The conference could also look at recommendation G 2 from this report.

There is also a Corporate Plan action to share data at a parish level to improve support for affordable homes and this could be an excellent way to do that.

Rural Exception Sites are small sites located on the edge of existing rural settlements. They allow land to be provided below market value for residential development – provided it is used to build affordable housing for local people.

Rural Exception Sites are allocated outside of the local authority's development plan – so homes delivered via Rural Exception Sites represent additional affordable housing for the local community.

Any kind of affordable housing can be delivered, including affordable rent, intermediate housing (including first homes), or social rent, provided there is adequate evidence of local need.

Community Land Trusts are a great way for community-led schemes to come forward that are driven by local communities, rather than local authorities or private developers and we would ask the Council to encourage such Trusts to come forward.

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by the Localism Act 2011. They enable communities to have a say about the development and growth of their local area by introducing local planning policies which (if the Neighbourhood Plan is successful at examination and referendum) form part of the statutory Development Plan. This means the Neighbourhood Plan must be taken into account when assessing planning applications for new development in that area.

3. Continues to seek from Norfolk County Council a minimum 50% return of the extra Council tax that will be received from the new extra second homes premium and that the money the Council receives is ringfenced for affordable housing

From April 2025 the Council, will be able to charge an additional 100% Council Tax premium to second home, furnished properties that could generate up to £8m.

Under the current rules which dictate the share of council tax, about 75% goes to Norfolk County Council, 15% to the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner, 8% to district councils and 2% to parish and town councils.

The Council has been lobbying the County Council and the Government for some time to allow sufficient amount of this money to come to the district where it was raised so that it could be spent in the local communities where it is raised.

We think that it would be good for that income to be spent in those local areas that are struggling with housing supply and agree with the call from Homes for Wells that the additional income from the second homes premium should be ring-fenced to provide affordable homes for local people to rent.

4. Responds to the Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework on the definition of affordability

The Government is currently undertaking consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework which is due to end on Tuesday 24 September 2024.

We ask the Council to respond to this consultation on whether the question of affordability should be changed.

CPRE, The Countryside Charity said, which we agree with, the following –

‘Affordable housing’ is defined by the government and NPPF as being 80% of the local market value and ‘affordable rent’ is at least 20 per cent below local market rents, but this is still unaffordable for many households.

The definition of affordable housing in national planning policy does not enable the delivery of genuinely affordable homes. Rural social-rented delivery has plummeted with just 348 homes delivered in England in 2020/21 and 3,282 delivered in 2021/22, whilst general ‘affordable’ housing delivery has increased with 21,826 general affordable homes delivered in 2020/21 and 25,294 delivered in 2021/22. This shows it is more viable for developers to deliver intermediate and discount market housing rather than lower rent homes that are desperately needed.

Government must redefine the term ‘affordable housing’ so that the cost of new affordable homes for sale or rent are directly linked to average local incomes. Where homes are not linked to average local incomes they should not be classed as affordable, as this obscures the type of housing that is being delivered.

Affordable housing needs to be redefined to match local incomes, with a mortgage lending ratio being no more than three times the annual income for a two-person household, and affordable rent at no more than 35% of average local household income.

This should lead to a more realistic and straightforward definition of ‘affordable housing’ in the NPPF.

5. Explores the potential to use Better Society Capital/National Homelessness Property fund to fund 3-to-4-bedroom properties

We were told that the critical shortage of homes in North Norfolk is 3- and 4-bedroom homes and we are aware of authorities that will buy properties directly from developers in new developments as a way of ensuring that there is sufficient affordable housing in a development.

This is of course expensive for a Council to do. However, there may be an opportunity to seek funding from the National Homelessness Property Fund [National](#)

[Homelessness Property fund 2 | Better Society Capital](#) which is a ten-year fund that invests directly into a diversified portfolio of residential properties – which will then be leased to housing providers to deliver affordable, good quality and suitable housing to address homelessness.

Better Society Capital is the UK's leading social impact-led investor and Resonance has already provided affordable homes in Wells

<https://resonance.ltd.uk/impact/impact-stories/homes-for-wells>

(F) Increase/sustain Private rental tenancies

1. Explores the model of using a local estate agency to set up a Council letting agency and also looks at whether homelessness prevention grant could be used to bring empty properties back into use

Both Norwich City Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council have set up private sector leasing schemes. We heard that the Central Suffolk Lettings scheme has been working well in a challenging Private Rented Sector [Central Suffolk Lettings: FREE Letting Services - Babergh District Council - Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils - Working Together](#)

We did hear that it might be better to use an existing good quality private estate agent to run the scheme rather than doing it in house.

