

Council



Please contact: Democratic Services

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10 March 2025

A meeting of the **Council** of North Norfolk District Council will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices on **Wednesday, 19 March 2025 at 6.00 pm.**

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:Democratic.Services@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 livestreamed: youtube.com/@nndcedemocracy/streams

Emma Denny
Democratic Services Manager

To: Cllr T Adams, Cllr P Bailey, Cllr M Batey, Cllr K Bayes, Cllr D Birch, Cllr H Blathwayt, Cllr J Boyle, Cllr A Brown, Cllr S Bütikofer, Cllr C Cushing, Cllr N Dixon, Cllr P Fisher, Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Cllr T FitzPatrick, Cllr A Fletcher, Cllr W Fredericks, Cllr M Gray, Cllr M Hankins, Cllr C Heinink, Cllr P Heinrich, Cllr V Holliday, Cllr N Housden, Cllr K Leith, Cllr R Macdonald, Cllr G Mancini-Boyle, Cllr P Neatherway, Cllr L Paterson, Cllr S Penfold, Cllr P Porter, Cllr J Punchard, Cllr C Ringer, Cllr L Shires, Cllr E Spagnola, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr J Toyce, Cllr K Toyce, Cllr E Vardy, Cllr A Varley, Cllr L Vickers and Cllr L Withington



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. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for absence, if any.

2. **MINUTES**

1 - 34

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19th February.

3. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS**

35 - 40

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)

4. **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.

5. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

To receive the Chairman's communications, if any.

6. **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

7. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS**

To consider any questions or statements received from members of the public.

8. **APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES & OUTSIDE BODIES**

To approve any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties and outside bodies, as proposed by the Group Leaders.

9. **PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

41 - 98

To receive reports from Cabinet Members on their portfolios.

Cllr T Adams - Executive Support & Legal Services

Cllr H Blathwayt – Coast

Cllr A Brown – Planning & Enforcement

Cllr W Fredericks – Housing and People Services

Cllr C Ringer – IT, Environmental & Waste Services

Cllr L Shires – Finance, Estates & Assets

Cllr J Toye – Sustainable Growth

Cllr A Varley – Climate Change & Net Zero

Cllr L Withington – Community, Leisure & Outreach (Including Health & Wellbeing)

Members are reminded that they may ask questions of the Cabinet Member on their reports and portfolio areas but should note that it is not a debate.

No member may ask more than one question plus a supplementary question, unless the time taken by members' questions does not exceed 30 minutes in total, in which case, second questions will be taken in the order that they are received (Constitution, Chapter 2, part 2, section 12.2)

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 03 MARCH 2025

99 - 122

The following recommendation was made to Full Council at the Cabinet meeting held on 3rd March:

Cabinet Agenda Item 9: Budget Monitoring P10 2024-2025

That full Council approves the changes to the Capital Programme as laid out in paragraph 5.5 of the report

11. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 12 MARCH 2025

Please note that the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee took place after the publication of the Full Council agenda. The Chairman of the Committee will provide a verbal update on any recommendations at the meeting.

12. DEVOLUTION - GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH A MAYORAL COMBINED COUNTY AUTHORITY FOR NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK - RESPONSE BY NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

12
3 -
13
4

Executive Summary	This report provides details of the Council's proposed response to the Government consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk
Options considered	Detailed within the proposed response
Consultation(s)	NNDC member briefing – 11 th February 2025 Town and Parish Council briefings held on 18 th and 25 th February 2025
Recommendation	Council is asked to approve the Council's response to the Government consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk as attached at Appendix 1 of this report and agree its submission to Government, such submission to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
Reasons for recommendation	To respond constructively to the Government's proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk through providing responses which

	seek to promote and protect the interests of North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses.
Background papers	Details of the Government consultation can be accessed via the following link:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr T Adams, Leader of the Council
Contact Officer	Steve Blatch, Chief Executive, steve.blatch@north-norfolk.gov.uk

13. PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NORFOLK

135 - 184

Executive Summary	The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) wrote to all Norfolk Leaders on 5 February 2025 inviting them to work with other council leaders in the area to develop a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation. The letter sets out the criteria for new unitary councils and what is expected to be received in the interim plan to be submitted by 21 st March 2025. This report sets out the interim plan and requests Council to indicate a preference order for the options outlined moving forward.
Options considered	The preparation of the interim plan prepared by the district councils in Norfolk considered one, two or three possible unitary authority models for the County and concluded that a three unitary model would best meet the criteria moving forward.
Consultation(s)	NNDC member briefing – 11 th February 2025 Town and Parish Council briefings held on 18 th and 25 th February 2025
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Council expresses its view that it disagrees with the Government's proposals to introduce a unitary local government structure in Norfolk; as it is not convinced that such an arrangement will best meet the needs of the district's rural communities and residents or deliver the savings and efficiencies anticipated. Accepting, however, that this is the position of Government as detailed in the English Devolution White Paper, the Council strongly objects to proposals being suggested for a single unitary

	<p>authority covering the whole of Norfolk in that it will be of a very large scale in terms of area and population served, will not be able to reflect the distinct communities of place and interest which exist across the county, and not meet the definition of “local” government in understanding local places or in providing services tailored to meet local needs.</p> <p>3. The Council therefore strongly supports proposals for a three unitary council model for Norfolk in the future as the basis of the interim plan to be submitted to Government. The Council believes that such an arrangement would best meet the six key criteria laid out by Government and would see one authority based on the urban area of Norwich; an authority covering the West of the county with a strong agricultural and agri-tech economy and an East authority with a key focus on clean energy and tourism.</p> <p>4. Council therefore agrees that its response to Government regarding local government reorganisation in Norfolk to be submitted by 21st March 2025 makes reference to an Interim Plan proposing three unitary councils in Norfolk as detailed at Appendix 3 with the submission of the response to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.</p>
Reasons for recommendations	To respond constructively to the Government's invitation to local authorities in Norfolk to put forward proposals for a unitary council local government structure which seeks to promote and protect the interests of North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses in the context of new council structures and complements proposals for a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined Authority.
Background papers	Appendix A – MHCLG letter of 5 th February 2025 Appendix B – Deloitte report Appendix C – draft Interim Plan prepared by the Norfolk district councils.
Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr T Adams, Leader of the Council
Contact Officer	Steve Blatch, Chief Executive, steve.blatch@north-norfolk.gov.uk

14. QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None Received.

15. OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None Received.

16. NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

None Received.

17. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To pass the following resolution – if necessary:

“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) _ of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.”

18. PRIVATE BUSINESS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 19 February 2025 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:

Cllr T Adams	Cllr M Batey
Cllr K Bayes	Cllr H Blathwayt
Cllr J Boyle	Cllr A Brown
Cllr S Bütikofer	Cllr C Cushing
Cllr N Dixon	Cllr A Fitch-Tillett
Cllr T FitzPatrick	Cllr A Fletcher
Cllr W Fredericks	Cllr M Gray
Cllr M Hankins	Cllr C Heinink
Cllr P Heinrich	Cllr V Holliday
Cllr K Leith	Cllr R Macdonald
Cllr P Neatherway	Cllr L Paterson
Cllr S Penfold	Cllr P Porter
Cllr J Punchard	Cllr C Ringer
Cllr L Shires	Cllr E Spagnola
Cllr M Taylor	Cllr J Toye
Cllr K Toye	Cllr L Vickers

Also in attendance: The Chief Executive, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Democratic Services Officer (Oversight Committees) PA to the Corporate Leadership Team (EC)

96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Bailey, D Birch, P Fisher, N Housden, G Mancini-Boyle, E Vardy and A Varley.

97 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 18th December and 29th January were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

Cllr J Punchard requested that his attendance was recorded for the December meeting of Full Council.

98 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None.

99 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

100 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman began by asking members to join her for a minutes' silence in remembrance of former councillor Pierre Butikofer who had recently passed away. She spoke about Dr Butikofer's love for life and throwing himself into whatever he was doing. He treated everyone the same, it didn't matter if you were a close friend,

an acquaintance or someone who crossed his path in his work as a councillor or magistrate. He always wanted the best for you and for you to be happy. In his professional career Pierre worked for both ICI and IBM. When Pierre eventually retired from IBM, he decided to retrain as a lawyer, completing the three-year degree course in 12 months. He then became a Magistrate and served for over 20 years on the Bench in Norfolk, right through until he died shortly before Christmas 2024. He stood as a district councillor in a by election in Astley ward in 2016 and worked really hard, doing what he enjoyed and then in the 2019 council elections, Pierre moved to represent the Gresham ward. He became Chair of the Licensing Committee and continued as a councillor until he stood down from North Norfolk at the elections in 2023. She concluded by saying that he would be warmly remembered by everyone who had met him and sent his family and friends condolences on their loss.

She then invited the Leader to speak about Dr Butikofer and share his memories of him with members.

The Chairman then spoke about recent civic events that she had attended:

- 31st January NNDC Pantomime, Sheringham Little Theatre, £3107,55 raised for local charities!
- 14th February – Ceremonial opening of the Annual Kings Lynn Mart

101 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader said that due to the anticipated length of the meeting, he would not provide an update this time.

102 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

Mr P Harris asked the following question:

The Parish Poll in Cromer on Thursday 13th February 2024 put forward 4 questions. The first question posed on the parish poll was "*With the financial pressures local residents are under, Cromer Town Council should limit the increase to its Council Tax Precept to no more than 10%*". On a cold dark evening 78% of people taking part in the Parish Poll supported this proposition.

On behalf of residents I therefore request that NNDC does not agree to a Council Tax Precept set by Cromer Town Council above 10%.

The response was:

The parish poll is a discretionary poll and there is no lawful obligation which allows the District Council to act upon the outcome so unfortunately in this matter the District Council is unable to do anything.

103 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025 - 2026

The leader, Cllr T Adams, introduced this item. He explained that it was a statutory annual report.

It was proposed by Cllr T Adams, seconded by Cllr W Fredericks and

RESOLVED

To adopt the Pay Policy Statement and to publish the statement for 2025/2026 on

the NNDC Website.

104 CAR PARK ORDER 2025

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services, introduced this item. She reminded members that car park fees had been debated at a previous meeting and the next stage was to go out to consultation on the proposed changes. This had now been completed and just one objection had been received.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the Council introduces the car parking order 2025 (as advertised) on Monday 07 April 2025.
2. That the Council considers it is appropriate to make the order without modification

105 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 3RD FEBRUARY 2025

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services, introduced this item. She explained that the Medium Term Financial Strategy would be reviewed and updated once the Budget for 2025/2026 had been agreed.

Cllr C Cushing proposed that recommendations 1 – 3 were taken en bloc and then recommendations 4 and 5 en bloc. Cllr T FitzPatrick seconded the proposal.

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

RESOLVED to

1. To approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/2028
2. To approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/2026
3. the Capital Strategy 2025/2026o approve the Capital Strategy 2025/2026

Nine members abstained.

Recommendation 4:

Council Tax Discounts & Premiums Determination 2025-26

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

RESOLVED unanimously

That that under Section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and other enabling powers that

- 1) The discounts for the year 2025-26 and beyond are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 3.1.
- 2) To continue to award a local discount of 100% in 2025-26 for eligible cases of hardship under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended). See the associated policy in Appendix B.
- 3) That an exception to the empty property levy charges may continue to be made by the Revenues Manager in the circumstances laid out in section 4.2 of this report.

- 4) The long-term empty-property premiums for the year 2025-26 (subject to the empty premium exceptions shown in Appendix C) are set at the levels indicated in the table at paragraph 4.2
- 5) To continue to award a local discount of 100% in 2025-26 for eligible cases of care leavers under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).
- 6) Those dwellings that are specifically identified under regulation 6 of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 will retain the 50% discount as set out in paragraph 2.1 of this report.
- 7) Those dwellings described or geographically defined at Appendix A which in the reasonable opinion of the Revenues Manager are judged not to be structurally capable of occupation all year round and were built before the restrictions of seasonal usage were introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, will be entitled to a 35% discount.
- 8) A new second homes premium of 100% as detailed in paragraph 4.3 (subject to the second home premium exceptions shown in Appendix C) is applied from 1 April 2025.

Recommendation 5:

Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Policy 2025-26

RESOLVED

1. That the Revenues Manager continues to have delegated authority to make decisions up to the NNDC cost value of £4k as indicated in Appendix A.
2. That the Revenues Manager continues to has delegated authority to make Hardship Relief decisions up to the NNDC cost value of £4k as indicated in Appendix C.
3. That the Rate Relief Policy is revised as indicated in Appendix A, B and C

106 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 12TH FEBRUARY 2025

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr N Dixon, informed members that there were no recommendations that were not already covered elsewhere in the agenda and he said that he would speak to these when they arose.

107 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2025 - 2026

The Chairman reminded members that there would be a number of recorded votes. She then invited the S151 Officer and Chief Financial Officer to speak on the robustness of the estimates.

She began by referring members to page 192, s5.7 of the agenda, which provided details of the process which had been carried out in preparing the Budget for presentation to Full Council. She explained that in formulating her opinion, she had considered the 2023/2024 Outturn position, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and in-year budget monitoring reports for 2025/2026. She had also looked at the cashflow which had been monitored throughout the year.

She was pleased to report that sufficient savings had been found to move the forecast deficit from £995k to a break-even position at the end of the financial year. She thanked officers for their hard work in reducing expenditure.

Regarding the setting of the 2025/2026 Budget, all factors that had an impact were considered, including interest rates, global markets, rate of inflation, borrowing and investment income returns. Fees and Charges and income levels had been thoroughly reviewed and future funding levels were also considered. She said that the final local government settlement had been disappointing. In conclusion, the Chief Financial Officer said that she was satisfied with the assumptions that had been made regarding forecasts and that the level of general and earmarked reserves were adequate and the budget was produced within a robust framework.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services, Cllr L Shires, to introduce the Budget for 2025/2026. Cllr Shires said that before starting her presentation, she would like to ask the Chief Financial Officer to explain the impact of the most recent change to the council tax precept for Cromer Town Council. The Chief Financial Officer referred members to Appendix F and said that this included the initial precept proposed by Cromer Town Council. She said that there was an amended version of the document which included the updated, lower precept figure and this had impacted on the overall parish and town council precept amount. It did not impact on the District Council's element of council tax for the year. The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services, Cllr Shires, to introduce the Budget for 2025/2026. Cllr Cushing sought clarification about the process and when an amendment would be considered. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Budget speeches would take place first and that an amendment could be put forward before the debate on the main budget.

Cllr Shires began by saying that the focus had been on maintaining the high quality of services that residents relied on whilst being fiscally responsible. She was pleased to announce that a balanced budget had been achieved and this was down to the hard work of officers and members. District Councils continued to face severe financial challenges, particularly in demand led services such as temporary accommodation. Many had sought emergency financial support from the Government or even declared bankruptcy via issuing a Section 114 notice. North Norfolk District Council was not in this position due to shrewd financial management, and she thanked everyone for working with her on setting such a challenging budget. She went on to say that the provisional local government financial settlement was extremely disappointing and this had been compounded by a reduction in the rural services delivery grant and the previous recovery grant had been abolished and now district councils had received a lower share of redistributed funds, with Metropolitan areas being prioritised over rural districts, implying that the Government did not understand the needs of districts such as North Norfolk.

The Government allocated additional money in floor funding to prevent District Councils facing direct funding cuts and this led to an allocation of £805k simply to maintain the level of funding as of that provided last year. Since the budget was set, a further reduction of £74k in the final settlement. This continual squeeze in funding had been ongoing since 2010, leaving many district councils with no option but to cut some services. Despite this continual pressure, North Norfolk District Council remained committed to delivering high quality services and ensuring that residents received the support that they needed. Since 2019, the Administration had committed over £145m to capital projects across North Norfolk. In the last 12 months, investment had continued to invest in key projects such as installing solar panels at the Victory Leisure Centre, completion of the Cromer and Mundesley coastal protection schemes, Coastwise, the backstage refurbishment of the Cromer Pier Theatre, new staff facilities at Holt Country Park, new public conveniences and changing places facilities in Holt, a new play park in Sheringham and the upcoming works on the new swimming pool and leisure centre in Fakenham. All of these

projects were fundamental to supporting local communities.

She went onto say that the commencement of work on the Fakenham roundabout had now begun and this key infrastructure scheme for the town was now underway and welcomed by local members. The Sustainable Growth team was thanked for its ongoing work in supporting the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund, underpinning the Council's continued support for economic growth across the district. Two further properties had been purchased, bringing the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to 25 homes. All of this had been achieved despite the ongoing financial pressures – many of which were global and beyond the Council's control. Yet demand for council services and support had surged. There was a shortfall of £725k in temporary accommodation funding, which was likely to continue into the next fiscal year. She added that because of these additional pressures, the Council had introduced the 100% premium on second homes and the money generated would be used to ease budget pressures and cover any shortfall in temporary accommodation costs. This meant that the capital investment pledged would not need to be funded through borrowing, saving 2.4m in interest repayments.

Cllr Shires said that she was pleased to inform members that the Council had been successful in its bid to the Local Authority Housing Fund and would receive £588k which would be invested in temporary accommodation.

Cllr Shires then thanked the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their engagement and input in setting the Budget for the forthcoming financial year and said that she looked forward to working with all members in the future.

In conclusion, Cllr Shires said that rather than ending the year with a deficit, as originally forecast, there would be a small surplus of £48k, protecting the Council's reserves and putting it in a strong financial position going forward. She highlighted the immense work undertaken by officers across the Council in reducing the deficit and personally thanked officers for their commitment and hard work. She then thanked Cabinet colleagues in engaging with the process and rising to the challenges set to review and reduce their portfolio budgets. The Local Government Finance settlement assumed that district councils would apply the maximum council tax increase of 3% or £5.00. It was proposed therefore that the district element of the council tax would be increased by £4.95. From every £1 of council tax collected, only 8 pence came back to NNDC.

In spite of the financial pressures, the proposed budget committed a further £2.5m in capital projects across the district. She then outlined the costs of the proposed projects, reflecting the Administration's commitments to North Norfolk and its residents. There remained significant uncertainty over future funding levels for local authorities, with major funding reviews still pending implementation. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) added further uncertainty and she said it was important that any changes should ensure that rural communities were not overlooked and were rooted in what worked best for residents and not finances alone.

Work was already underway to address future forecast deficits, with further service reviews planned for the next financial year. Thanks were given the Council's S151 and Chief Financial Officer and the Finance Team for their dedication and expertise. Cllr Shires proposed the Budget for 2025/2026. Cllr T Adams seconded the Budget proposals.

The Chairman invited the Leader of the Opposition, Cllr C Cushing to respond to the Budget proposals.

Cllr Cushing began by thanking the Director for Resources and the Finance team for their hard work in preparing the Budget and for the support provided to the Conservative Group as they prepared their response. He also thanked Cllr Shires for her engagement with members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the budget setting process.

Cllr Cushing said that the shadow of local government reform hung over district councils at the moment, casting a long shadow. Therefore, with a long-term future unlikely, the delivery of services should be tailored accordingly and focussed on the next two to three years. He agreed with Cllr Shires that the Government had little understanding of rural areas and their needs and acknowledged the additional financial pressure caused by the demand for temporary accommodation. He therefore welcomed that a balanced budget had been achieved but noted that for the second year running it had only been achieved by officers having to find substantial savings. He was concerned that this would not be sustainable for much longer. He reiterated comments that he had made in previous meetings that the deficit had been forecast for some time and that the Administration should have done more to 'fix the roof whilst the sun was shining' and that the price for a lack of action was being paid now. The only option going forward was to cut services. For this reason, the Conservative Group could not support an increase in council tax. It would fall on residents to pay the price and this was not fair.

The Medium Term Financial forecast made difficult reading and it estimated that the future deficit would be approximately £900k. He referred to Appendix A which indicated that staff costs would not be increasing and he queried whether this was the case as it was usual for an annual pay rise to be given and as far as he was aware there were no plans to reduce staff numbers. In addition, inflation had recently risen to 3% and with the pay award set at 3%, it was very possibly that it may have to rise further in line with inflation. There was also the rise in national insurance contributions, which left a further shortfall of £350k. There would also be additional costs from the implementation of local government reform and he was therefore concerned that the forecast deficit would be higher than estimated.