The Council's Housing Strategy refers to further discussion with Country Estates with a date of June 2025. If this is the Council's preferred estate agents we would ask that the conversations are speeded up as it is needed now.

We also note from the Council's Housing Strategy that there would be investigations of a Council rent deposit guarantee/gift scheme to help households access private rented homes with a date of April 2026. We believe that this is needed now and could form part of how a letting agency would work.

2. Encourages the new government to continue the previous government's work on introducing an appropriate licencing scheme for all short-term lets

On 19 February 2024 the previous government published a statement that set out the next steps in developing a registration scheme for short-term lets in England. Consultation was undertaken and a response on that consultation is awaited from the new government,

The Low-use homes in rural and coastal areas across the UK report by Action for Empty Homes, Sheffield University and abrdn Financial Fairness Trust ([Low-use Homes in Rural and Coastal Areas of the UK — Action on Empty Homes](#)) states that:

“A licensing scheme would require property owners to apply for a licence before they can rent their properties out as short-term lets or holiday lets (for example on Airbnb) and provide evidence that they are meeting required health and safety standards.

Such a scheme would enable councils to have a better sense of how residential properties are being used and, critically, to limit the number of licences granted if the

number of short-term lets in an area is deemed too high. Councils would be able to revoke or refuse the renewal of licences and so be able to respond to the changing numbers of holiday lets each year.”

3. Continues to engage proactively with the private landlords and considers whether setting up a Landlords Forum would be beneficial with an introductory conference type session including mortgage brokers, lenders, insurance companies as well as landlords and housing associations to explore solutions to the issues Landlords are experiencing

It was clear that the private rental market in North Norfolk is already difficult, and we were left with the impression that it would only get worse without some sort of intervention as landlords are leaving the market and there are not enough new landlords replacing them.

We ask the council to continue encouraging the private rental market. A landlord forum may help in this regard as other authorities in Norfolk have done this to help the private rented market survive.

(G) Reducing Long Term Empty Homes

1. Continues to have an Empty Homes Officer as a permanent role

Bringing empty homes back into use can play a key part of local strategies to meet housing need. Not only are empty homes a wasted resource, but they are also often the subject of complaints and frustration for communities, as well as being a catalyst for crime and degradation.

We are pleased to note that the Council has found funding to continue to employ an Empty Homes Officer and would ask the council to make this post permanent. Other authorities have teams looking at empty homes and have made substantial reductions in the number of long-term empty properties in their area.

If the number of empty homes is reduced and become lived in again the council will receive revenue funding from council tax income so the post could very well end up paying for itself.

2. Considers how to increase engagement with the towns and Parish Councils on the number of long-term empty properties in their areas

This could well be part of a North Norfolk affordable housing conference as there are a surprising number of empty properties in some of the villages and towns and there is some potential to reduce that number. We would also encourage the Council’s Empty Homes officer to consult and work with the Parish and Town Councils in looking at these properties.

3. Continues to investigate whether funding could be found to refurbish empty properties for people in housing need

Action on Empty Homes told us that one of the things that local authorities could do is to seek funding to buy and refurbish empty properties for people in housing need. As part of this, funding could also be made available to community-based

organisations wishing to buy and refurbish empty homes. Authorities could also support community-based providers and housing associations seeking funding to bring empty homes back into use.

(H) Sustain social tenancies

1. Continues to investigate with registered providers on the reuse of sheltered housing and to seek fewer age designated homes

There is a lot of sheltered housing in North Norfolk that was built in the 1950 and 1960s with an expectation of what that home was for, that is different to the current approach of independent living. It is part of a wider strategic discussion that is needed on what is the best housing supply to meet the ageing demographic in North Norfolk.

A meeting with the registered providers to agree a joint vision on future plans on what to do about sheltered housing, whether supply can be matched with demand and what do with the exiting housing stock would be particularly useful.

2. Continues to have a strategic discussion with the registered providers on potential disposals that may occur over the next few years

We are pleased to see in Council's Housing Strategy the introduction of a monthly meeting with Flagship to discuss potential disposals. However, there is also a wider more strategic discussion needed that looks at all the homes across North Norfolk that will come to an end of life in the next few years and what the Council and the Registered Providers want to do about them.

3. Encourages registered providers to ensure sufficient target hardening is provided to make homes safer in Domestic Abuse cases

Target hardening is the strengthening of the security of a building or installation in order to protect it in the event of attack or reduce the risk of theft. In domestic abuse cases it is used to help survivors of domestic abuse feel safer in their homes.