Cllr Cushing then spoke about his concerns over the level of borrowing undertaken by the Administration. At a recent meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, it had been revealed that the current level of borrowing was £12.4m, predicted to rise to £16m by the end of April 2025. He said that all members were shocked that it was so high and there was a broad consensus that it was borrowing by 'stealth' despite claims that it was internal borrowing. He said that it should be noted that all internal borrowing had to eventually be replaced by external borrowing and NNDC or a future authority would have interest payments to make. He added that when the Administration took over the Council in 2019, there was no borrowing at all. In addition, the last Conservative administration had built up reserves and these had not been replenished. The current rate of borrowing was currently six times greater than the General Reserve, meaning that the Council was likely to have a net debt liability – probably for the first time in its history. He said that the Conservative Group would not support any further borrowing for 'nice to have' or vanity projects.

Referring to the Capital Programme, he said that a number of them were funded by Government money, including coastal protection schemes and the Fakenham Leisure centre project. He thanked the Leader, Cllr Adams, for his support for the latter. However, there were several other capital projects in the programme, that he

believed showed an unfair bias towards Cromer. He accepted that the Council owned several assets in the town and that the car park income was considerable but having looked into it further, he had established that car parking in the town over the last 6 years had generated approximately £3m of net income. Between 2019 and 2025, expenditure on projects in Cromer had been £6m, with over £5m of that spent on the Pier a listed structure. However, there were other projects such as the Marrams pathway which was a 'nice to have' project and not necessary. He went onto say that the amount of money spent on Cromer totalled more than that spent on North Walsham, Sheringham and Fakenham combined. There needed to be fairness across the district when formulating the capital programme and this was not the case currently. Now that the Sustainable Communities Fund had been disbanded, there was nothing allocated to smaller parishes. He then spoke about the derelict property in Fakenham and urged the Administration to consider allocating funding for a compulsory purchase order (CPO).

In summary, Cllr Cushing said that the forecast deficit was likely to be higher than estimated and it was unsustainable to continue to find savings going forward, without cutting essential services.

The Chairman invited Cllr J Punchard, Leader of the Independent Group to respond to the Budget proposals. He began by thanking the Chief Financial Officer and her team for their hard work and Cllr Shires for presenting a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year. Every year the budget was more challenging to set and impending devolution and local government reorganisation would only exacerbate this and impose additional costs. He reiterated Cllr Cushing's comments about the medium term forecast and said that the Administration needed to work to serve all residents across the district.

The Chairman invited Cllr Shires to respond. She began by saying that she welcomed Cllr Punchard's comments and she hoped to be able to work with him on setting the next Budget over the coming 12 months.

Replying to Cllr Cushing, she said that she was pleased with his speech, especially the lack of criticism regarding the Administration's strategic vision. She said that her view differed from his regarding some of the historic context that he had referred to and prior to 2019 there was approximately £1m in borrowing requirement. She referred members to page 93 of the report which set out the figures for recurrent borrowing and likely borrowing for capital projects. She thanked both Group Leaders for their input.

The Chairman invited Cllr Cushing to respond. He said that there was a clear end date regarding any strategic vision and her comments regarding 'rewriting history' were disingenuous as most of the money that had been spent by the Administration had come from a Conservative government. He added that it would be helpful to identify any projects that were government funded on the Capital Programme so it was clear where the funding came from.

Cllr Punchard said that he welcomed the opportunity to work with Cllr Shires in the next 12 months on setting the future budget.

The Chairman then advised members that an amendment had been received. She confirmed that the S151 Officer had seen it and accepted it.

The following amendment was proposed by Cllr Cushing, seconded by Cllr N Dixon:
Capital Programme 2025-2026

- Imperative that borrowing is brought under stricter control. Borrowing substantially increased from nothing in May 2019 to a current £12.4m and predicted to be £16m by April 2025.
- Capital projects should be led by community inspired needs to deliver the widest benefit to residents across the District or those in clearly defined localities spread equitably across the District.
- Capital projects should be supported by transparent and rigorous Business Case appraisal.
- None of the Capital Programme items listed below are supported by current reserves or Government grant funding. Therefore the money would have to be borrowed which would add further pressure
- We propose that the £1.6m saved by our amendment is either not be borrowed or used additional houses that would enable families in need to lead stable lives.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25				
Scheme	Current Approved	Revised Provision	Saving	Proposals
3G Facilities	847,568	423,784	423,784	<p>This fund was originally earmarked for 3G pitches at Fakenham and North Walsham. The Football Foundation (FF) has indicated that it will support building on these sites, in addition to Cromer.</p> <p>The Fakenham proposal is currently being negotiated with the FF with the assumption the pitch will be built in 2026/27. The North Walsham project is conceptual and not close to being brought forward.</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Split the allocated funding in two. Retain that for Fakenham and remove the sum allocated to North Walsham. If the NW proposal comes to fruition then the Council should approve this then, and expect cross party support for it.</p>
Cromer 3G Football Facility	979,274	300,000	679,274	<p>The latest edition of the Corporate Plan states that the Football Foundation will contribute £450k which is 65% of the</p>

				development costs. Therefore the total development costs are £692,308 which means that NNDC will contribute an estimated £242,308. PROPOSAL: Reduce budget to £300,000, which allows for some contingency. This saves £679,274.
Marrams Building Renovation	48,325	0	48,325	It has been stated that because NNDC own the building, so have a responsibility to maintain it. There is no Business Case for this. Why should NNDC Council Tax Payers subsidise a bowls club, especially since there is another Bowls club in Cromer. PROPOSAL: Remove allocated funding of £48,325.
Collectors Cabin Roof	30,000	10,000	20,000	It has been stated that due to the location of the building in a conservation area, this roof will need to be replaced with another thatched roof to meet 'planning guidelines'. Planning guidelines are not statutory. Spending £30,000 is not justified as the pay back on this based on the annual rents would take years. Also thatched roof buildings are three times more expensive to insure. PROPOSAL: Reduce allocation to £10,000 which should be more than sufficient for a standard roof.
Totals	1,905,167	733,784	1,171,383	

CAPITAL BIDS 2025/26				
Scheme	Total	Revised	Saving	Reasons for Exclusion

	Requested	Provision		
Public Conveniences Renovation, Holt Country Park	50,000	0	50,000	We are told that due to the introduction of an energy supply these improvements are to help the Council achieve its net zero ambitions which are to be achieved by 2030. This is no longer a justification since the Council will cease to exist by 2028. It is not justified either when the Council wants to close public conveniences elsewhere in populated areas yet enhance those in a country park.
Path, Lighting and Railings Replacement, Marrams Pathway, Cromer	240,000	0	240,000	The work requested is an extension of current work on footpath and footway lighting. Replace rest of foot slabs with tarmac. Replace handrails. This is a 'nice to have' and not essential work.
Sunken Gardens, Improvements, Marrams, Cromer	150,000	0	150,000	This may be mentioned in Norfolk Growth Plan. We struggle to see that refurbishing the gardens is vital to Cromer's tourist offering y let alone North Norfolk's economy. If money is to be spent on this then it would be better secured by a grant not borrowing by NNDC.
Totals	440,000	0	440,000	
Overall Total Saved	1,611,383			

Cllr Cushing outlined the amendment. He explained that the proposed reductions would allow more to be spent on providing temporary accommodation which was a key priority for the Council at the moment. Moving onto Capital bids for 2025/2026, he said that there were 3 that the Conservative Group could not support. He spoke about the proposal to renovate the public conveniences at Holt Country Park and said that they were predominantly used by visitors to the park and could not be considered a priority when there were proposals to close other facilities in the district. He said that the projects for the Marrams pathway and the sunken gardens in Cromer were essentially 'vanity projects' and neither could be considered essential in the current financial climate. Referring to the Local Growth Plan, which mentioned the sunken gardens project, he said that Cromer was mentioned more times than Fakenham which did not seem equitable. Such work would be better supported by grant funding rather than borrowing.

In conclusion, if these amendments were supported, it would allocate approximately £699k for temporary housing and could be spent on purchasing additional

properties.

The seconder of the amendment, Cllr Dixon, reserved his right to speak at the end of the debate.

The Chairman asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance, if she accepted the amendment. Cllr Shires said that she was pleased to receive the amendment before the meeting so she could explore the proposals fully. She said that she was, however, unable to accept them for the following reasons.

Regarding the reallocation of £229k from the football facility, she said that the money put into the project by NNDC would be borrowed and would therefore come with an interest cost. She went on to explain that although temporary housing costs were rising, there had been an increase in grant funding and the increase in second homes council tax.

Cllr Shires said that Holt Country Park was a long-term asset that had over 60k visitors a year and investment in the toilets was needed. Regarding the Marrams pathway in Cromer, it was one of the main routes from a key car park into the town and the Council had a responsibility to maintain it. This would happen regardless of location.

She concluded by saying that she could not therefore accept the amendments. The Monitoring Officer informed members that the standing orders allowed the proposer of the substantive motion to speak last but that Cllr Shires had opted to speak in response to the amendment.

Cllr T FitzPatrick sought clarification that anyone speaking during the debate on the amendment could speak again during the substantive debate. The Chairman confirmed this.

The Chairman opened the debate on the amendment. Cllr FitzPatrick said that all the points raised by Cllr Cushing were important. It was evident that spending was more focussed on Cromer than the wider district. He said that Walsingham had over 300k visitors a year but there were proposals to close the public toilets there in the long-term. He reminded members that the second homes premium had previously paid for the Big Society Fund which had provided grants for small projects throughout the district. It was clear from this Budget that there was a preponderance of spend in one town and it really needed to be addressed now.

Cllr M Taylor said he wanted to focus on the first proposed amendment. The temporary accommodation problem was a huge issue for residents and there was a pressing need to get families into decent housing and this was more important than sporting facilities in Cromer.

Cllr T Adams said that there would need to be increasing agility in how the Council's budget was managed going forward. LGR was likely to put additional pressure on the Council's finances and its assets. He reminded members that there were two large projects underway in Fakenham and he felt that the comments on the Marrams pathway were unfair as members had supported the Local Growth Plan. Holt Country Park was popular with residents as well as tourists and it was important to retain its green flag status. Regarding the provision of temporary housing, he said that a great deal had been achieved already and forthcoming additional funding would expand on this.

Cllr K Bayes said that he failed to understand why the Council was borrowing money to build a 3G pitch in Cromer. He said that he would struggle to justify this to residents.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett raised the issue of maintaining stability of Overstrand cliffs, which was listed in the capital programme. The Chairman reminded her that the current debate was regarding the proposed amendments.

Cllr L Withington said that she would like to address the points regarding Holt Country Park. She said that it was not linked to Net Zero ambitions but was focussed on replacing plumbing and overall renovation. Regarding the 3G pitch in Cromer, she said the amendment was not aimed at removing the project completely from the capital programme but removing the borrowing element. She said that the Norfolk Football Foundation would not even consider supporting the project if there was not a need. In terms of the budget being focussed on spending and borrowing, she said it was important to see it in light of those being proposed by neighbouring authorities, which were significantly higher by comparison. She agreed with Cllr Shires that it was a very prudent approach.

Cllr J Toye said that sporting facilities encouraged people to move into local towns and benefit from their surrounding environment.

Cllr Dixon, seconder of the amendment, was invited to speak. He said that he wanted to make the following points. It seemed that the Administration put 'nice to do' projects as a higher priority to investing in temporary accommodation. He said that as Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, he had listened to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cllr W Fredericks, speak on several occasions about the constraints in purchasing land and buying homes for temporary accommodation. By adjusting the capital programme as proposed in the amendment, the Administration could make a clear declaration that the provision of temporary accommodation was a priority. He wondered how comfortable the Administration would feel having to justify to people on the housing list that they wanted to focus spending on 'vanity projects' rather than housing. In summary, it appeared that the Council was prioritising a 3G football pitch over providing homes for vulnerable residents.

Cllr Dixon said that when comparisons were made regarding borrowing, it was important to make sure that they were comparable. It was clear to everyone that borrowing to purchase housing was a solid investment unlike the 'nice to do' projects, which would not provide a tangible return. He concluded by saying that he was extremely disappointed that the amendment was not being supported.

Cllr Cushing was invited to close the debate on the amendment. He said that he reiterated Cllr Dixon's comments regarding priorities and he did not support the argument that there was now sufficient money to spend on temporary accommodation and therefore no more was needed. He said that he was particularly disappointed that the Administration would not support the first amendment regarding the 3G pitch as it was low risk.

Cllr Shires said that she was disappointed that Conservative colleagues had not voiced concerns the previous day when the County Council had cut £2m from the homelessness budget.

The Chairman said that there would be a recorded vote on the amendment.

12 members voted in favour, 20 against and 1 abstained. The amendment was therefore not supported.

The Chairman then opened the debate on the substantive budget:

Cllr K Bayes said that as local member for Stalham, he was extremely disappointed that there was funding allocated in the capital programme for the town. He said that it indicated a disregard for Stalham and highlighted the disparity in spending across the district. He acknowledged that there maybe some spending in the pipeline but said that he was not convinced that it would come to fruition.

Cllr M Taylor reiterated Cllr Bayes' comments. Yet again there was no funding in the capital programme. He really hoped that there would be a proper place-making project in the near future. There needed to be far more buy-in from officers and members of the Administration to ensure that such a project could get off the ground. He expressed his frustration with the lack of government funding for rural shire districts and said it was clear that the government did not care about rural communities.

Cllr L Paterson said that he wanted to support Cllr Bayes comments about Stalham. Cllr J Toye, said that he would like to have some context for the comments regarding lack of investment in Stalham. He said that his ward was of similar size and there were several members who could say that they were not seeing funding allocated to their local areas but it was important that the focus was on the areas that needed it the most.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett commented on the proposed capital project entitled 'maintaining the stability of Overstrand cliffs'. She said that she was aware that the Shoreline Management Plan set out that Overstrand could be defended whilst it was economic to do so. She sought clarification on whether funding for such a scheme would be forthcoming from the Government and/or the Environment Agency and that it was important to know the situation before the capital programme was agreed.

Cllr H Blathwayt said that he was tired of hearing his local town, Stalham, being run down month after month by its local councillors. It was a thriving town doing very well indeed and they should stop running it down. As Portfolio Holder for Coast, he said that in response to the question regarding Overstrand cliffs, all options were being explored and an update would be provided soon.

Cllr T FitzPatrick said that the Council had previously been described by the editor of the Eastern Daily Press (EDP) as a 'pocket sized Council that punched above its weight'. He added that it could no longer be described as this because the Council had lost its sense of vision – of delivering the best possible services at the best possible price. It had gone quickly from a council with no debts to one with debt and borrowing. He said that it was not much of a legacy to leave when LGR came into effect and if the Council wanted to prioritise spending on a bowling club rather than investing in public toilets in key tourist areas, then it sent out a clear message regarding priorities. Regarding the new roundabout in Fakenham, he said that this was a project being managed by the County Council and funded externally so the Administration could not take credit for this. Regarding the Council's vision for the future, he said that it was important that members were ready to hand it over and consideration should be given now to investing in trusts to ensure key assets were maintained in future years. In conclusion, Cllr FitzPatrick said that it was important to focus on the Council's statutory duties such as tackling homelessness.

Cllr S Butikofer said that some members would remember that the Liberal Democrat took control of the Council in 2019 because of vanity projects, specifically one in Cromer for a tennis club. She was pleased that the opposition was concerned about housing residents but they didn't help in the early days and they should acknowledge that the Administration was tackling the issue of homelessness without dipping into the reserves.

Cllr W Fredericks said that she welcomed members focussing on the importance of housing issues and challenges. The Council was a leading authority on buying temporary accommodation and it now owned 25 units. However, they would not be needed if the previous government had not hollowed out the housing market. There were plans to increase the number of affordable homes in the next two years and this was a clear demonstration of the commitment to providing homes for local people.

Cllr P Heinrich said that the big risk to a new unitary did not come from small district councils but from the County Council with its £900m of debt.

Cllr S Penfold said that he supported Cllr Butikofer's comments regarding vanity projects and Cllr Heinrich's comment regarding the legacy of debt. He said that the County Council paid £85k a day on interest on debt alone.

Cllr L Vickers said that it was pointless discussing the budgets of other councils. Members should remind themselves why they were elected and who they represented. She agreed with Cllr Fredericks about the need for houses for local people and said that the Council should be providing more.

Cllr N Dixon said that he welcomed the comments of Cllr J Toye in setting out what the Council would like to do but the real challenge was putting this into action. He did, however, want to take issue with Cllr Blathwayt's comments. The Local members for Stalham were speaking up for the town and it was unfair to accuse them of running Stalham down. They had set out cases where the town had not been treated well. It was their duty to do so and he hoped that Cllr Blathwayt would withdraw his allegations against them.

Cllr Dixon said that the proposed council tax increase owed more to the years of failure to prepare for the coming financial storm and to the relatively profligate spends, leading to unprecedented borrowing. If those strategic choices had been prudent then the described current pressures, including temporary accommodation, could have been absorbed without dipping so deeply into residents' pockets. In conclusion, he said that it was undoubtedly a Cromer centric budget and should be acknowledged as such.

Cllr P Neatherway asked for more information regarding the cost of local government reorganisation and whether this was covered within the budget for 2025/2026, specifically support for town and parish councils as it was likely they would be required to take on more responsibilities once the district council was abolished.

Cllr C Ringer said that he wanted to comment on Cllr J Toye's earlier reference to the rural 'hinterland' in the district. He said that his own ward consisted of several parishes and had very few assets. That said, when nearby towns were invested in, it did directly benefit the residents of his ward. He went on to say that he did not feel that his ward was neglected in any way by not receiving any capital investment from NNDC as it was well served by officers and there were 10 affordable homes coming

forward in one village, which had been driven by the work of the Council's housing team.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was invited to speak on behalf of the Committee. He said that he had already spoken at length and did not wish to say anything further.

Cllr T Adams was invited to speak as seconder of the Budget. He began by saying it had been a difficult process of reaching a balanced budget. The Government's financial settlement for rural district councils had been pitiful and incredibly disappointing. He said he did not accept allegations of 'salami slicing' and he said that the deficit was in fact larger when the Administration took control of the Council. Regarding Stalham, he said the Council's investment and focus on the town would be clearly reflected in the Annual Action Plan which would be coming forward shortly. It was important that the town's assets were secured for the future. He went on to say that the focus now needed to be on the future for all of the Council's assets under a future Unitary authority and he wanted to work with local members on this. In response to Cllr Neatherway's query regarding support for town and parish councils ahead of devolution, he said that briefing sessions would be held but clarified that as far as he understood, there was no expectation that they would be taking on any additional statutory services. They could, however, take on responsibility for some of NNDC's assets.

Cllr Adams concluded by recommending the budget for approval and he thanked officers and members for their hard work and support.

Cllr L Shires then spoke as proposer of the Budget for 2025/2026. She began by saying that she was pleased to present a budget which was ambitious and responsible, which protected the essential services that residents relied on whilst ensuring the financial stability of the Council. The achievements outlined were a testament to the dedication and commitment of officers, members and communities. Bold strategic decisions had been taken to support the local economy, improve infrastructure, protect the environment and address the housing crisis. That said, the challenges ahead were not underestimated. These included the ongoing cost of living crisis, pressures on local government funding and the uncertainty of future reforms. The Council did not shy away from difficult decisions. It had already demonstrated that it would act decisively, innovate and ensure that North Norfolk remained a place where people could thrive. She concluded by thanking the Finance Team, officers and Cabinet colleagues and all members who had constructively engaged in the budget setting process. The road ahead would not be without challenge but she had no doubt that the Council had the resilience, vision and dedication to overcome them.

Before moving to the vote, Cllr Cushing proposed that the recommendations were split accordingly – recommendations 1,2,3,6,7 and 9 en bloc and recommendations 4 and 5 to have a separate recorded vote. Cllr Dixon seconded the proposal.

A recorded vote was taken on recommendations 1,2,3,6,7 and 9.

It was RESOLVED unanimously to approve

- 1) The 2025/26 revenue budget as outlined at Appendix A;
- 2) The service budgets detailed in Appendix B;
- 3) The statement of the movement in reserves as detailed at Appendix C;
- 6) The statement of identified savings as detailed in Appendix F;
- 7) That Members note the current financial projections for the period 2026/27 to

2028/29 that form the Medium Term Financial Strategy as presented as a Cabinet recommendation from its meeting on 3 February 2025;

- 8) The Optimum Level of the General Fund Reserve of £2.1m for 2025/26 to 2027/28;
- 9) The Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) for 2025/26 as recommended for approval by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 February 2025;

A recorded vote was then taken for Recommendation 4 and it was

RESOLVED with 21 votes in favour and 12 abstentions to approve:

- 4) The updated Capital Programme and financing for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as shown in Appendix D;

A recorded vote was taken for Recommendation 5 and it was

RESOLVED with 21 votes in favour and 12 votes against to approve

- 5) The new capital bids recommended for approval as detailed at Appendix E;

The Chairman advised members that they were now required to undertake the setting of Council Tax for 2025/2026.

The Chairman invited the Section 151 Officer (Chief Financial Officer) to outline the different elements of the Council tax recommendations. She explained that Appendix F to the report set out the statutory calculations for the council tax bases and reminded members that the Council Tax base had been approved by Full Council on 29th January. She then talked members through the calculations and advised them of the adjustment due to the late receipt of the change to the Cromer precept.

Cllr C Cushing requested that 10 and 11b were voted on en bloc and 11a was voted on separately. The Monitoring Officer informed members that a recorded vote would be taken. The Chief Financial Officer advised members that the figure as set out at recommendation 11b had been adjusted to reflect the change in the Cromer precept and was now **£3,697,853** and that a recorded vote would be taken to approve the amendment.

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

RESOLVED unanimously to approve that recommendation 11b was amended to reflect the Cromer precept.

A recorded vote was then taken on recommendations 10 and 11b and it was

RESOLVED unanimously

- 10) That Members undertake the Council Tax and statutory calculations set out at Appendix G, and set the Council Tax for 2025/26;
- 11b) £3,697,853 for parish and town council precepts (as amended)

A recorded vote was then taken for recommendation 11a and it was

RESOLVED with 21 votes in favour and 12 abstentions to approve

The demand on the Collection Fund for 2025/26 is as follows:

11a. £7,812,584 for District purposes which reflects the recommended Council Tax increase of £4.95 for the district element for a Band D equivalent property

108 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman advised members that there was 30 minutes allocated for this item.

Cllr J Boyle asked Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement, for a brief update on the Local Plan. Cllr Brown said that the next phase of the Local Plan would be a visit from the Planning Inspector from 8th to 11th April. He would visit the Council Offices and look at aspects of modifications to the plan. This would include issues such housing trajectory, deliverability of site allocations, the effect of nutrient neutrality and if the Council was compliant with habitat regulations. He concluded by saying that it was intended that the Local Plan would be agreed before local government reorganisation took effect.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett asked Cllr L Withington, Portfolio Holder for Community Outreach, about call waiting times. She welcomed the fall in waiting time but asked if it was possible to have more detailed information and how the waiting times compared on a benchmarking basis. She referred to the service sector where calls would be answered within 3 rings and asked if a similar approach was taken at NNDC. Cllr Withington said that she would provide a written response.

Cllr J Punchard asked the Leader for an update on 9 Norwich Street, Fakenham. He said that the saga had gone on for a number of years. Concerns had been raised about economic viability in the town and the need for more residential places. Refurbishing this property would address both issues. Cllr Adams said that the property was not owned by the Council and that made it challenging. He said that a decision on this matter would be coming forward to Cabinet in the near future to determine legal routes of action.

Cllr T FitzPatrick said that he had always been supportive of Eastlaw, the Council's legal arm and asked for an update on current workstreams and the opportunities to provide additional income for the Council. Cllr Adams replied that the Council was very proud of Eastlaw and the work that it did. A Coastal Transition Lawyer had recently been recruited and it was hoped that they would be able to provide support to other coastal authorities.

Cllr K Bayes said that he wanted to ask Cllr A Varley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, a question but in his absence he would put it to the Leader, Cllr Adams. He referred to a recent social media post on collaboration with 'Make my House Green'. He asked how the collaboration had come about. He understood that it was a national company based in London and he felt that a local company could provide the same service and offer discounts where possible. He asked whether it was unfair to local businesses by promoting a national company and its services. Cllr Adams said that he would ask Cllr Varley to provide a written response.

Cllr M Taylor spoke about the increasing number of housing developments proposed for Stalham and asked whether the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Cllr Brown, would commit to meeting with local members and the Assistant Director for Planning to discuss the establishment of Stalham Infrastructure Fund, which would be funded via s106 contributions. Cllr Brown said that he would be happy to meet and discuss this matter further, although it would be helpful to have more detail to ensure it complied with legislation and the Council's Local Plan. Cllr Taylor said that it would relate to seeking to fund safety improvements to the A14. Cllr J Toye said that he would be happy to be involved in any discussions as Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development.

Cllr L Vickers asked the Leader, Cllr T Adams, for assurance that every penny raised from the second homes council tax would be spent on housing and addressing homelessness. Cllr Adams confirmed that this was the case. He said that the agreement with the County Council would need to be renegotiated annually so the Council would need to demonstrate that it was spending the full use of that money on the terms agreed.

Cllr K Leith asked the Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Waste Services for an update on the introduction of the collection of food waste for businesses. Cllr Ringer confirmed that separate food waste collection for trade would commence in April for larger businesses (more than 10 full time equivalent employees), approximately 10% of businesses. He said that the service would be available for all of the Council's trade customers, including those with less than 10 employees and that all customers had received a leaflet advising them of the changes. He offered to provide an email briefing to members if that would be helpful.

109 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None

110 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None

111 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

None

112 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

113 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 8.38 pm.

Chairman

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 – Amendment

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T		X		Holliday, V	X		
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M		X		Leith, K		X	
Bayes, K	X			Macdonald, R		X	
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H		X		Neatherway, P	X		
Boyle, J		X		Paterson, L	X		
Brown, A		X		Penfold, S		X	
Bütikofer, S		X		Porter, P	X		
Cushing, C	X			Punchard, J			X
Dixon, N	X			Ringer, C		X	
Fisher, P				Shires, L		X	
Fitch-Tillett, A	X			Spagnola, E		X	
FitzPatrick, T	X			Taylor, M	X		
Fletcher, A		X		Toye, J		X	
Fredericks, W		X		Toye, K		X	
Gray, M		X		Vardy, E			
Hankins, M		X		Varley, A			
Heinink, C		X		Vickers, L	X		
Heinrich, P		X		Withington, L		X	

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 recommendations 1,2,3,6,7,8 & 9

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T	X			Holliday, V	X		
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M	X			Leith, K	X		
Bayes, K	X			Macdonald, R	X		
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H	X			Neatherway, P	X		
Boyle, J	X			Paterson, L	X		
Brown, A	X			Penfold, S	X		
Bütikofer, S	X			Porter, P	X		
Cushing, C	X			Punchard, J	X		
Dixon, N	X			Ringer, C	X		
Fisher, P				Shires, L	X		
Fitch-Tillett, A	X			Spagnola, E	X		
FitzPatrick, T	X			Taylor, M	X		
Fletcher, A	X			Toye, J	X		
Fredericks, W	X			Toye, K	X		
Gray, M	X			Vardy, E			
Hankins, M	X			Varley, A			
Heinink, C	X			Vickers, L	X		
Heinrich, P	X			Withington, L	X		

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 recommendation 4

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T	X			Holliday, V			X
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M	X			Leith, K	X		
Bayes, K			X	Macdonald, R	X		
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H	X			Neatherway, P			X
Boyle, J	X			Paterson, L			X
Brown, A	X			Penfold, S	X		
Bütikofer, S	X			Porter, P			X
Cushing, C			X	Punchard, J			X
Dixon, N			X	Ringer, C	X		
Fisher, P				Shires, L	X		
Fitch-Tillett, A			X	Spagnola, E	X		
FitzPatrick, T			X	Taylor, M			X
Fletcher, A	X			Toye, J	X		
Fredericks, W	X			Toye, K	X		
Gray, M	X			Vardy, E			
Hankins, M	X			Varley, A			
Heinink, C	X			Vickers, L			X
Heinrich, P	X			Withington, L	X		

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 recommendation 5

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T	X			Holliday, V		X	
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M	X			Leith, K	X		
Bayes, K		X		Macdonald, R	X		
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H	X			Neatherway, P		X	
Boyle, J	X			Paterson, L		X	
Brown, A	X			Penfold, S	X		
Bütikofer, S	X			Porter, P		X	
Cushing, C		X		Punchard, J		X	
Dixon, N		X		Ringer, C	X		
Fisher, P				Shires, L	X		
Fitch-Tillett, A		X		Spagnola, E	X		
FitzPatrick, T		X		Taylor, M		X	
Fletcher, A	X			Toye, J	X		
Fredericks, W	X			Toye, K	X		
Gray, M	X			Vardy, E			
Hankins, M	X			Varley, A			
Heinink, C	X			Vickers, L		X	
Heinrich, P	X			Withington, L	X		

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 recommendation – amendment to 11b

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T	X			Holliday, V	X		
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M	X			Leith, K	X		
Bayes, K	X			Macdonald, R	X		
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H	X			Neatherway, P	X		
Boyle, J	X			Paterson, L	X		
Brown, A	X			Penfold, S	X		
Bütikofer, S	X			Porter, P	X		
Cushing, C	X			Punchard, J	X		
Dixon, N	X			Ringer, C	X		
Fisher, P				Shires, L	X		
Fitch-Tillett, A	X			Spagnola, E	X		
FitzPatrick, T	X			Taylor, M	X		
Fletcher, A	X			Toye, J	X		
Fredericks, W	X			Toye, K	X		
Gray, M	X			Vardy, E			
Hankins, M	X			Varley, A			
Heinink, C	X			Vickers, L	X		
Heinrich, P	X			Withington, L	X		

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 recommendations 10 and 11b (as amended)

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T	X			Holliday, V	X		
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M	X			Leith, K	X		
Bayes, K	X			Macdonald, R	X		
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H	X			Neatherway, P	X		
Boyle, J	X			Paterson, L	X		
Brown, A	X			Penfold, S	X		
Bütikofer, S	X			Porter, P	X		
Cushing, C	X			Punchard, J	X		
Dixon, N	X			Ringer, C	X		
Fisher, P				Shires, L	X		
Fitch-Tillett, A	X			Spagnola, E	X		
FitzPatrick, T	X			Taylor, M	X		
Fletcher, A	X			Toye, J	X		
Fredericks, W	X			Toye, K	X		
Gray, M	X			Vardy, E			
Hankins, M	X			Varley, A			
Heinink, C	X			Vickers, L	X		
Heinrich, P	X			Withington, L	X		

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COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE FORM

Agenda Item: Budget 2025-2026 recommendation 11a

Date: 19 February 2025

	For	Against	Abst		For	Against	Abst
Adams, T	X			Holliday, V			X
Bailey, P				Housden, N			
Batey, M	X			Leith, K	X		
Bayes, K			X	Macdonald, R	X		
Birch, D				Mancini-Boyle, G			
Blathwayt, H	X			Neatherway, P			X
Boyle, J	X			Paterson, L			X
Brown, A	X			Penfold, S	X		
Bütikofer, S	X			Porter, P			X
Cushing, C			X	Punchard, J			X
Dixon, N			X	Ringer, C	X		
Fisher, P				Shires, L	X		
Fitch-Tillett, A			X	Spagnola, E	X		
FitzPatrick, T			X	Taylor, M			X
Fletcher, A	X			Toye, J	X		
Fredericks, W	X			Toye, K	X		
Gray, M	X			Vardy, E			
Hankins, M	X			Varley, A			
Heinink, C	X			Vickers, L			X
Heinrich, P	X			Withington, L	X		

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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>

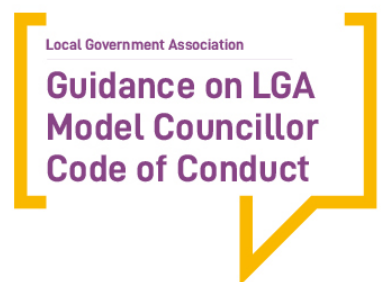
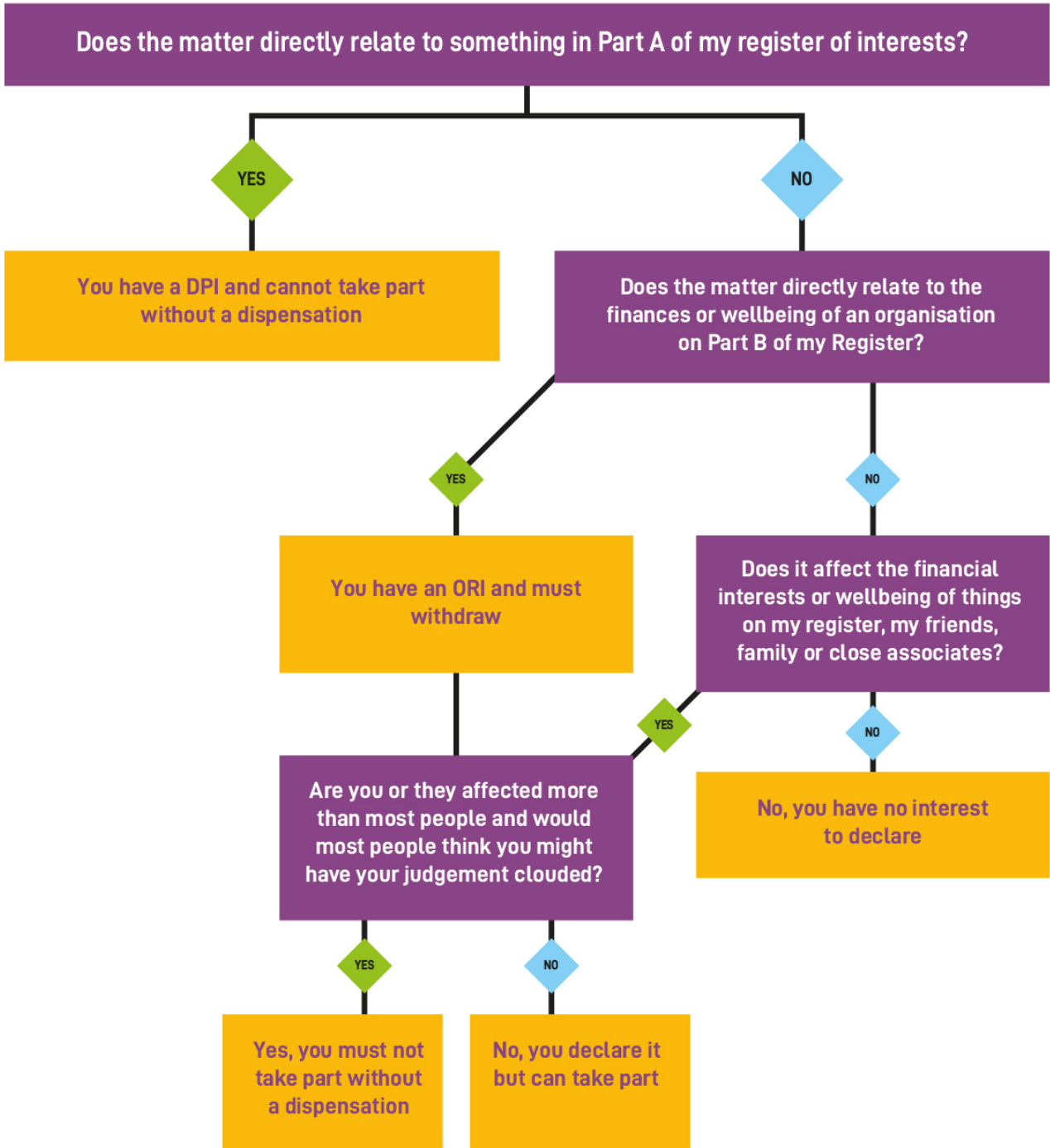
	spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* '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

<p>You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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)
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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

COUNCILLOR ADAMS - CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGY, COUNTRYWIDE WORKING AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS, PERFORMANCE, COMMUNICATIONS, HR AND LEGAL SERVICES

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Legal

FOI - The Council continues to meet its target in terms of response times at or above 95% for the year. The team are currently looking to publish our performance rates on the Council's website.

Planning – Eastlaw have worked hard to get four section 106 agreements completed in relation to the 40 bedroomed Care Home and 40 affordable housing in Stalham.

Litigation – The Council has recently successfully prosecuted an individual and two companies for their failure to provide information that the Council reasonably requires to recover outstanding debts. Furthermore, the Council has successfully prosecuted an individual for breaches of planning enforcement in Great Ryburgh and await hearing for another similar planning matter in Trimmingham.

FLASH - Eastlaw continue to work behind the scenes to implement the Fakenham swimming pool project.

General - We have seen an increase in instructions for certain workstreams which have provided additional income to the Council. It is noteworthy that Eastlaw has exceeded its income target by 50% already this financial year.

Human Resources

Work is ongoing in relation to the draft Workforce Development and People Strategy and the Learning and Development Strategy.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment Training has been rolled out to all officers and members via the Skillgate system.

Changes in respect of the threshold amount and employer contributions for National Insurance comes into effect from 5 April 2025.

The National Living Wage will increase with effect from April 2025, with the rate for those aged 21 and over increasing to £12.21 per hour. The Pay Policy statement for 2025/26 was agreed at Full Council on 19 February 2025 and has now been updated as required.

Elections

On 13th February the team successfully delivered the Cromer Parish poll across four polling stations in the town, and we now have an election to plan on Thursday March 27th for two recent vacancies on Cromer Town Council.

The review of eligible voters from the European Union has just ceased with non-responding electors now being removed from the register. Over 200 individuals had responded to the review to advise they remained eligible to be registered following changes to the franchise brought about by the 2022 Elections Act, with over 66 non-responding names being removed from the register.

Communications

Supporting Environmental Health with profile and delivery in highlighting roles/services that NNDC provides.

Supported Climate team with launch of MakeMyHouseGreen scheme for residents to get solar discounts.

Supported the Norfolk Film Sector, working with Norfolk Screen and attending sector events to advocate for North Norfolk as a filming location.

Highlighting the work of Countryside Rangers and supporting the Green Futures project, to get young people involved with nature and the environment. (Partner project with the North Norfolk Youth Advisory Board)

Supporting Economic Growth team with the creation of case study assets for upcoming business events and delivery of Invest North Norfolk project. Further support for the business sector through the promotion of grant schemes and other opportunities.

Supported Coastwise Team in highlighting developments around Happisburgh Car Park, and promotion of Coastwise Creatives Challenge.

Promoting ongoing capital projects, such as Cromer Pier, the Mundesley Coastal Management Scheme and Albert Street in Holt.

Continued audience growth on social media, including more

bespoke/targeted use of video content on Instagram and TikTok in line with current consumer trends, and focused sector-based promotion on LinkedIn.

Internal consultation and content preparation for International Women's Day.