We heard that registered providers do provide target hardening but thought it worthwhile to reemphasise this message.

(I) Prevention of/provision for victims of Domestic Abuse

1. Explores how partner organisations can be used to help with homelessness prevention especially in domestic abuse cases that would include tenancy support by the Registered Providers and spreading awareness to Parish and Town Councils and Councillors

Domestic Abuse is one of the main reasons for people becoming homeless in North Norfolk. It was clear from partner organisations such as Leeway that they wanted to do more and could provide outreach in communities to seek to increase preventative work.

This could involve more advice and help with regular drop-in sessions with refuges, clearer signposting to organisations such as Leeway on the Council's website and via the advice line.

2. Asks the new Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner whether the offer of scoping out a pilot that moves out the perpetrator in domestic abuse cases rather than the victim is still valid

DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) and the Drive Partnership alongside a broad alliance of voluntary and statutory sector organisations have been building the case for why more formalised perpetrator housing support and pathways are needed to keep victims safe and prevent further abuse.

At the moment it is most likely that the victims of domestic abuse will have to flee a property to become safe and the perpetrator will remain. The disruption then falls onto the victim and any children in the family.

Without the option to remove and rehouse a perpetrator, victims will continue to suffer by remaining trapped in abusive relationships or being forced to flee their home.

The Previous Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner had asked if the Council would like to scope out a pilot scheme to run in North Norfolk that rehoused the perpetrator rather than the victim and it would be good to ask the new Commissioner whether this offer is still valid.

Homelessness Task and Finish Group:

Councillors Victoria Holliday (Chair), Jill Boyle, Nigel Housden, Liz Vickers, Saul Penfold and Garry Bull (for the initial meetings).

Agenda Item 8

Sheringham Enabling Land	
Executive Summary	<p>A sale of surplus land adjacent to The Reef, Sheringham was agreed following an extensive marketing period. A legal agreement outlining the purchase conditions was made with the purchaser and since this time planning consent that was funded by the purchaser has been obtained and other conditions satisfied.</p> <p>Following the 15th April 2024 Cabinet report, the purchaser has been establishing mechanisms in order to satisfy the last remaining condition. Subsequently, a proposal has been submitted by the purchaser for the Council to consider.</p> <p>Officers have considered the proposal and provided a summary of alternative options to enable the Council to make an informed decision regarding the next stage of the disposal.</p>
Options considered	Alternative options have been considered and can be found in exempt Appendix B.
Consultation(s)	Corporate Leadership Team Eastlaw for legal advice
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet resolve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To grant a further extension to the legal agreement as outlined in the exempt appendix, and alongside this, For Officers to explore demand for the site as outlined in the exempt appendix.
Reasons for recommendations	To generate a capital receipt.
Background papers	Cabinet papers Sheringham Enabling Land 2 nd March 2020 and 15 th April 2024

Wards affected	Sheringham
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr, L Shires
Contact Officer	Renata Garfoot. Asset Strategy Manager. Renata.Garfoot@North-Norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Investing in our local economy and infrastructure A strong responsible and accountable Council
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	The proposal generates a capital receipt as outlined in the exempt appendix.
Council Policies & Strategies	Asset Management Plan 2018 - 2022

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	By Virtue of Paragraph 3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) Part of the appendix contains commercially sensitive information and are exempt
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Cabinet paper Sheringham Enabling Land 2 nd March 2020 and 15 th April 2024

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide a further update to Cabinet on the sale of the enabling land at Sheringham, including a proposal from the purchaser to enable them to satisfy the last remaining purchase condition and to provide Cabinet with alternative options to consider regarding the potential next stage of the disposal.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 The development of the Reef Leisure Centre at Weybourne Road, Sheringham resulted in an area of surplus land of approximately 1 acre adjacent to the new leisure facility. See appendix A Site Plan.
- 2.2 Having marketed the land for sale for over 2 years, a number of offers were received, including for a care facility, leisure complex with hotel/camping, local development company for a hotel development and a national hotel operator with a lease back proposal that did not support the Council's aspirations to generate a capital receipt to support the funding of the Reef development.
- 2.3 A report to Cabinet was presented on 2nd March 2020 regarding the various interest received to acquire the site alongside an options appraisal identifying possible alternative uses. At this meeting Cabinet agreed to approve the disposal of land to the current purchaser.
- 2.4 Since this time legal contractual arrangements have been put in place with the proposed purchaser and planning application was submitted in July 2022 and consent was granted September 2023 for a 37-suite apartment hotel. A further application was submitted for removal or variation of conditions following planning consent, which was approved January 2024.
- 2.5 It was agreed in April 2024 that a 4-month extension to the legal agreement to allow the purchaser sufficient time to satisfy the remaining purchase conditions. Since this time the purchaser has been establishing mechanisms to satisfy the final condition.

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1 The purchaser has submitted a further proposal to the Council as outlined in Appendix B.

4. Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The proposed sale aligns with the Corporate Plan priority; A strong, responsible and accountable Council as it will generate a capital receipt for the Council as outlined in the exempt Appendix B and also the priority; Investing in our local economy and infrastructure which seeks to continue to promote North Norfolk's diverse tourism and visitor offer.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 The proposed sale will generate a capital receipt for the Council as outlined in the exempt Appendix B.

5.2

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The proposed sale will generate a capital receipt which can be used to reduce the borrowing requirement to fund the Reef leisure centre. The purchaser's current proposal to build a hotel will also benefit the local economy.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Legal agreements are in place regarding the proposed sale of the site.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

Eastlaw has provided some assistance in this matter. Members will need to consider the balance of risk and benefits, and the opportunity to generate a capital receipt, in agreeing to the purchaser's proposal of a further extension to meet the remaining condition of the legal agreement.

7. Risks

- 7.1 Typical risks apply regarding the disposal of the land and further risks are outlined in the exempt appendix.

8. Net ZeroTarget

- 8.1 An Energy Statement was submitted as part of the planning application which details how design proposals could implement energy efficiencies and

strategies to minimise energy consumption and reduce carbon emissions. It considers a Fabric First approach, energy efficient heating and LED lighting. The planning consent also requires a 10% on site renewable energy provision.

- 8.2 A sale of the land will remove the asset from the Councils carbon footprint.
- 8.3 The district emissions will increase with development of the site and whilst other environmental options could be explored these will not generate a similar capital receipt.
- 8.4 A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed including possible mitigations, however due to the stage of the disposal process it is not possible to fully action these.

Criteria	Score	Justification	Mitigation
Energy Use	-4	Proposed fuel is unknown.	
GHGs	-8	Significant emissions will be associated with the construction and energy use of a hotel.	The council creates a condition for the construction to create a Net Zero ready hotel: To include low-carbon heating technology (heat pumps or electric heating), to maximise solar PV and to have high energy efficiency standards.
Air quality	-4	If the building burns fossil fuels on site it will directly release these pollutants into the atmosphere.	
Land use change	4	On the basis of development a brown site into hotel use that has existing planning consent for this purpose.	
Soil and waterway health	0	Drainage scheme forms part of the purchasers planning application. No other negative impacts are expected.	
Waste	-8	The development of the site and on going use of the site will.	The council has very limited control over the product use that would generate waste whilst operational, but a condition to include sustainable building practice and materials could be placed
Sustainable Transport	0	The land is near a bus stop however the sale will have no impact on that service. The venue will be connected to train and bus links, but a car park will promote	
Biodiversity	0	The site has little or no habitat as its hard standing compound.	
Climate Change Adaptation	2	The development is required to provide 10% sustainable measures. Depends hugely on the design specks including a well designed sustainable building.	
Sustainable Materials	-1	The full construction details are unknown.	A condition to include sustainable building practice and materials could be placed
Food	0	:Unknown	
Health	4	As a hotel the site would provide greater access to Blue Beaches and improve mental health and relaxation. Health outcomes will be negatively effected if fossil fuels are burnt on site.	
Housing	0	N/A	
Education	0	It is assumed that jobs created through construction and on going use will create opportunities for learning and development.	
Built Community	2	The land is a brown field and provides no benefits to the current built environment.	
Cultural Community	0	There is no expected change to culture	
Accessibility	2	The future use of the hotel will need to comply with current accessibility requirements	
Local Economy and Jobs	4	Development of the site and hotel use will support jobs locally and wider area through supply of goods and services required in operating the hotel.	
Safety	2	Development of a vacant site is expected to reduce risks of fly tipping, vandalism.	
Democratic Voice	1	Consultation forms part of the planning process and disposal was considered at Cabinet as a public meeting	
Equity	0	No impacts on groups with protected characteristics.	

8.5

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1 There are no equality, diversity or inclusion impacts from this proposal.