Creation of content ahead of Empty Homes Week, to highlight Council's important work in bringing empty properties back into use.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Communications

Supporting NNDC's involvement in Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

3 Meetings attended

Meetings and events, including upcoming:

- Numerous meetings on Devolution and LGR with different partners, including Town and Parish Briefings.
- Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital
- Business Planning & Cabinet
- DCN conference
- Norfolk Anti-Poverty Alliance

Media

- EDP
- That's TV

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

COUNCILLOR HARRY BLATHWAYT - CABINET MEMBER FOR COAST

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Cromer and Mundesley Coastal Protection Schemes

- The completion of the Cromer scheme was held on 5th February. Some minor 'snagging' and 'making good' operations remain to be completed at the time of writing
- Concreting works at the west promenade and apron and below Ship Inn steps to the toilet block (facilitated by temporary closure of parts of Mundesley promenade)
- Monitoring the impacts of the rock stockpile at Mundesley has commenced, in accordance with the consenting conditions, and the first report has been submitted to Natural England



Coastwise

- Purchase of site of the former Manor Caravan Park in Happisburgh is complete.
- Research relating to clifftop located graveyards is progressing, with a workshop planned to gather and analyse issues
- Coastwise Creative Competition winners confirmed with exhibition in March.

- Participated in the Norwich Science Festival in collaboration with UEA, 'Going Coastal'.



Coastwise Creatives Individual Winner - 'If my home could fly.'

Repairs and Maintenance

- Beach debris clearance in Sheringham
- Repairs to groynes 2a and 2b in Cromer
- First phase of removal of cliff material containing Japanese Knotweed from the sea wall at Overstrand
- Construction of access steps for Overstrand
- Decision taken to close Coast Path along the sea wall at Overstrand due to continued encroachment of cliff slips and hazardous conditions for pedestrians

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Cromer and Mundesley Coastal Protection Schemes

- Ongoing concreting works at Mundesley.
- Groyne plant bays in Cromer to be reinstated.

Coastwise

- Procurement of construction contractor for the replacement car park in Happisburgh

- Coastwise Creative Competition exhibition launch in March
- Procurement of consultant to formulate community coastal erosion transition plans

Repairs and Maintenance

- Steps between beach and top of sea wall to be installed at Overstrand
- Repairs to groynes 1 and 2 in Cromer
- 'Pre-season' inspections to commence

3 Meetings attended

February 2025

3rd Cabinet and Business Planning

4th Cromer and Mundesley Schemes Board

5th Coastwise Board and Cromer Scheme Completion celebration

6th Broads Authority leadership meetings

7th Broads Authority planning Committee

10th CPE Board Meeting

11th Broads Authority Risk, Audit & Governance Committee. LGA IDB Funding SIG. Members Devolution Briefing.

13th Mutford Lock Refurbishment, on site visit.

14th Coastwise Creative Panel Judging

17th Cabinet Pre-Agenda & Business Planning.

19th Full Council.

20th NCP Chairs Catch up. BA CEO meeting

25th Meeting with Adrian Ramsey MP.

26th Training Risk Management

27th Broads Authority devolution briefing

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19th March 2025

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

For the period 8th February 2025 to 7th March 2025.

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

In terms of **Planning Policy**:

- (i) Further ***Local Plan Examination Hearings*** will take place in the week of 8th April 2025. These will focus on the issues raised during the Further Consultation on the Local Plan concluded on 19th December 2024. These Hearings will take place in our Cromer offices and will be led / chaired by our independently appointed Planning Inspector. For further information see: [Local plan examination latest news](#).

In terms of **Development Management**:

- (ii) The ***Development Committee*** has met once since the last Report and considered 6 applications at that meeting. Those 6 included two major applications – for a 41 room retirement apartment development at Sheringham – see [Development Committee Report PF241229](#) – and a change of use from a care home to 35 dwellings at High Kelling – see [Development Committee Report PF242717](#). The Committee deferred the former and agreed to authorise officers to approve the latter – once certain highways related matters are resolved.
- (iii) As the meeting on 6th March 2025 was the last of the financial year, Councillors may be interested to note the following statistics about the ***Development Committee's workload*** for 2024/25:
 - The Committee met 14 times;
 - 48 different applications were considered;
6 were deferred at the first meeting they were reported to. 2 of those 6 have since been reported back to Committee - and determined;
 - The Committee agreed to approve 38 applications and refuse 6 applications;
 - Of the 44 applications determined, 89% (39) were in accordance with the officer recommendation and 11% (5) went against the recommendation;

- Of the 48 applications considered, 12 of them were 'major applications' – one of which one was deferred and that one has not yet been reported back to Committee. All of the 11 determined were determined in accordance with the officer recommendation – and all of those were for approval;
- 19 different councillors 'called' an item into Committee – with no councillor 'calling' in more than 2 items;
- 16 different Officers presented at least one application to Committee; and
- The 48 applications were spread across 19 different wards – with Holt having the highest number – at 5 – having moved into the lead with the penultimate application considered in the year. Holt was just ahead of Coastal, Sheringham North and Stalham – all on 4 a-piece.

In terms of **Building Control**:

- (iv) On 26th February 2025 the Government announced that they were accepting all the recommendations on the ***Grenfell Report***. Those recommendations mean that the Government have now committed to establishing an independent panel to review the building control sector and in particular who should perform building control functions (e.g. a new national body, local councils or the private sector). The Government response also states that work is underway to set up the Independent Panel that will conduct the Review(s) and that they will be asking the Panel to make their recommendations by October 2025 – with the Government planning to set out their proposals by the end of the 2025 calendar year. For more information see: [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report: Government response](#).

Finally, on other matters:

- (v) As ward councillor, it has been fascinating to see the interest the national and local media have taken in the proposal to remove the ***Sharrington phone box*** and it has been a salutary reminder as to the importance people often place on items of character in their neighbourhoods – and the fact that quirky stories often grab what some might see as a disproportionate amount of media interest. I really hope that Mr Harris succeeds in his 'Derek v Goliath' campaign to keep the phone box. As an example of the media interest see: [Sharrington Guardian Article](#).
- (vi) At the last Council meeting, Cllr Taylor requested that I meet with him, Cllr Bayes and our Assistant Director – Planning to discuss the possible development of a ***Stalham Investment Plan***. In keeping with the commitment given at the last meeting, we are now due to meet 12th March and we will look to see if we can progress work on the concept – potentially within the auspices of a Stalham Neighbourhood Plan.

Note: This report is shorter than the norm. That is because there have only been 4 weeks since the last Council meeting.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

The next Development Committee is due to be held on 3rd April 2025.

3 Meetings attended

February (from 8th)

- 17th Pre Cabinet and Business Planning
- 18th Public meeting in High Kelling re fatal accident incident
- 18th Appointment with The Guardian re Sharrington kiosk rescue mission
- 19th Full Council
- 20th Planning Portfolio Holder meeting
- 25th Town & Country Planning Assoc webinar on planning reforms
- 26th Rural Services Network webinar on rural connectivity
- 27th Local Plan review meeting
- 28th Meeting at Stody Estate with Economic Development officer

March (up to 7th)

- 3rd Cabinet and Business Planning
- 4th Melton Constable Parish Council
- 4th Pre Development Committee meeting
- 6th Development Committee

4 Future Meetings (after 7th March) due to be Attended

March (from 8th)

- 11th Stody PC
- 12th Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 12th Thornage PC
- 17th Pre Cabinet and Business Planning
- 18th EELGA planning reform
- 19th Full Council
- 31st Cabinet and Business Planning

April

- 3rd Development Committee
- 9th Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 29th Standards Committee

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

March 2025

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE SERVICES

For the period up to 28th February 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

Caseload

In February the team received over 170 new claims and 8600 reported changes in circumstances.

As at 1st March, we have 7,215 households claiming Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support of which 53% are working age. The caseload has increased compared to the previous month, due to an increase in the number of working age households claiming Council Tax Support.

The number of working age households claiming Housing Benefit continues to reduce due to the managed migration to Universal Credit. To date 461 households have migrated with a further 530 households expected to migrate by the end of the year.

Speed of processing for February

The table represents our speed of processing data for February 2025. The service is continuing to perform highly compared to the national standard.

	NNDC number of days to process (February 2025)	NNDC Benchmarked number of days to process (Q2)	National Benchmarked number of days to process (Q2)
New claims HB	9.00	6	22
New claims CTS	7.00		
Changes in circumstances HB	2.30	9	9
Changes in circumstances CTS	4.50		

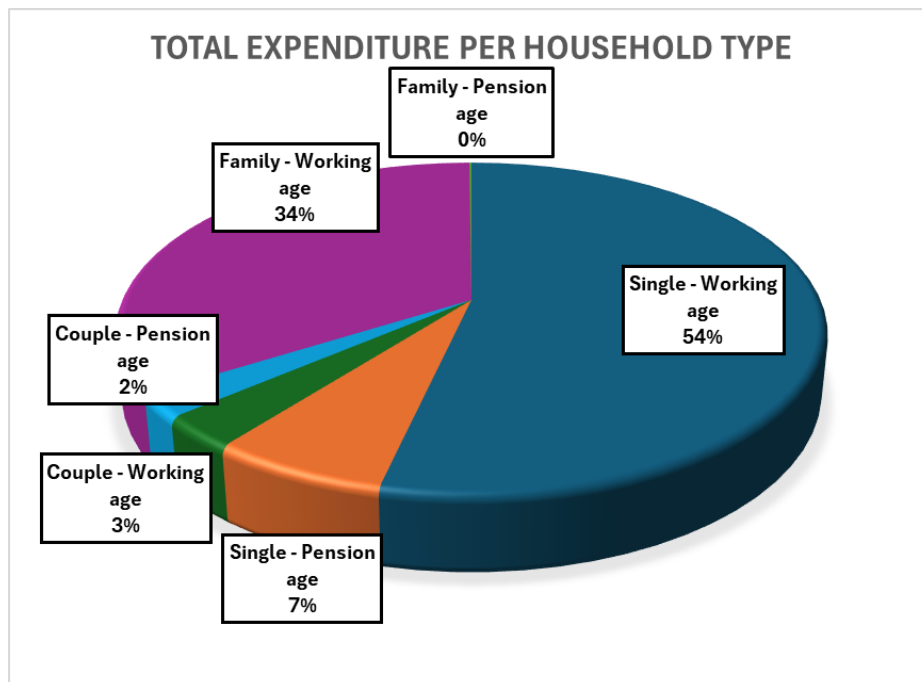
Discretionary Housing Payments

We continue to administer Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support tenancy sustainment, homelessness, and to support people to stay within the community.

For 2024/25, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of £103,037.00, and up to 28th February 2025 we have spent 92% of our allocation across 112 households. A further total of 220 applications (across 201 households) have been refused as the circumstances of the household are outside the scope of the scheme. Where we have not been able to provide support through the DHP scheme, the team considers other funding options and support available and signposts the customer accordingly.

A breakdown of how the expenditure has been allocated across the 112 households can be seen below.

Household Type	Number of Households paid	Expenditure across households
Single - Working age	69	£ 50,394.38
Single - Pension age	6	£ 6,599.67
Couple - Working age	5	£ 3,012.98
Couple - Pension age	1	£ 2,154.00
Family - Working age	30	£ 31,827.02
Family - Pension age	1	£ 106.92
Totals	112	£ 94,094.97



Financial Inclusion

The Financial Inclusion team is continuing to support low-income households become financially resilient by maximising their income through unclaimed benefits, premiums, and grants. We have also run Pension Credit campaigns using data from the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) to target individual households and have used DWP data shared through Norfolk County Council to increase take up of Council Tax Support. In total the Benefits team and Financial Inclusion team have generated over £2 million in missed benefits and/or funding for households across North Norfolk, with the highest amount of income being claimed for disabled households. This is illustrated below.

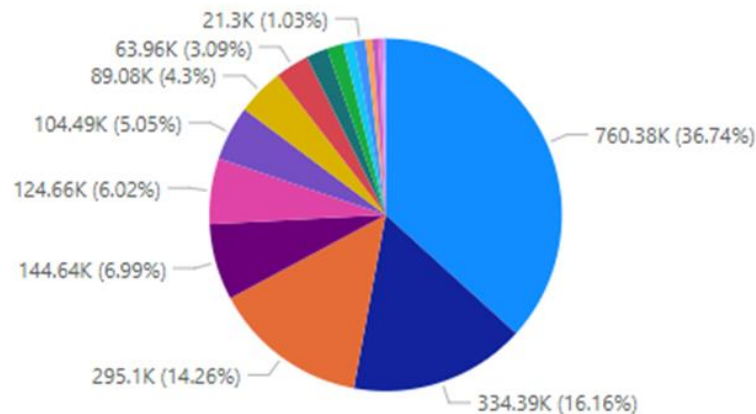
**Where benefits have been claimed, the amounts shown are an annual award.*

Financial Inclusion

Income Tracker 24/25

Support type	Sum of Annual income or lump sum award
Universal Credit	21,380.52
Take-up Campaign Pension Credit Financial Inclusion Assisted	104,489.84
Take-up Campaign Pension Credit	144,639.04
Take-up Campaign Council Tax Support	31,595.01
Personal Independence Payment	295,097.40
Pension Credit	334,394.84
Housing Benefit	63,961.04
Household Support Fund/ Discretionary Household Support Grant	12,976.95
Energy Bank Voucher	5,851.86
Employment and Support Allowance or Jobseeker's Allowance	21,304.40
Edenred/Argos Voucher	12,155.00
Discretionary Housing Payment	6,724.49
Disability Living Allowance	40,791.40
Council Tax Support/ Discount	89,080.77
Carer's Allowance /Premium	124,659.60
Attendance Allowance	760,375.20
Total	2,069,477.36

Sum of Annual income or lump sum award by Support type



<p>Support type</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attendance Allowance ● Pension Credit ● Personal Independence Payment ● Take-up Campaign Pension Credit ● Carer's Allowance /Premium ● Take-up Campaign Pension Credit ... ● Council Tax Support/ Discount ● Housing Benefit 	<p>Support type ▲</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disability Living Allowance ● Take-up Campaign Council Tax Sup... ● Universal Credit ● Employment and Support Allowan... ● Household Support Fund/ Discreti... ● Edenred/Argos Voucher ● Discretionary Housing Payment ● Energy Bank Voucher
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Household Support Fund (HSF)

In February we have delivered a further £103k of support through the HSF to low income pension age households not in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment and who are not entitled to Pension Credit. We have been able to target this funding using the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT). Each eligible household has been sent a voucher for £120. This payment has been distributed through the Post Office PayOut scheme.

[Housing Options and Homeless Prevention](#)

Your Choice Your Home

As at the 28 February 2025 there were 2,210 households on the housing list with 476 (21%) being on the Housing Register – this register contains those qualifying applicants who have the most urgent housing needs, including households to whom the council owns a statutory housing duty.

The tables below highlight the makeup of housing need and the size property required by applicants on the housing list. Although the greatest demand for housing is those with a 1-bedroom need, there are significantly fewer larger properties allocated with a current demand for 4 beds+ properties being 237 with only 1 four-bedroom house being let between 01 April 2024 to 28 February 2025.

Some properties have a minimum age requirement, for example, in some cases only people over 55 years of age can apply, this applied to 57 properties let during 01 April 2024 to 28 February 2025.

	Housing List by Bedroom Need				Homes Let by Property size (Bedrooms)			
	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total
1 Bed	203	876	154	1233	97	2	8	107
2 Bed	102	327	87	516	101	10	9	120
3 Bed	68	85	38	191	29	1	6	36
4 Bed	92	107	38	237	1	0	0	1
5 Bed +	11	12	10	33	0	0	0	0
Total	476	1407	327	2210	228	13	23	264

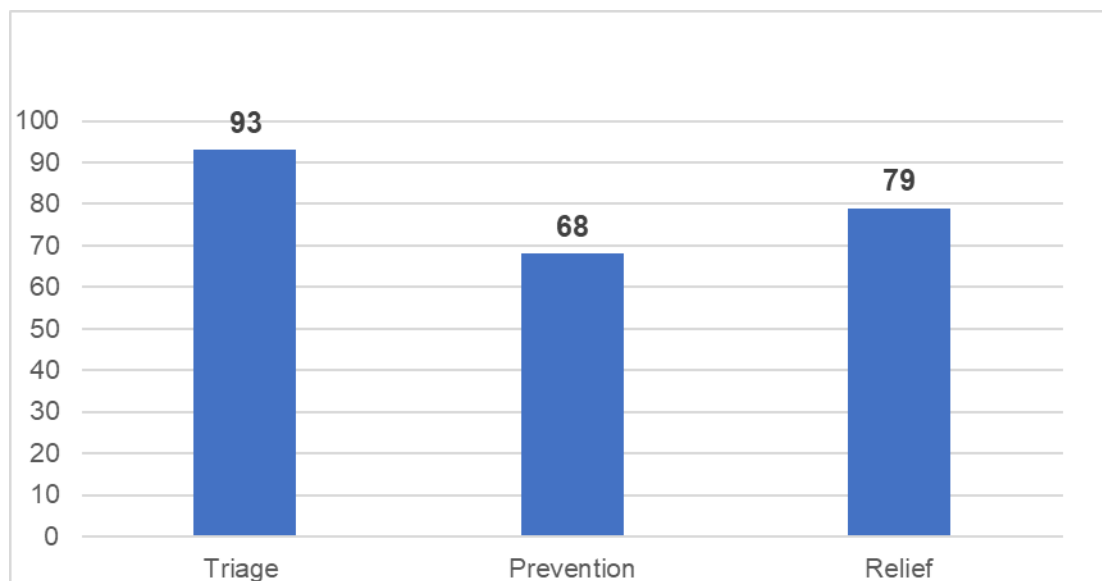
Homes let 01 April 2024 to 28 February 2025.

Households Assessed and Duty Owed

Our Housing Options Service offers advice to anyone who has a housing problem, and offers support and assistance if someone is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, within the next 56 days.

Approaches to the service remain high and between 01 April 2024 to 28 February 2025 we have opened 1,104 new cases. Each case represents a household who has contacted us as they have some sort of housing need, and we are still seeing an increase in households being owed a Relief Duty (200 cases) Vs the Prevention Duty (132 cases).

As at the 28 February 2025 there were 243 open homeless cases. The table below shows the levels of Homelessness, where a household is owed either the prevention or relief duty following initial assessment.



The three most common triggers of homelessness for households owed a homeless duty by reasons for loss, or threat of loss, of last settled home were:

- End of Private Tenancy

- Family/Friends no longer/willing to accommodate
- Domestic Abuse

Outcome of main duty decisions for eligible households

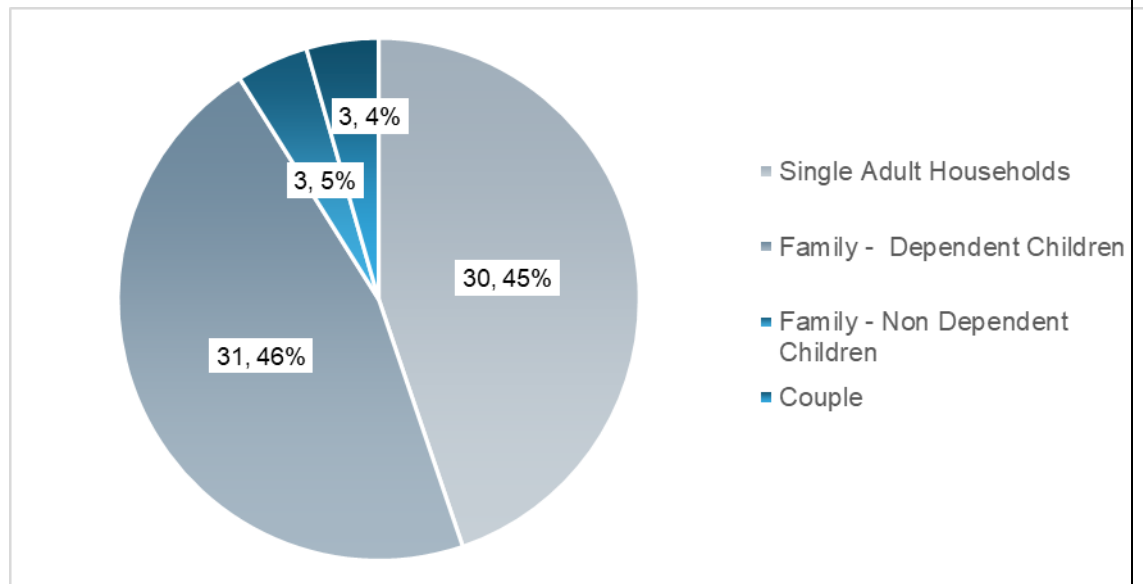
Main homelessness duty describes the duty a local authority has towards an applicant who is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and has priority need. Households are only owed a main duty if their homelessness has not been successfully prevented or relieved.