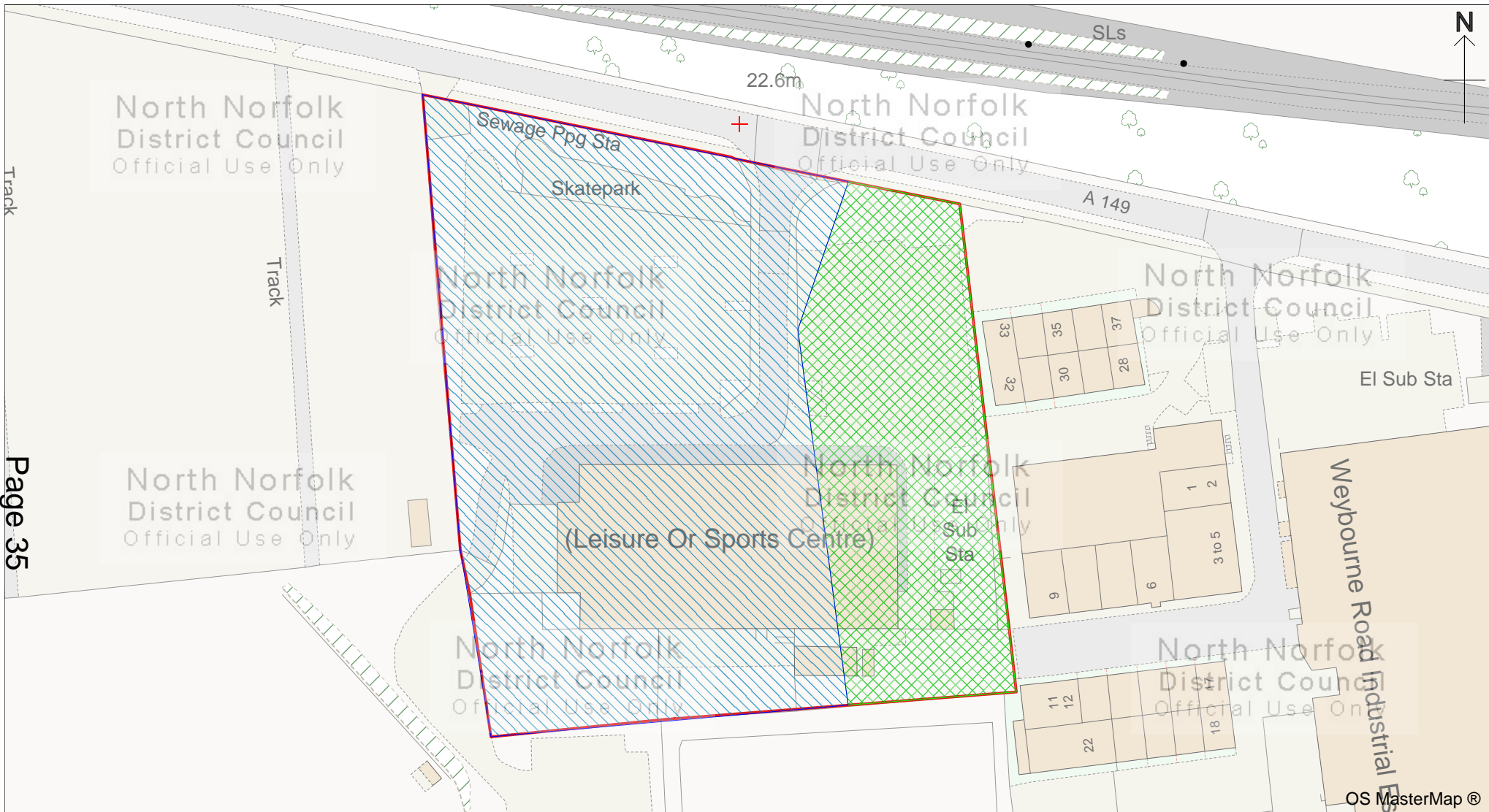
10. Community Safety issues

- 10.1 Community Safety issues are considered as part of the planning consultation process and feedback has been received from Norfolk Constabulary regarding design features that could help improve security for the building and the immediate area.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 11.1 A sale of the land was agreed following an extensive marketing period and a legal agreement outlining the purchase conditions was made. Since this time planning consent that was funded by the purchaser has been obtained and more recently development and investment proposals have been submitted by the purchaser.
- 11.2 Officers have considered the purchaser's proposal and alternative options for Cabinets consideration.
- 11.3 A recommendation has been made in the exempt Appendix B.

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Appendix A

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13/11/2019

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