Between 01 April 2024 to 28 February 2025, 154 main duty decisions have been taken with 111 households (72%) being found to be Homeless, priority need, and unintentionally homeless.

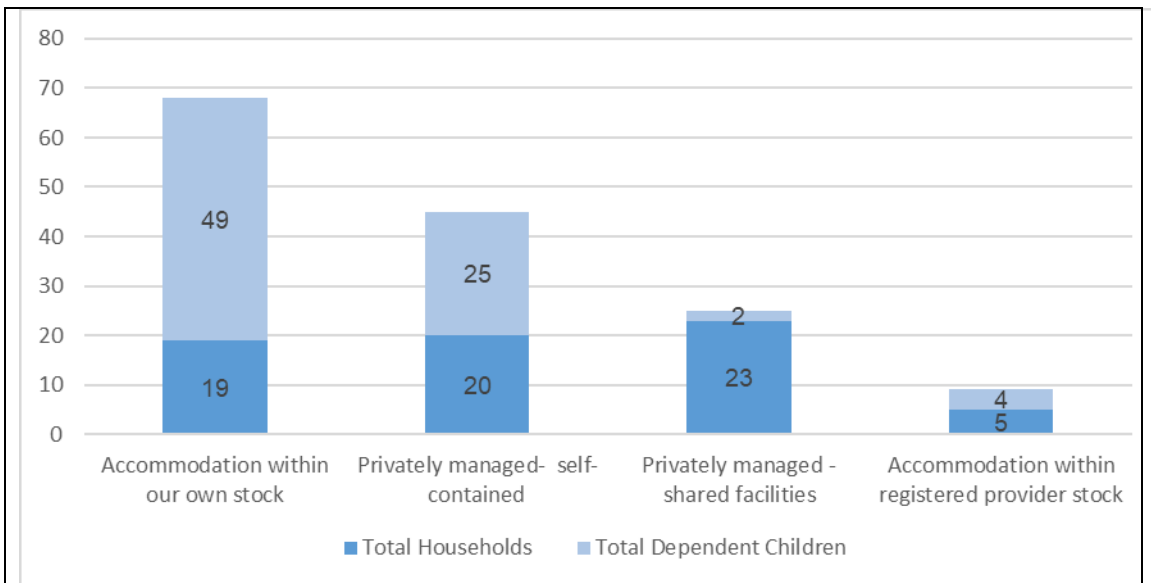
Where a local authority has accepted a main housing duty to an applicant, Section 193 accommodation duty arises. This requires the local authority to ensure that the applicant has access to suitable temporary accommodation until the applicant is rehoused and the Section 193 duty is discharged.

Temporary Accommodation

On the 28 February 2025 there were 67 Households in Temporary Accommodation. Included in the 31 Family Households there were 80 dependent children.



Households in Temporary Accommodation



Households by Accommodation Type

Rough Sleeping

During the month of February (at various points in time) 4 people were reported/verified as sleeping rough in North Norfolk, this includes 2 people with entrenched experience of rough sleeping, 1 person who has previously slept rough in the district and 1 person who was new rough sleeping in the district.

At the end of the month, 2 people remain sleeping rough in the district.

Housing Strategy

Temporary Accommodation

The Council currently holds 25 units of Temporary or other homeless accommodation (including five units on move on accommodation for ex-rough sleepers).

The demand for TA continues and we have recently been successful in our bid for government funding through Local Authority Housing Fund grant which will help us to purchase a further four units of homelessness accommodation and two further units using Second Homes Council Tax premium funding. These homes will be acquired in 2025/26 to bring the Council's portfolio up to 31 homes.

New Affordable Homes

We have a healthy affordable housing scheme pipeline, many of which are 'rural exception' housing sites at various points in the development process. There are over twenty developments which will, subject to approvals, deliver more than 550 new affordable homes in the next few years.

In 2024/25 we expect Housing Associations to provide 41 new affordable homes in the district – this is a lower figure than previously reported as one scheme will only partially handover their new development this year with the remaining in a phased process which takes some home now into early 2025/06.

So far in 2024/25, 35 new homes have been completed, which include, in January, a rural exception site in Warham with 12 affordable rented homes specifically for Homes for Wells. The development of 24 affordable homes in Sheringham (Westwood), is due for completion over the next few months.

Flagship have commenced building in Bacton where they will deliver 47 new affordable homes with a mixture of affordable rents and shared ownership properties. They have also commenced building in Walcott where 23 affordable rent homes will be delivered.

Planning applications continue – in Stalham planning permission has been issued for a fully affordable development which will deliver 61 extra care homes, along with 40 affordable homes.

Swanton Novers Community Land Trust, in partnership with Broadland Housing Association, has received planning consent for 7 new affordable rented homes in the village. Broadland Housing Association has received planning consent for a rural exception housing site in Little Snoring, where we will have 10 affordable homes delivered. Flagship have a current planning application for 9 affordable homes in Pudding Norton. Following a successful public consultation, Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society continue to work in partnership with Broadland Housing Association to deliver 8 affordable homes, with a planning application submission expected in the coming months.

Work continues to seek further land in the district which is suitable for affordable housing with some local landowners making contact following recent publicity. Strategic Housing are currently working on the suitability of six early stages sites with the potential to increase the affordable housing pipeline.

[Social Prescribing](#)

February 2025:

Referrals received into SP = **58**

Key issues in respect of reasons for referral included finances, benefits and mental health.

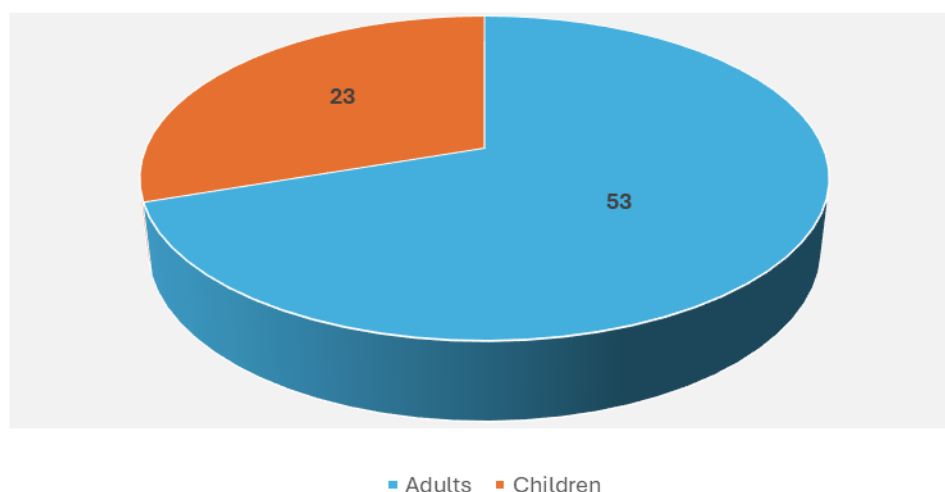
Complex referrals are presented to and discussed at the multi-agency Help Hub to get a more holistic view of the person being referred. Agreement is reached at the Hub on how to deal with the referral and the concerns raised. Referrals are also allocated to Social Prescribers, Community Connectors for Social Isolation or Financial Inclusion for benefits, debt,

budgeting and financial issues.

Homes for Ukraine

Currently we have 31 hosts, 76 guests in a hosting arrangement (53 adults and 23 children) including 1 person in Temporary Accommodation.

Ukrainian Guests



IHAT

- On 03/01 the government announced an immediate in-year uplift to the Disabled Facilities Grant for the 2024-2025 financial year. The increase for North Norfolk was a total £203,310. The expectation is that these funds are spent this financial year or at least committed. The uplift has been committed by way of DFG approvals (these works are likely to not be completed until the next financial year).
- IHAT has been down an assessing officer through Norfolk County Council's Assistant Practitioner role since 18th December. The role has now been filled and the new Assistant Practitioner will begin 10th March. The number of assessments completed over December, January and February has therefore dipped due to the reduced resource.
- The Discretionary grant policy is currently under review with a view to extending this for a further year.
- We are in the process of extending the contract with Flagship housing association to deliver adaptations for Flagship Housing Group tenants via their contractor. The new contract is expected to start from 1st April 2025.
- The team has published a DFG leaflet, see attached. This will better promote the service across the council and to reach a wider audience

in addition to the website information. The leaflet can be used for professional and public use to better understand eligibility for DFG and the referral process.

The DFG expenditure is shown below.

Figures 2024-25 – Disabled Facilities Grant

Total referrals for February 2025 (New data)	19
Cases awaiting assessment for adaptation (as of 28 th Feb)	53
YTD completed grants	125
YTD average monthly completed grants up to end of February 2025	11.36
Total spend YTD (as of 28 th February)	£1,357,163.07
February total spend	£149,317.96
February total approval value	£125,913.05 (13 cases)

Discretionary Grants

YTD as of 28 th Feb grants awarded (completed)	70
YTD as of 28 th Feb total value	£92,567.86

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

3 Meetings attended

Cabinet
Pre Cabinet Agenda
Business Planning
EELGA Assembly Meeting
Anglian Water Workshop

EELGA Forum on Housing
All Members Briefing on LGR and Devo
Topping out with Broadland Housing Association Salthouse
Meeting with Inspector of NNPolice
Town and Parish Briefing
Portfolio Catchups People Services and Housing
Mundesley Parish Council Full Council
NNDC Full Council
EELGA Conference

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

COUNCILLOR RINGER - CABINET MEMBER FOR IT, ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE SERVICES

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Environmental Protection

A new Environmental Protection Team Leader has been appointed and has made a positive start in his new role.

The four car-meet/vehicle Public Space Protection Orders that were approved by Cabinet are signed and sealed by EastLaw. The team will now consider how best to provide signage and information in the applicable areas.

The team have been working with Millenium Pest Control on rat ridden programmes in North Lodge Park, and around Old the Donkey Shelter in Cromer following reports of increased rat activity. Further discussions are being held about monitoring rat activity in areas which have previously been highlighted as problematic.

An evening meeting was held with residents of Great Snoring to discuss fly nuisance issues which have previously arisen in the village. A plan for monitoring during the warmer months of 2025 was discussed. Officers also shared information on the businesses plans for managing the issue going forward.

The recent internal audit of Environmental Protection highlighted some issues associated with completion of Private Water Supply risk assessments, a plan is being formulated to catch up a backlog of work in this area.

Public Protection

The taxi and private hire policy and handbook has been revised to final draft and will go out to consultation in March.

The Gambling statement of principles has been reviewed, and minor updates will go out to consultation in March.

Recruitment of an additional officer was successful. The vacancy will be filled at the end of March.

3 staff were trained in caravan site licensing to build resilience in this area.

Institute of Licensing fees training was completed as work starts on reviewing NNDC licensing fees and charges in advance of 2026/27 budget.

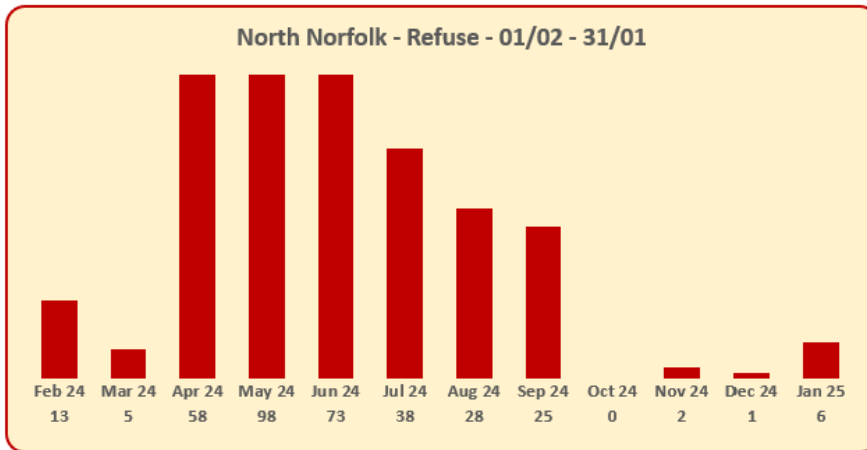
Number of Licences issued by type 2025:

	Jan 2025	Feb 2025
Lic. Animal Activities	3	0
Fit and proper person caravan site	0	0
Street collection	2	2
Gambling premises	2	0
Lottery - Small Premises	0	1
Personal	6	5
Premise Licence inc. clubs	0	8
TENS	28	13
Hackney Carriage Operator	0	0
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	16	11
Private Hire Vehicle	35	38
Taxi Driver	25	20
Skin piercing	2	2
Street Trading	1	7

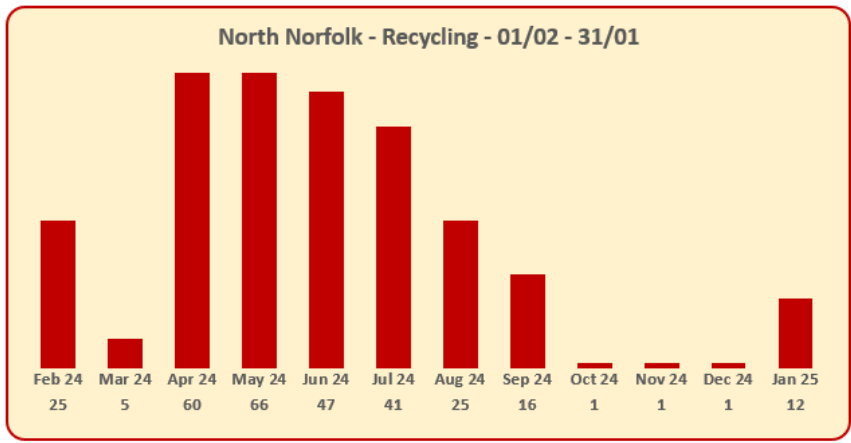
Environmental and Safety Services.

The following statistics were reported by Serco at the February Contract Management Board.

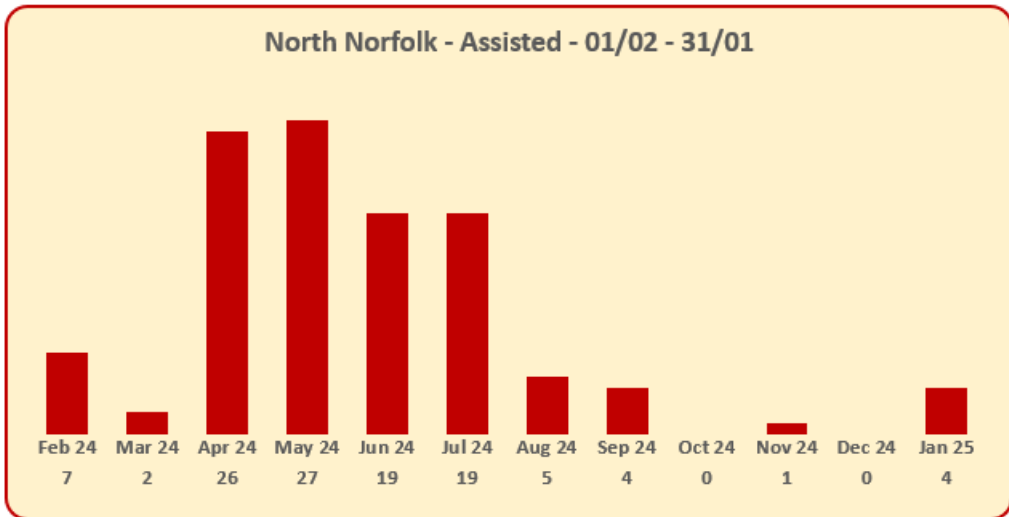
Missed Collections Refuse:



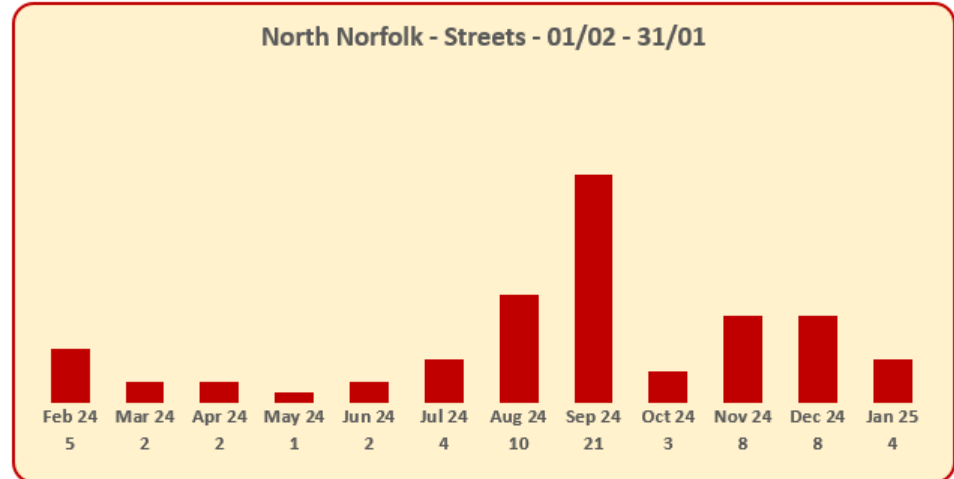
Missed Collections Recycling:

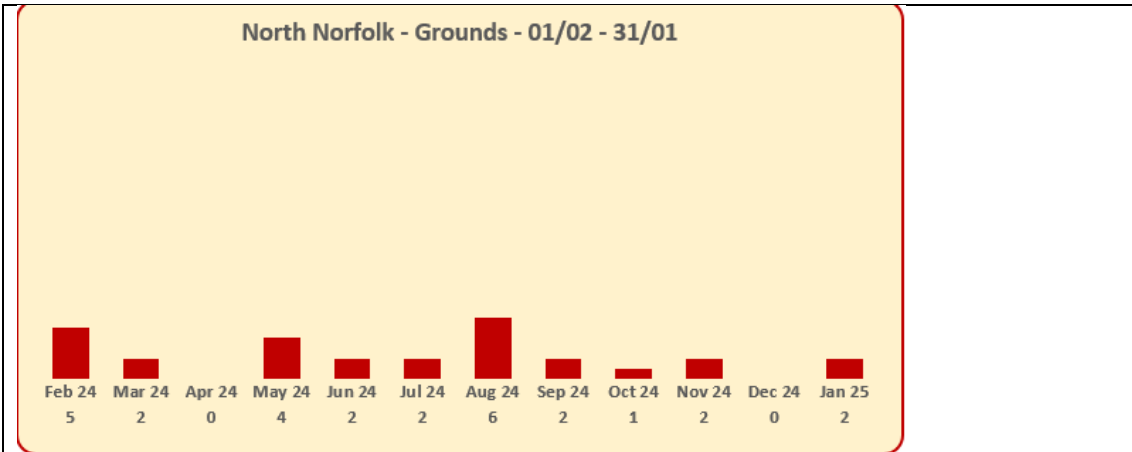


Missed Assisted Collections:



Complaints Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing





Work continues to ensure that businesses will be able to sign up for food waste collections from April 2025. In line with the government changes to business waste legislation.

Bin calendars for 2025/26 – are ready to be printed and will be distributed towards the end of March in time for changes over easter

The Corporate Health and Safety Officer managed an inspection by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The Inspection focused on NNDCs management of Asbestos in various assets. The HSE made recommendations and actions which are now being completed by various departments across the organisation, including assets and property services.

Civil Contingencies

The benign weather continued throughout February, this meant that there has been no need to close floodgates over this period.

Some internal coordination was required around Avian Flu - testing of seabirds and seals at Blakeney Point by the Animal Plant Health Agency
 A Site meeting was held to progress the rest centre plan for the Stalham Poppy Centre.

The Bacton Gas Terminal Community Liaison Group met and was attended. NNDC are part of a pilot project of the Community Resilience Maturity Index tool, 17 groups in 15 locations have signed up. Half of these do not currently have a community resilience plan, or a flood plan so will be supported to produce them.

Local pandemic exercise will be held by the NRF in April, prior to the national exercise in the autumn (three separate weeks in Sep, Oct and Nov)

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Food Waste collection for some trade waste customers will commence.

3 Meetings attended
Regular meetings with officers related to portfolio matters Norfolk Waste Partnership Joint Waste Contract review and development board

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

6 March 2025

**COUNCILLOR C RINGER - CABINET MEMBER FOR IT,
ENVIRONMENT & WASTE SERVICES**

For the period February 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Main focus of work was year-end uprating. Despite issues caused by software supplier this was completed successfully with minimal user downtime. Required benefits letters and council tax/Business rates bills were dispatched.

Notification that M3 waste component is being desupported. Options for mitigation currently being considered. Reached out to Serco to understand possible option of using their Whitespace.

EH Assure LIVE system migrated to new server, software updated to current release levels (this was at quite a historic release level so was a significant upgrade) and new Document Management System also switched on in LIVE.

Critical legislative release update taken place on HR software.

New Civica Financials account manager, initial liaison undertaken to ensure recent progress isn't lost with transference of responsibility.

Audit of Revenues systems has been completed. Has identified need to undertake system DPIA, also that GDPR documents require review.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Property Services Concerto system procurement underway. Demoes of tendered bids scheduled for later in the month.

Twice-yearly checks required following weekend clock changes later in the month. Preventative measure as left unchecked this has historically caused issues.

Audit of Finance systems underway.

Work to migrate land registry data to national database still ongoing. Next

extract scheduled 2nd June. Request from service to provide further data checking/validation.

Further Revs/Bens systems activity required to rollover financial years on the evening/morning 31st March/1st April. Team will work through the night to minimise impact on end users.

EH Trade Waste data matching completed at request of service, very manual process that required intense data validation as Eh data drawn from multiple sources that lacked shared primary reference.

Finance Assets module currently being configured with planned go-live later this month (delayed from last month)

Upgrade of Planning core software to current release levels. Currently in TEST, in LIVE shortly. To be followed by upgrade of Land charges and Document management System. (To be undertaken by supplier but supported locally).

3 Meetings attended

EH/ICT ongoing review meeting 12/02, 26/02
Revs/Bens Year-end meeting 04/02, 12/02, 13/02
Planning/ICT ongoing review meeting 06/02
HR Procurement meeting 20/02
Finance/ICT ongoing review meeting 13/02, 27/02
Civica Finance [new] Account manager intro meeting 26/02

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

March 2025

COUNCILLOR SHIRES - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, ASSETS AND PROPERTY SERVICES

For the period February 2025 to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

Budget Monitoring

- The period 10 (Jan 25) Budget monitoring report has been prepared for cabinet. This anticipates a much improved position to that forecast reported at period 6 (Sept 24). In Sept it was forecast that there would be a £0.995m deficit and this has now moved to a small surplus (£0.048m) forecast at Jan 25. This favourable swing is largely down to improved income as well as significant savings in employee and supplies and services budgets. There is still expected to be shortfalls in Housing benefit subsidy and interest receivable from investments.

Budget 2025/26

- Balanced Base Budget for 2025-26 was presented to Full Council in February. This has been uploaded on to the Councils finance system ready for monitoring in April.

Recruitment

- Interviews took place for the Chief Technical accountant post, the successful candidate is due to start at the end of March.
- The recruitment process for the accountancy assistant post has just started. Successful candidates will be invited to interview in late March.

Accounts

- All outstanding Statements of Accounts have now been signed off by the Auditors. This means that we are now up to date and can proceed with normal time scales for 2024/25. The timescale for a draft statement of accounts for 2024/25 is to be published by 30th June 2025. This is still a month later than pre Covid deadlines.

Audits

- Audit planning has started for 2024/25, interim evidence has been requested from EY.
- Two internal audits are nearing completion, Key Controls and Finance Application.

Revenues

Collection for 2024/25 as of 28 February 2025.

- The Council Tax collection was 94.27% against the 28 February 2025 target of 94.25%. This equates to an excess of £18.5k. We have collected over £90.3m to date.
- The NDR collection was 95.72% against the 28 February 2025 target of 95.00%. This equates to an excess of £189.5k. We have collected over £25.4m to date.
- For context, at the end of February last year, we had achieved 94.37 for council tax and 95.53 for NDR, so we are finding things more difficult with council tax collection.
- Revenues continue to work well with legal on several cases that are progressing through the courts to increase revenue for NNDC.

Estates

Vacant property

- Cornish way letting – There is interest from existing tenant to relocate to a vacant unit, a further unit is has received offers following marketing, which officers are reviewing.
- The Cedars Barns continue to be advertised. Vacant Annex has some interest from an existing tenant.
- North Lodge Park hard standing consultation closed 14th February.
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices are being advertised
- North Norfolk Visitor Centre – Advertising of the property for lease has started with viewings being undertaken.

Leases

- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House are subject to governance approvals. Repair of the building is progressing with café having completed.
- Short term agreement for car parking at Gold Park continues to progress and is expected to be in place for April 2025.
- Fakenham industrial unit lease renewal with solicitors is nearing completion with an increase in rent.
- Solicitors continue to progress with the lease renewal to North Walsham Football Club in consultation with the funding body.
- Meeting with the Marrams Bowls Club during January 2025 and draft Heads of Terms have been sent. Lease renewal is progressing at Suffield Park.
- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way with rental increases continue.
- Donkey shelter – Building redevelopment by community organisation being considered.
- Cromer Council office first floor lease short term lease being progressed and longer-term lease for a smaller reconfigured area and viability is being considered. This is expected to create additional space with initial discussions with potential public sector tenants.
- Lease negotiations to facilitate the FLASH project are progressing and the land has been registered.
- The beach hut and chalet new lettings is underway and notice of rent increase has been issued and will take effect from 1st April 2025

Disposal

- Enabling land at Sheringham. The option agreement is to be further extended for a period of 6 months to enable the purchaser time to apply for planning consent for an amended scheme, alongside this advertising of the site for sale, will also commence. Legal transaction in progress and meeting held. Quotes for remarketing obtained.
- Sale of Station Approach putting greens to the Town Council in Sheringham is to be put on hold to enable a whole review of the asset portfolio due to LGR.
- Disposal of Highfield Road car park, Fakenham to local housing association continues to progress.
- Mundesley a disposal of amenity land to Parish Council continues to progress.

Acquisition

- Supporting Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring 1 area of land in Happisburgh as a replacement car park and 2 further residential properties. 2 purchases have been completed.
- Supporting Housing with purchase of additional properties. Offers have been made and 2 purchases are under offer and Eastlaw instructed.

Property Services

Play Area

- The play area at the Leas Sheringham, the design has been approved and has been delivered ready for installation. Commencement of works is the 24th March.

The Marrams

- Works to reposition the lighting columns and footpath at the Marrams footpath Cromer has seen the 1st phase successfully completed and reopened to the public. These works are now complete.
- 2nd phase of works post capital award is now being reviewed.
- Asbestos removal works have been undertaken at the Marrams Bowls club.
- Roofing works required to the Marrams bowls club.

The Pier

- Working with Leisure Services and Openwide on the Pier backstage refurbishment
- Works are now underway with handover back to Openwide Ltd on the 20th March.

Holt Country Park

- Collaborative working with Countryside on a bid submission for funding for an educational unit at Holt Country Park. Bid submission has been successful so now scoping the works.
- After successful capital submission works at HCP will now include refurbishment of existing public convenience, installation of new foul drainage system, increase of car park spaces, construction of ECO

classroom (grant funded)

Cabbell Park

- Collaborative working with Countryside to scope works for new clubhouse at Cabbell Park football ground.
- Consultants have now been appointed.

Rocket House

- Rocket House restaurant works are complete.
- Rocket House ground floor public conveniences and lift foyer area refurbishment works are to be fast tracked outside of the museum works.
- This will allow the public conveniences to be back on track before the start of the summer.
- RNLI and public conveniences (Rocket House) tender being worked up. A three-month damp monitoring and recording regime has been commissioned.
- Works to the Watch House Cromer are being scoped by an external consultant and a procurement exercise is underway for structural design to support the cliff.

The Reef

- Reef remedial works are being programmed.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

Accounts

- The Finance team are working on the detailed timetable and procedure notes to provide managers with support at the end of the financial year and closedown process.
- Completion of the Outturn position (P12 Budget monitoring as at March 2025)

Estates

Asset Management

- Asset valuation procurement
- Asset Management Plan and Community Asset Transfer update
- Asset Review in connection with Local Government Review.

Revenues

Second Homes Work

- North Norfolk District Council has voted to implement the premium charge from April 2025 and have now agreed a deal with Norfolk County Council as to how a proportion of the additional Council Tax receipts generated from the

premium in North Norfolk can be used to address the acute housing pressures which exist in the district – through investing in new social housing developments with Housing Association partners.

- There is additional work needed here to deal with the increase enquiries and to implement measures to reduce avoidance of the premium.

Training/Development

- We have a have a team leader nearing completion of her level 5 CMI management qualification and a Revenues Officer now starting the level 3 certificate in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV).

Service Improvements

- Online forms - reviewing and improving the most used customer paper forms is continuing. We are about to go live with a new Non-Domestic (Business) Rates direct debit form that replaces one by Capita. We are working on a Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Change of Address form.
- The Long-term empty property review forms as part of our Business Process Review of the current process has been completed and is now live with updated webpages.
- We have also completed the work on the online Second Homes form which has gone live linked to our webpages to help with the increase in annual billing enquiries challenging the new second homes premium charge.

OPEN Revenues Workflow Disk Space discussion

- Revenues and Benefit services in conjunction with IT and System Teams are reviewing the amount of disc space being used with a view to the size reducing. We are close to capacity and have agreed to implement processes to delete and archive old electronic accounts and documents stored that are no longer needed by the services.
- This work is important, and the Revenues data has been tested and implemented in our live system. It is hoped a rolling plan to undertake this exercise can start so we are in a much better place before annual billing starts each year when we need to create and save another year's worth of data.

Property Services

2025/26

- Capital works bids for 2025/2026 submitted. Outcome has been published.
- Budget saving proposals for 2025/2026 submitted. Outcome has been published.
-

Temporary Accommodation

- Working with EELGA on options for temporary housing solution.
- Membership of steering group to review EELGA options.

Procurement

- Consultant contract tender exercise is now complete and under evaluation
- Working up tender for car park repairs from current capital fund.
- Working up tender brief for new asset management system. Current contract expires June 2025 with no further extension allowed. Tender exercise is now complete and under evaluation.

3

Meetings attended

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

COUNCILLOR JOHN TOYE - CABINET MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

Funding and Programmes

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) programmes, delivered by the Council over the past three years and two years, respectively, will conclude in March 2025. All current UKSPF workstreams have already met or exceeded their output and outcome targets and live programmes will continue to provide support through until the end of Quarter 4.

Programme delivery was reported to the UKSPF and REPF Project Board on 23 January. Where projects have come in at lower costs, funding has been reallocated to enable additional outcomes and benefits to be delivered against the programme interventions. This has helped facilitate additional business engagement activity to be delivered in the final quarter (see Business Engagement).

The REPF Rural Business and Community Grants (~£1.4 million) is now fully committed with over thirty business and community projects supported. Written and video case studies are being produced and these will be available on the Council's business support website (Invest North Norfolk), including profiles for some of the businesses that have benefitted from the REPF grant. This content serves to promote the value of these investments, to inspire others and nurture interest in any future business support initiatives.

Following the announcement by MHCLG in December 2024 that a further allocation of ('transitional') UKSPF funding would be made to the Council (£405,000 for 2025/26), it was confirmed on 4th March that a further REPF allocation will also be made for 2025/26 (in effect, extending the scheme for another year in accordance with the methodology of the previous REPF scheme plan). The final REPF allocation amount has yet to be confirmed. Decisions about how this funding will be used, in accordance with the MHCLG guidelines, will need to be made hastily in order that this Capital fund is fully defrayed within the expected timeframe.

An example of one of the business case studies is given below.

Richardson's Leisure



Investing in People

GRANT RECEIVED

Future Skills Now, Audit and Training Grant

Future Skills Now is part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). It is supported by North Norfolk District Council and delivered in partnership with Norfolk County Council



Richardson's Leisure collaborated with North Norfolk District Council, taking advantage of the Future Skills Now audit and grant funding to support its ambitions. Recruitment and retention of staff is a key issue for many north Norfolk businesses and Richardson's Leisure is an exemplar case study of how this is being successfully delivered.

North Norfolk District Council, in partnership with the Future Skills Now programme, provided Richardson's Leisure with a comprehensive training and skills audit. The initiative helped the business identify areas for growth and deliver targeted training to upskill its team. Additionally, Richardson's Leisure supported personal development through courses such as Basic Carpentry and Joinery. This enabled general team members to explore their interest in carpentry and grow their skillset.

The project proved extremely valuable for the business, allowing it to develop the skills required to meet organisational goals and stay compliant with legal regulations. For example, the company introduced Sexual Harassment Training for Managers and Supervisors, Disability Awareness sessions and Mastering the Coach programs, all while reducing the financial burden typically associated with this type of training.

The training enabled the team to expand knowledge and create opportunities for personal development. This helped the business retain talented individuals, reduce the high costs of recruitment and foster a culture where team members feel supported and empowered to grow professionally and increase their earning potential.

"The most special thing about Norfolk is its people. We're a company that want to invest in our team members continually. The opportunities that North Norfolk District Council are providing us to grow as a business and grow in the community has been second to none."

Greg Munford, Chief Executive of Richardson's Leisure

Richardson's Leisure Ltd, The Staithe,
Staithe, Norfolk, NR12 9BX

richardsonsholidays.com



FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE
SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT
[WWW.NORTH-NORFOLK.GOV.UK/
RICHARDSONS-LEISURE](http://WWW.NORTH-NORFOLK.GOV.UK/RICHARDSONS-LEISURE)

Business Engagement Activities

Working closely with partners, the Communications team and the Web team, the Economic Growth team has formulated a new approach to business engagement. This includes a range of business engagement activities across the year, starting with the following events to be held in March:

Inspiring North Norfolk – 12th March – Woodland Holiday Park



This inaugural event is intended to shine a light on the remarkable achievements of local businesses, to celebrate their success and champion opportunities presented by local enterprise. This year local businesses will be recognised for their achievements across the following four categories:

- **Investing in Rural Diversification**
- **Investing in People**
- **Investing in Sustainability**
- **Investing in Innovation**

The event will provide a platform for businesses to share their inspirational stories, supported by professionally produced video case studies, more of which will be shared throughout the year by the Council.

North Norfolk Annual Business Forum – 25 March, Holkham Hall



Generously hosted by Holkham Hall, this NNDC event will provide the opportunity for businesses to meet and network with other local businesses and key support providers. Delegates will be able to find out about the latest support and grant funding opportunities from the Council and its partners. The Managing Director of the Holkham Estate will deliver an inspirational keynote speech, sharing his business insights, and discussing the challenges and the ambitions of the estate. Following on from the event held in February 2024, this is aimed at helping local businesses to develop greater cohesion, realise synergies and establish mutually beneficial ways of working; it will also help

the Council to better understand the challenges faced and the impacts of its activities on local businesses.

North Norfolk Cultural Partnership Workshop – 27th March – Sheringham Little Theatre



This is a sector-focussed workshop which will engage with the cultural and creative industries operating in North Norfolk. Bringing together creative individuals, businesses and organisations, this workshop will explore the value and contribution of this sector and discuss opportunities for greater collaboration. The event will be introduced by Cllr Liz Withington.

Business & Skills Activities – General

- As part of the emerging business engagement approaches, the Council's Invest North Norfolk website is being refreshed and improved. Particular thanks to the Web and Communications team for their support with this activity.
- In collaboration with DWP colleagues, NNDC is intending to work with Sainsbury's to support its recruitment and induction process, in advance of the establishment of the first 60 FTE jobs at the proposed new store on Holt Road, Cromer.
- Hosted by NNDC, an 'Apprenticeships Employer Network' event is scheduled for 14 May (4pm-6pm). This event, with the agenda to be announced shortly, will provide the opportunity for businesses to learn more about the support available to help take on an apprentice. Please direct interested businesses to economic.development@north-norfolk.gov.uk for early registration to this event.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

The Council's business engagement events are outlined above. In addition to those, at the time of writing, the following local events are planned to take place.

Women Talk Business (Fakenham) Friday 7 March 2025 from 10.30am to midday

Location

Venue: Fakenham Library, Oak Street, Fakenham, NR21 9DY

Organised by Business and IP Centre Norfolk

[Find out more](#)

Video marketing session three: Launching your campaigns

Thursday 13 March 2025 from 9.15am to 12.45pm

Location

Venue: Merchants Place, 16 Church Street, Cromer, NR27 9ES

Organised by New Anglia Growth Hub

[Find out more](#)

Women Talk Business (Cromer)

Friday 21 March 2025 from 10.3am to midday

Location

Venue: Cromer Library, Prince of Wales Road, Cromer, NR27 9HS

Organised by Business and IP Centre Norfolk

[Find out more](#)

3 Meetings attended

Had a Holiday so just the 2 to mention plus council meetings

Norfolk Economic Strategy Launch at The House of Lords

Police and Crime Panel Meetings

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

COUNCILLOR ADAM VARLEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE & NET ZERO

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Review of Environmental Charter & Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan

Several workshops have been held with staff and members to shape the revision of the Environmental Charter and Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan (NZSAP document).

The two net zero targets still remain – the Council’s 2030 target for its buildings & operations and for the wider North Norfolk district (community emissions) by 2045. The direction and actions to get there need to be assessed and revised in light of the changing context since the Strategy was adopted. Once drafted, the revised documents will be presented to CLT and members through the committee cycle.

Community Energy

Members of the Climate Team attended a Norfolk Climate Change Partnership workshop, funded by Innovate UK and facilitated by the Carbon Trust. Community energy is about reducing, managing & generating energy in ways that provide community benefit. It has the potential to play an important part in UK’s energy security and zero emission plans. Norfolk does not have many examples of community energy and funding is now available to help communities that are interested.

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/helping-your-community>
[Community Energy Fund - Greater South East Net Zero Hub](#)

Climate Emergency Staff Forum

The recently established Climate Emergency Staff Forum is meeting regularly. With representatives from across the Council, the group has concentrated so far on sharing examples of good practice between teams and identifying ways of embedding behaviour change in the office and day-to-day activities. The group has ambitions to take on some bolder initiatives in conjunction with the Decarbonisation Board.

Climate Impact Assessment Tools

The Climate team have devised a series of tools to assist in the assessment of climate-related impacts of decisions (to help complete the 'net zero impacts' section of committee reports). This will help in meeting the annual action plan objective to "ensure the climate impact of all decisions are fully accounted for." The tools, which come with guidance on the intranet, help staff consider and present the implications of their recommendations on the net zero targets.

Carbon Literacy

The Council was recently awarded Bronze Accreditation in recognition of the standard and number of people at the Council who have received climate literacy training.

Carbon Literacy and Carbon Awareness training continues to be available to all staff and members with ongoing availability to make sure all new starters are aware of the Council's aims and targets. If you have recently completed your training, please remember to complete your pledges in order to receive your qualification.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Collaboration with UEA

The Council has recently "commissioned" five UEA final year BSc students to carry out research on carbon credits and offsetting. The topics to be researched include the carbon value of our current assets, offsetting opportunities in Norfolk and current best practice amongst other local authorities.

3 Meetings attended

Cabinet
Business planning
Net zero strategy workshop
NZSAP team meeting
Transport webinar
Sustainability business briefing

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

**COUNCILLOR L WITHINGTON - CABINET MEMBER FOR
COMMUNITY OUTREACH (CUSTOMER SERVICES)**

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

The Customer Services and Digital Mailroom teams have had a busy and productive start to the year, managing a high volume of enquiries as we process new Council Tax billing, Benefit notification letters, and continue Garden Bin subscription renewals. Our advisors have worked tirelessly to support residents, ensuring queries are handled quickly and efficiently during this peak period.

Customer contact volumes into Customer Services for February were as follows:

- 3,577 calls answered
- 542 face-to-face customers assisted
- 380 emails received
- 512 online customer contact us forms (334 escalated from the chat bot)
- 757 uses of the Chat Bot with a resolution rate of 54.69%.
- 9 web chats handled
- 1,383 letters received and processed by the Digital Mailroom.

Average call wait times were 3 minutes and 5 seconds, a significant improvement and much lower than expected for this time of year. This reflects the team's dedication and the continued success of digital self-service options in managing demand efficiently.

We received a response rate of 16.2% for our customer satisfaction survey in regards to customer services resolved enquiries. Customer satisfaction survey results for February showed positive feedback:

- 88.30% were satisfied with their ability to contact the Council.
- 93.80% were satisfied with the helpfulness of the advisor.
- 91.90% were satisfied with the advice provided.
- 88.70% were satisfied with the overall experience.

A new online contact form for Revenues Services has also gone live, aiming

to improve efficiency and encourage self-service. The form requires full customer details, including a Council Tax or Business Rates reference number, which allows for automation in processing enquiries. This eliminates manual data entry by the Digital Mailroom and reduces back-and-forth communication with customers. With approximately 1,500 email enquiries received monthly, shifting these to the online form will save significant staff time and improve response times.

To drive uptake, links to the new form, including a QR code, will be included in upcoming Council Tax bills. Email contacts have now been removed from billing communications to encourage self-service and enhance automation benefits.

Further consideration is being given to expanding the potential of the new contact form to other departments, focusing on promoting self-service functionality and ensuring all necessary data is captured efficiently when an enquiry needs to be escalated.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

We're looking to build on our strong start to the year with continued development of our C3 contact centre. Testing for the new Workflow system and PCI-compliant payment platform is expected to begin soon, helping to streamline processes, reduce handling times, and enhance security for residents making payments.

A key priority moving forward is to continue to actively promote and educate customers on the availability of self-service options wherever possible. By increasing awareness and accessibility, we aim to drive a channel shift, reducing reliance on traditional contact methods such as phone calls, emails, and face-to-face interactions. This will allow resources to be redirected towards more complex enquiries while improving efficiency and response times. Initiatives such as enhanced website signposting, chatbot integration, and proactive communication will play a critical role in encouraging residents to embrace self-service options. In the month of February, 2,697 transactions completed via online forms (e.g., applying/reporting/paying), equating to 29.64% of customer contact completed via self-service means.

The transition into the new financial year will bring additional demand on services, but the team is well-prepared to meet customer needs efficiently. We anticipate increased customer contact as we support residents with council tax, benefits, and other annual billing matters, ensuring timely responses and clear communication.

With a strong performance in February, Customer Services remains committed to delivering a responsive, high-quality service while embracing innovations that improve the resident experience and operational efficiency.

3 Meetings attended
Portfolio holder meetings Passive listening with AI

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CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

February 2025

COUNCILLOR LIZ WITHINGTON - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND OUTREACH SERVICES

For the period up to 28th February 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Community Connectors Portfolio Holder report: activity and achievements in February 2025



PositiviTea:

Thursday 27th February, Adults with additional needs and disabilities PositiviTea, Fakenham library

Outcomes

On this occasion we were joined by 5 organisations who were attending for the first time.

Feedback from the attending library manager was that it was helpful to have the opportunity to speak to NIDAS. She stated that she was not previously aware of the range of services they offered and how she could signpost library members to them.

One visitor advised that she had come along specifically to speak to About With Friends. She commented on how being able to chat with them and speak to one of the service users made her less anxious about where her son could go after school and the available opportunities for him.

Carers from the Dereham Hub (Independence Matters) picked up information and contact details of attending organisations to arrange visits to the Hub, extending the service and support they offer.

It was expressed by one visitor that there is not enough like this locally, everything is Norwich based. "As a carer for my sister, I can't take her that far or travel that far myself, so this is ideal for me."

Why Adults with additional needs and disabilities?

The prevalence of learning disabilities in Norfolk is higher than England and the East of England.^[52]

'It is predicted that there are over 17,653 adults in Norfolk that have a learning disability, of which 12,714 are of working age. Of these it is predicted that there are around 2,892 adults that have a moderate to severe learning disability. Approximately 5,000 adults and children with learning disabilities who could require some form of support are known to Norfolk County Council's Social Services department'

([Microsoft Word - Adults with Learning Disabilities Briefing.docx](#))

Why Fakenham?

Organisations who joined us for our SEND PositiviTea in November 2024, fed back that they would like to attend a similar event specifically for adults with additional needs, and identified Fakenham and Cromer as potential towns to hold such an event

Fakenham library is a well-attended, accessible library in the centre of the town. It is close to First Focus, a charity offering support for the community, where many of its members are adults with additional needs.

Thursday is market day in Fakenham, therefore the day when the town is at its busiest, with people travelling in on public transport as well as community transport.

<https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/communityconnectors> has upcoming PositiviTea dates.

Falls & Frailty:

Data from the NNUH continues to be received on a weekly basis.

In January, there were 45 referrals for North Norfolk residents of whom 8 went on to decline the service. Officers have made 62 calls.

749 calls have been made to residents to date, plus 11 home visits.

Referrals made for aids & adaptations (5), Active Now (6), Financial Inclusion (1).

Information provided for benefits (7), Blue Badge (2), community group (2), Carer support (1), Energy and Heating Support (3), Good Neighbour Scheme (1), other action (6), safety advice (14) and transport advice (3). Signposted back to GP (1).

This support empowers residents to:

- stay safer in their homes for longer
- maintain and improve activity levels
- connect with others
- maximize their income
- improve their wellbeing

High Intensity Users:

Community Groups Attended: 24

Signposting to Adult Social Services (2), Attendance Allowance (13), Blue Badge (3), Therapeutic listening (27), Carers support (4), Community Supermarket (1), GP surgery/hospital (4), HIU friendly groups (6), Citizen's Advice Bureau (1), employment support (7), Tech Skills for Life (5), Vision/hearing support (2), Community fridge/larder (4), grief support (1),

community groups (4), community police (1), dementia support (3), weight loss programme (2), Pension Credit (2), menopause support (1), foodbank (1), transport (2), housing team (2)

Referrals made to Cromer Cares (3), Housing Adaptations team (2), Financial Inclusion (10), Everyone Active (2), Active Now (1)

46 referrals received: 17 direct phone call / email, 5 external organisations, 5 out in the community, 1 PositiviTea, 6 Social Prescribing, 7 via a group and 5 Workbench.

Communal Room visits: 2

In the year to date we have supported 124 residents with Attendance Allowance applications.

This has resulted in a combined annual income uplift of over £425,000 for residents.

Age Friendly Communities:

We have been encouraging the community in and around Stalham to provide their feedback to our survey, which will be fed back to the relevant organisations and services, and to the Town Council.

A handover agreement has been arranged for Age Friendly Sheringham with Healthier Sheringham taking the scheme forward.

North Norfolk Health & Wellbeing Partnership:

Upcoming meetings:

Wednesday 5 March, 2pm-4pm in the Council Chamber

Poppyland Radio:

Four shows recorded on:

<https://www.poppylandradio.co.uk/shows/community-connectors>

- the State of the Voluntary & Community Sector in West and North Norfolk Survey
- Your Health Norfolk
- Green Futures: Youth Project
- Pace of Mind

3 Meetings attended

Benjamin court
Portfolio holder Meeting
Dementia Support Group
Eastern England LGA Health and Well being reference Group
Health and Wellbeing Board
Integrated Care Partnership
North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing partnership

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 March 2025

COUNCILLOR WITHINGTON - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY, LEISURE AND OUTREACH.

For the period February to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Leisure Contract

Everyone Active returned strong participation figures across the 5 leisure facilities in January, attracting 45483 visits. This is an increase compared to 2024.

Funding has been secured from the Football Foundation to upgrade the current artificial grass pitch at Cromer Sports Centre to the districts first 3G pitch. The Football Foundation will contribute 65% towards the total project cost with the Council providing 35%. It is planned that this project will commence imminently.

Countryside

Green Flag applications for the Council's three sites were completed and submitted at the end of January. This year Holt CP will receive a mystery shop, whilst both Pretty Corner Woods and Sadlers Wood will be judged.

In February the rangers worked through the last of the planned tree works across all sites to ensure that this was completed before the start of bird nesting season.

The first of this year's family events have been planned and advertised for Easter, with Easter Egg Hunts taking place at Sadlers Wood and Holt Country Park

Beaches/RNLI

RNLI Lifeguards are now in the final planning stages for this season and prepping new lifeguard courses to aid recruitment for this summer. All is on track for the planned start date later in the year.

Markets

Much of the team's work in the last month has been spent getting ready for the new 'season' to commence in April. This is when our Wednesday market return in Sheringham and we see more traders return, which has meant an increase in the necessary administration.

Physical Activity Development

Big Norfolk Holiday Fun returns at Easter with 10 locations confirmed in North Norfolk for eligible children to access. The team are continuing to consider a long-term plan for this type of offer should this be the final year of the central government funding.

Conversations are ongoing for a second Hire Hub in the district following the success we have seen at Bacton. The Localities Officer has supported Mundesley Infant & Juniors and Pebbles nursery, to submit an application to Sport England's Movement fund to set this second site up. These hubs make sports equipment available to hire for free by local families, enabling them to stay active out of school hours.

The team have supported Norfolk County Council's the Early Help Community Worker for the North area to submit an application to Sport England Movement fund to try and secure funding for their North Sea Swell project. This was submitted 17th Feb with Sport England saying they have a 3–6-week decision time. The project is aimed to support children with poor mental health or linked to anti-social behaviour and offers them surf therapy sessions as support. It would be offered through six high schools in NN.

Planning is well underway now for this year's Triathlons, with Victory open for entries. We have reached 26 entrants already without too much promotion, so we are hopeful for another successful event in June.

Pier Pavilion Theatre

This is the quietest time of year for the theatre, and this is particularly so this year with the backstage refurbishment taking place. These works are all on track to be completed on time, with an opening ceremony set for March 25th and the first show on March 27th.

The team at the pier are also organising an 'Open Day' on the 26th for regular hirers of the theatre and concert agents to come and view the new and updated facilities on site.

3 Meetings attended

Introduction to risk management
Flash Steering Group
Pretty Corner Community Meeting

BUDGET MONITORING P10 2024/25	
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides an update on the Council's financial performance and projected full year outturn position for 2024/25 for the revenue account, capital programme and reserves statement as at the end of January 2025.</p> <p>As at 31 January 2025, the General Fund projected surplus is £0.048m for the full year 2024/25. This is after adjusting for all known variations and full year forecasting by service managers.</p>
Options considered	This is an update report on the Council's financial position and so no other options were considered.
Consultation(s)	Cabinet Member Section 151 officer Budget Managers
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of the report and the current forecast year end position. 2. Continue the work to minimise the risk of a General Fund revenue deficit for 2024/25. 3. Seek approval from full Council to make all the changes to the Capital Programme as laid out in paragraph 5.5 of the report.
Reasons for recommendations	To update members on the current budget monitoring position for the Council.
Background papers	
Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Lucy Shires
Contact Officer	Tina Stankley, Tina.stankley@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Budgets set to support the Corporate Plan objectives.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Budget process in line with MTFS
Council Policies & Strategies	Service Budgets set in line with the council policies and strategies.

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	Not an exempt item

1. Introduction and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme forecast full year out turn position against the budget for 2024/25 as at 31 January 2025.

2. Revenue

- 2.1 The Council has an approved General Fund revised revenue budget of £20.266 million (Including Parish Precepts and funding from reserves). This report provides a forecast of spending and income against budget for 2024/25.
- 2.2 The overall revenue budget forecast performance for the year as at 31 January 2025 is £20.363 m against the budget of £20.266m which is a projected Overspend of £0.096m on Net Operating Expenditure as shown in Table 1
- 2.3 The Base Budget which was approved by Full Council on 21 February 2024 has been updated to reflect approved budget movements and changes in the reporting structure where Customer Services has moved from the Resources Directorate to Corporate Leadership and Executive Support.
- 2.4 The Period 6 monitoring report forecast a full year overspend of £0.995m. This Period 10 monitoring report is forecasting a full year a small underspend of £0.048m. This is a significant change in the year end position which is explained in the main body of the report.
- 2.5 In summary the swing is due to a large underspend of over £0.7m on employee costs, some further significant savings on supplies and services, improvements in income levels for both services and investment. Whilst the expenditure forecasts are quite certain and will result in an underspend, the overall forecast underspend is also dependent on some income levels being maintained for the last two months of the year. There is less certainty here. Where there are predicted savings related to expenditure items that are being funded from Reserves, the reserve position has been updated to reflect this.
- 2.6 It should be noted that officers have worked very hard to bring the financial position back round. Many teams have held vacancies to generate the employee savings, and this puts pressure on the existing workforce and service delivery. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets and the Director of Resources would like to acknowledge this and thank all the staff for their hard work.

2.7 Table 1: General Fund Summary

General Fund Summary Period 10 2024/25

Service Area	2024/25 Base Budget £000	2024/25 Revised Budget £000	2024/25 Full Year Forecast Period 10 £000	Period 10 Variance £000
Corporate Leadership/ Executive Support	576	528	287	(240)
Communities	11,530	11,387	11,221	(167)
Place and Climate Change	7,121	7,130	6,349	(781)
Resources	4,538	4,628	5,083	455
Savings to be Identified	(250)	0	0	0
Net Cost of Services	23,516	23,673	22,939	(734)
Parish Precepts	3,129	3,129	3,129	0
Capital Charges	(2,962)	(2,962)	(2,962)	0
REFCUS	(762)	(762)	(762)	0
Interest Receivable	(1,865)	(1,865)	(1,455)	410
External Interest Paid	40	340	340	0
Revenue Financing for Capital:	210	2,448	2,448	0
Minimum Revenue Provision	488	488	507	19
IAS 19 Pension Adjustment	268	268	268	0
Net Operating Expenditure	22,062	24,757	24,453	(304)
Funded By				
Parish Precepts	(3,129)	(3,129)	(3,129)	0
Council Tax	(7,069)	(7,069)	(7,069)	0
Collection Fund Surplus	(108)	(108)	(108)	0
Retained Business Rates	(7,683)	(7,683)	(7,828)	(145)
New Homes bonus	(6)	(6)	(6)	0
Revenue Support Grant	(309)	(309)	(309)	0
3% Funding Guarantee	(1,231)	(1,231)	(1,231)	0
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(657)	(657)	(657)	0
Ctax Discount Grant	(52)	(52)	(52)	0
Services Grant	(23)	(23)	(23)	0
Income from Government Grant and Taxpayers	(20,266)	(20,266)	(20,411)	(145)
(Surplus)/Deficit	1,796	4,491	4,042	(449)
Contribution To/(From) Reserves	(1,796)	(4,491)	(4,090)	401
(Surplus)/Deficit Position	0	0	(48)	(48)

Forecast variance explanations

- 2.8 The net cost of services full year forecast position is a net Underspend of £0.734m. This is the net figure after adjusting for savings in staffing and professional fees, some of which were to be funded from reserves. Where these savings have occurred there has also been an equal adjustment made to the use of reserves so that we are now forecasting a use of reserves of £4.090m rather than the budgeted £4.491 i.e. a saving of £0.401m in the use of earmarked reserves. This is discussed in more detail in Section 6 below and at Appendix D.
- 2.9 The net cost of services underspend is offset in part by a shortfall in investment income and a revised MRP calculation. However the investment position has improved slightly with the shortfall reducing from £0.445m at Period 6 to £0.410m in Period 10. The forecast variance for investment income is explained in detail in Section 4 below.
- 2.10 The Council has received some windfall income i.e. £0.145m from the County Council which was from the Norfolk business rates pool prior years' surplus. This was not budgeted for and has been used to reduce the overall General Fund deficit.
- 2.11 The significant variances between the revised full year budget and the full year forecast are highlighted in paragraphs 2.12 to 2.15 below.
- 2.12 **Corporate Leadership/Executive Support** - £0.241m Underspend. The main reasons are outlined below: -
- i. An underspend of £0.147 in Employee Costs related to reductions in contracted hours and having vacant posts where there has been staff turnover.
 - ii. Savings of £0.076m in supplies and services including printing and publication expenditure.
- 2.13 **Communities** - £0.166m underspend.
- i. An Underspend of £0.120m in Employee Costs related to having vacant posts.
 - ii. An Overspend in premises related expenditure of £0.018m relates to drainage levy costs, which is unavoidable.
 - iii. Reduced supplies and services costs in relation to commercial waste disposal are forecast to deliver a saving of £0.130m.
 - iv. Income for garden bins is expected to fall short of target by £0.080m, this is partially offset by income for bulky waste collection which has exceeded the budget expectation by £0.010m.
- 2.14 **Place and Climate Change** - £0.781m underspend due to the following: -
- i. An underspend of £0.444m in Employee Costs Employee Costs, £0.140m of which was being funded from reserves.
 - Reduction in contracted hours and being unable to recruit to 2 vacant fixed term posts in Environmental Strategy giving a saving of £0.060m.

- There are several vacant posts in Development Management some of which are reserve funded giving a saving of £0.132m,
 - Vacant posts in Conservation, Design & Landscape giving a saving of £0.095m, which would have been funded from reserves.
 - Reduced contracted hours and savings for vacant post in Planning Policy giving a saving of £0.044m.
- ii. There is an underspend of £0.319m in Supplies and Services due to
- Local Plan work originally expected to be completed in 2024/25 but will now be done in 2025/26 has resulted in £0.086m less expenditure on Professional fees. The expenditure would have been funded from earmarked reserves.
 - Slippage in climate projects of £0.070m within Environmental Sustainability which would have been funded from reserves.
 - Cost provision made in 2024/25 for 2023/24 related expenditure was £0.033m more than the actual expenditure, thus generating a saving.
 - There being less revenue spending on coastal protection projects of £0.047m than expected because of delayed capital schemes.
 - £0.020m contribution towards coastal manager post not incurred due to there being a vacancy.
- iii. There is a favourable income variance of £0.059m
- It was reported as part of the period 6 budget monitoring that Planning and Building Control fee income was predicted to be below budget by £0.160m. This position has been reviewed and updated following an upturn in income being received. Budget managers now forecast that the full fee income budget will be delivered at outturn.
 - Improvements to the pre-application service in Development management is set to deliver increased income of £0.017m.
 - Land Charge fees increased £0.040m in relation to wind turbines, however this is offset by a reduction of £0.017m in discretionary search fees.

2.15 Resources - £0.455m overspend due to: -

- i. A forecast Underspend of £0.158m for Employee Costs
- Finance vacant posts have resulted in a saving of £0.055m, this has been offset by agency costs.
 - ICT vacant posts and reduced contract hours will generate full year savings of £0.067m.
 - Estates vacant posts will deliver an Underspend of £0.043m.
- ii. A forecast Underspend of £0.031m on premises costs that is made up of the following.
- £0.061m reduction in Repairs and Maintenance spend, including Public Conveniences and the Rocket House.
 - £0.023m overspend on Public Conveniences costs due to hiring the temporary toilet block facility in Weybourne.

- There is an overspend on water and electricity costs of £0.061m.
 - There is a reduction in Business Rates of £0.023m.
 - Insurance Premiums are £0.027m less than was budgeted for.
- iii. There is a forecast Underspend £0.102m on Supplies and Services made up of
- Overspend of £0.020m on the car park management contract due to increased employee costs.
 - £0.034m net Underspend on Computer maintenance, software and consumables.
 - Underspend on Audit fees £0.187m because full audits have not been carried out on the 21/22, 22/23 and 23/24 accounts, plus an underspend of £0.018m Internal Audit fees.
 - £0.194m is forecast to be spent on Agency and Locum staff to cover vacant posts e.g. the Assistant Director in Finance and Chief Technical Accountant. However this will have been partly offset by savings (£0.158m) in Employee costs for the vacant posts. So the net overspend will effectively be £0.036m.
- iv. **Income** - £0.715m shortfall.
- Based on the 2024/25 initial Housing Benefit subsidy claim submitted to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) the forecast shortfall in non-HRA subsidy is £0.725m for the year. This relates to the subsidy the Council can claim to cover the cost of temporary accommodation.
 - Whilst the work at the Rocket House takes place and the RNLI move out for the duration of this work the Council will not receive any contribution for service charges from the RNLI. This is forecast to be a £0.042m loss in income over the year.
 - Due to void periods at one of the industrial units in North Walsham a full year income shortfall of £0.025m is forecast.
 - Additional income £0.026m from Legal professional fees.
 - Additional income of £0.133m is anticipated from car parking income.

3. Performance against savings targets

- 3.1 To set a balanced budget for 2024/25 £0.975m of savings were identified and approved by Members in February 2024. Service Managers and Assistant Directors have provided an update on the progress being made in achieving these savings. Table 2 below summarises the forecast achievement of these savings at the year-end. A more detailed breakdown can be found in appendix A.

3.2 Table 2: Performance against £0.975m Savings Target

Directorate	Assistant Director	Base Budget	Period 10 -	Variance
		Savings	full year	
		£'000s	forecast	£'000s
Corporate	Corporate	49	49	0
Communities	Environment & Leisure	148	78	(70)
	People	235	235	0
Place & Climate Change	Sustainable Growth	43	43	0
	Planning	182	180	(2)
Resources	Legal and Governance	85	82	(3)
	Finance, Assets & Revenues	234	207	(27)
Total		976	874	(102)

3.3 The savings forecast at Period 10 is still largely positive with the forecast that 90% of the savings will be achieved by the end of the year. In-year vacancies and difficulties in recruitment into the Environmental Services team have meant it has not been possible to undertake the planned garden bin promotions work and the additional budgeted income of £0.050m will not be achieved. Again due to resourcing issues it hasn't been possible to deliver some planned external training courses which means that the anticipated additional income of £0.020m (included in the £975k savings target) won't be achieved. The extension to the Meadow car park in Cromer scheme has not taken place, so the additional car park income of £79k identified as a saving won't be generated. However the current car park income levels indicate that there will be a surplus of actual income of £130k over budget for the year. The proposal to generate additional income of £20k from advertising and concessions in areas such as the Pier and Car Parks has not progressed as planned, again due to a lack of capacity.

3.4 In addition to the identified savings of £0.975m included in the balanced budget a further £0.250m of savings 'to be identified' was also. £0.256m of service savings were identified by managers up to period 6, the revised budget has now been updated to take account of these savings. All further savings have been identified as part of the forecasting exercise.

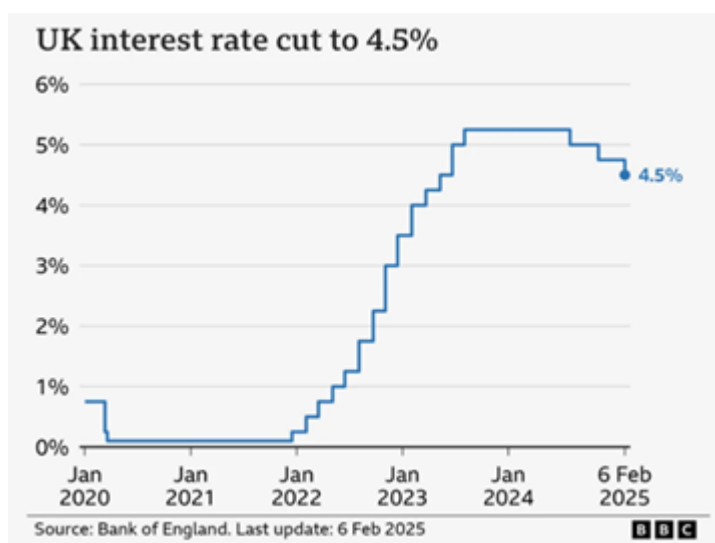
3.5 Table 3: Progress against £0.250m Unidentified Savings Target

	Base Budget	Pd 6 - savings	Transfer to
	Savings	identified	General Fund
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Savings to be identified	(250)		
Breakdown of savings achieved			
Corporate Directorate		(43)	
Environment & Leisure		(87)	
People		(56)	
Sustainable Growth		(5)	
Legal and Governance		(32)	
Finance, Assets & Revenues		(32)	
Total	(250)	(256)	(6)

4. Non-Service Income and Expenditure

Investment Interest

- 4.1. The 2024/25 investment interest budget is £1.866m. This budget was calculated based on the economic position in November 2023 (6% interest rates and average cash balance of £33.8m). Since then, the Monetary Policy Committee (of the Bank of England) has made a series of cuts to the interest rate with the latest one being on 6 February 2025 to the current 4.5%, (see chart below which shows the movement in interest rates since January 2020), as it was felt that the higher interest rates have achieved their purpose in bringing UK inflation back under control (with the December 2024 inflation sitting at 2.7%). However, this has had an adverse impact on the investment income the Council is achieving.



- 4.2. At period 10, the Council had earned £1.3m in investment interest, which is under budget by £250k. This variance is due to the average rate of 5.54% being lower than the 6% when the budget was set and the average level of investments of £28m being lower than the £33.8m assumed when the budget was set. The full year forecast calculation predicts a shortfall of £410k for the year which is a slight improvement on the Period 6 shortfall forecast of £445k. Investment income for the year is now expected to be £1.455m.
- 4.3. The lower level of cash balances, averaging £28m instead of the budgeted £33.8m is due to the delays in receiving grants from the Environment Agency (Cromer & Mundesley coastal schemes) and the Fakenham Leisure Centre and Sports Hub scheme (FLASH) being put on hold whilst the new government reviewed the funding commitments it inherited from the previous government. The Levelling-up grant we expected to receive for this scheme has not yet been received and therefore has been unavailable for investment.

Borrowing Interest

- 4.4. The Council has previously approved borrowing to fund some of its capital projects, most notably The Reef (c.£5m) and Refuse Freighters (c.£3m). Up until recently the Council has been able to 'internally borrow' for these projects, saving on borrowing costs, but at the expense of the investment income achieved. It is prudent to do this as borrowing interest rates are always higher than investments interest rates.

- 4.5. During 2023/24 there was an increased requirement to borrow short-term to meet cashflow shortfalls. This ongoing shortfall is an indicator that longer term borrowing is required to replenish cash balances. Therefore a 13 month £5m loan at an interest rate of 5.39% was taken from the PWLB in March 2024.
- 4.6. At its meeting on the 25th of September 2024, Full Council approved the use of the Treasury Management Reserve (£300k) to provide a budget for 2024/25 borrowing costs. There was an existing budget of £40k, so the total budget now stands at £340k. PWLB borrowing costs for the year will be £266k and short-term borrowing costs as at period 10 are £54k, meaning a total of £321k will be spent at year-end. This leaves £19k for any short-term borrowing requirements during February and March, which should cover the borrowing costs until the end of the year. This time of year is always a period of low levels of cash as we do not receive much council tax income at this time of the year as we collect the majority of the income over 10 months (April to January).
- 4.7. Currently the Council doesn't have any outstanding short-term borrowing commitments as at the end of period 10.

5. Capital

- 5.1. This section of the report presents the capital programme 2024/25 position as at the end of period 10, together with an updated capital programme for the financial years 2025/26 to 2029/30. Appendix C provides the details of the current position.
- 5.2. Total capital expenditure for 2024/25 as at period 10 was £22.321m compared to an updated full year capital budget of £39.740m, leaving £17.419m to be spent by the year end.
- 5.3. The level of underspend is not a cause for concern as the Council has several large on-going schemes that are being delivered and are being delivered over more than one year. The most notable delay is in the delivery of the FLASH scheme which was put on hold due to the government reviewing its inherited commitment to the Levelling Up Schemes. These large schemes are largely government funded,
- 5.4. There are some adjustments to be made to the capital programme, subject to approval by full Council. These changes have all been included in Appendix C to show what the programme will be assuming all the adjustments are approved.
- 5.5. **It is requested that Cabinet recommend that full Council approve the following**
 - 5.5.1. Increase the 2024/25 capital budget for the Mundesley Coastal Defence scheme from £6.206m to £7.637m, following the award of additional grant funding from the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and the Environment Agency to fund inflationary costs to the project over its lifetime. The Council is awaiting the outcome of a bid to the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee from NNDC for £0.750m to both replace the previous £0.250m contribution from Anglian Water that will not be forthcoming and seek additional funding to cover the projects costs towards reducing coastal erosion risk.
 - 5.5.2. Increase the 2024/25 capital budget for the Cromer Coastal Defence scheme from £10.106m to £10.250m. This is covered by additional grant from the Environment Agency to fund inflationary costs over the project's lifetime.

- 5.5.3. Increase the capital budget for the Disabled Facilities Grants in 2024/25 by £0.203m to a total of £2.079m. This will be funded by additional grant funding awarded to the Council in January 2025 by MHCLG.
- 5.5.4. Increase the capital budget for the Provision of Temporary Accommodation in 2024/25 by £280,000 to £578,307, and fund this from the Local Authority Housing Fund thus reducing the fund to zero. This aligns with the Council's decision to use the remaining Local Authority Housing Fund Grant to purchase a property to use for Temporary Accommodation.
- 5.5.5. Increase the UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital budget by £0.050m to £0.239m. This will be funded by a re-allocation of UKSPF revenue grant funding (which is not ring-fenced for revenue) to the capital budget.
- 5.5.6. Increase the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub capital budget by £60,000 in 2024/25, following the award of additional grant by MHCLG in January 2025 as a local growth capacity and support payment. This payment is being provided to mitigate any immediate delivery issues caused by the Government's delay in approving the Levelling-up Schemes.
- 5.5.7. Remove the Backup Network Upgrade capital budget totalling £14,000 as the IT Network Manager has confirmed the project has been completed.
- 5.5.8. Reduce the Coastwise capital budget in 2024/25 by £86,000 to a total of £14.610m to match the level of grant funding awarded by the Environment Agency for this scheme.

6. Reserves

- 6.1 The Council's current reserve position is shown at Appendix B. This position has been updated as part of preparing the forecast for 2024/25.
- 6.2 Where base budgets funded from reserves are underspent it has been anticipated that this saving will remain in the earmarked reserve and reallocated in the future. An adjustment of £401k has been made to earmarked reserves which offsets savings in the net cost of services. Where applicable this commitment has been moved to the 2025/26 financial year.
- 6.3 Savings of £256k have been identified against a target of £250k, the additional £6k has been allocated to the General Reserve to balance the budget.

7 Corporate Priorities

- 7.1 Corporate Plan objectives are supported by the Council's allocated budgets.

8 Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 This report is financial in nature and financial implications are included within the content of the report.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 None as a direct consequence of this report

10 Risks

- 10.1 The detail within section 2 of the report highlights the more significant variances including those that are estimated to result in a full year impact.
- 10.2 The estimated outturn will continue to be monitored during the year.

11 Net Zero Target

11.1 None as a direct consequence of this report

12 Equality and Diversity

12.1 None as a direct consequence of this report

13 Community Safety Issues

13.1 None as a direct consequence of this report

14 Conclusion and Recommendations

14.1 The revenue budget is showing an estimated full year underspend for the current financial year of £0.048m. The overall financial position continues to be closely monitored. The Council will continue to take steps to minimize expenditure and maximise income for the remainder of the year.

14.2 There are two recommendations for Cabinet to note the report and to continue its work to balance the budget.

14.3 There is a recommendation to seek approval from full Council for all the recommendations for changes to the capital programme as laid out in paragraph 5.5.

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Proposed Savings/Income 2024/25 to 2027/28

Assistant Directorate	Service Area	Savings Title	Brief Outline of Saving/Additional Income (where applicable)	Saving(S) /Income(I)	Permanent (P) /One off (O)	Budgeted 2024/25 Savings /Income		
SAVINGS BIDS SUBMITTED BY ASSISTANT DIRECTORS								

COMMUNITIES								
People Services	People Services - Housing Options	Temporary Accommodation additional Income	Increase in temporary accommodation rental income due to rent increases from 1 January 2024 and 1 April 2024.	I	P	70,000	70,000	Discuss with Jenny - will this still below the threshold ?
People Services	People Services - Early Help and Prevention	Sustainable Communities Fund	Cease payment of Grant	S	O	131,550	131,550	Savings met - £0 budget in 2024/25
People Services	People Services - Early Help and Prevention	Arts and Cultural Grant	Cease payment of Grant	S	P	33,260	33,260	Savings met - £0 budget in 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Environment and Safety Services	Savings from provision of street signs.	Fewer signs need replacing as more robust signs are now used resulting in a savings in expenditure.	S	P	2,000	2,000	Budget reduced for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Environment and Safety Services	Income from further promotion of garden bins.	Further active promotion of the garden waste collection service could generate additional income from 1,000 additional subscribers.	I	P	50,000	0	Insufficient resources within the team to promote for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Environment and Safety Services	Income from health and safety training.	Opportunity for NNDC to act as a training provider to 3rd parties and charge for this service. Expanding additional service to increase income.	I	P	20,000	0	Income budget created for 2024/25 ; however no income received to date due to lack of resources. H&S manager covering for ES Manager.
Environment and Leisure	Environment and Safety Services	Reduction in spend on recycling initiatives.	Budgets for the promotion of recycling initiatives both internally and in conjunction with the Norfolk Waste Partnership have not fully been spent in recent years and so a saving can be offered for both aspects.	S	P	10,000	10,000	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Leisure & Locality Services	Pier Pavilion Theatre changes to budget	Remove budget allocated to electricity at the Pier Pavilion Theatre as this is no longer required.	S	P	5,000	5,000	Budget taken out for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Leisure & Locality Services	Holt Country Park Car Parking	Increase the budget for car parking income to better reflect the actual income received which has increased in recent years. Also to increase parking by 20p per visit to increase income received. Increasing the cost of parking at HCP to £2.50 is still seen as very good value.	I	P	18,500	18,500	Budget increased for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Leisure & Locality Services	HCP Events and Sale of goods	Increased income from events and sale of goods.	I	P	4,000	4,000	Budget adjusted for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Leisure & Locality Services	Pier Contract Profit Share	The Pier Pavilion Theatre has had a strong year and it is predicted that the Council will receive a profit share from the contract for the first time this year.	I	P	10,000	10,000	Income budget created for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Leisure & Locality Services	Reduce R&M on Foreshores	R&M of promenades and foreshores. By its very nature this can fluctuate form year to year depending on weather and other factors and this saving is reflective of activity.	S	P	15,000	15,000	Budget reduced for 2024/25
Environment and Leisure	Leisure & Locality Services	Memorial Seats/Benches	Review of repair & maintenance responsibilities.	S	P	13,700	13,300	Budget reduced for 2024/25 - £400 spent to 24/07/24
SUB TOTAL COMMUNITIES						383,010	312,610	

CORPORATE								
Corporate	Human Resources	HR & Common Training Budget Review	Review of HR & Common training budgets realising savings across Equipment Purchases, First Aid Purchases, Subscriptions, Other Fees & Charges and Health & Safety.	S	P	3,270	3,270	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Corporate	Customer Services	DM/Reprographics Restructure	Deletion of vacant post	S	P	45,456	45,456	Speak to Stuart Harber, can see Paul's actuals are still going through here, do these need to move to the post room cost centre where the budget is?
SUB TOTAL CORPORATE						48,726	48,726	

Proposed Savings/Income 2024/25 to 2027/28

Assistant Directorate	Service Area	Savings Title	Brief Outline of Saving/Additional Income (where applicable)	Saving(S) /Income(I)	Permanent (P) /One off (O)	Budgeted 2024/25 Savings /Income		
SAVINGS BIDS SUBMITTED BY ASSISTANT DIRECTORS								
PLACE								
Planning	Development Management	Fee Income	Reduction in 2024/25 reflects the under recovery in 2023/24 influenced by the state of the national economy and age of the Local Plan. This is partially offset by the recently announced Government increases in fee levels. Adoption of the Local Plan should increase the number of applications received (but that will probably take effect in the 2nd half of 2025/26).	I	P	(50,000)	(50,000)	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Planning	Planning	Various Minor Savings	Minor reductions to a number of services.	S	P	10,225	9,200	DM subscriptions saving of £1,025 cannot be met due to overspend.
Planning	Planning Policy	Planning Policy Savings	The Local Plan is expected be adopted in the summer of 2024 and a review of resource will be undertaken then. It is considered that a lower staffing level would be appropriate and it is estimated that this could be introduced in-year at no direct cost to the Council.	S	P	45,000	45,000	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Planning	Planning	Use of Planning Reserve	The Local Plan Examination is expected to be completed by the end of March 2024. Some further expenditure above normal budget levels might be required prior to adoption (although these could possibly be funded from within existing resources) . The production of a new Plan should be a cheaper process as the Government are endeavouring to simplify the process and the Council won't be starting from a review of a Plan that is significantly out of date. It is estimated that a reserve position of £200,000 for the 2025/26 financial year is appropriate and therefore the level above that can be offered by way of a reduction in reserve levels.	S	O	87,300	87,300	Reserve adjusted for 2024/25
Planning	Land Charges	Use of Land Charges Reserve	Reduction in reserve to a level that allows for £40,000 per annum (for this year and the 4 years of the Medium Term Plan). As a consequence, a saving is offered by way of a proposed reduction in the reserve level.	S	O	89,100	89,100	Reserve adjusted for 2024/25
Sustainable Growth	Housing Strategy & Delivery	Reduction in staffing levels (with no redundancy)	Review of the way in which services within the wider team are managed.	S	P	11,900	11,900	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Sustainable Growth	Climate and Environment	Greenbuild	Discontinuing a "Greenbuild" style event. event. Engagement would be limited to smaller activities and/or where events are entirely sponsored or paid for by third parties.	S	P	10,000	10,000	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Sustainable Growth	Economic Growth	Conference Expenses	Reduction in Conferences attended	S	P	1,000	1,000	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Sustainable Growth	Economic Growth	Marketing General (Deep History Coast).	Reduction in Marketing spend. A core budget needs to be retained for maintaining the Deep History Coast app and general marketing savings are achievable.	S	P	10,000	10,000	Budgets reduced for 2024/25
Sustainable Growth	Economic Growth	Grants	Reduction of grant award	S	P	10,000	10,000	Reserve adjusted for 2024/25
SUB TOTAL PLACE						224,525	223,500	

RESOURCES								
Legal and Governance	IT Infrastructure	Personnel Budget Saving	Reduction in resource requirement	S	P	18,876	18,876	£18,876 taken at Budget Setting, staffing budget underspent.
Legal and Governance	IT Web	Replacing Council Workflow System	Workbench, workflow and online forms system needs to be replaced as it will soon no longer be supported by the software provider. The proposal is to work with C3 (providers of contact centre software for Customer Services) to develop this so that it can be rolled out across the council at no extra cost. Also Microsoft software can be used to create any required online forms.	S	P	15,000	13,000	Removed budget for Silktide software by mistake therefore saving not achievable for this.
Legal and Governance	Legal	Legal Reserves	A contribution can be made of some of legal reserve fund of £36,000.	S	O	36,000	36,000	Reserve taken
Legal and Governance	Legal	Additional Legal Fee Income	Increase income target by increasing the number of section 106 agreements and income from legal work on beach hut leases.	I	P	5,000	5,000	On target to achieve.

Proposed Savings/Income 2024/25 to 2027/28

Assistant Directorate	Service Area	Savings Title	Brief Outline of Saving/Additional Income (where applicable)	Saving(S) /Income(I)	Permanent (P) /One off (O)	Budgeted 2024/25 Savings /Income		
SAVINGS BIDS SUBMITTED BY ASSISTANT DIRECTORS								
Legal and Governance	Democratic Services	Travelling General	Non-formal meetings such as pre-agendas etc to move to a remote format to reduce members travel claims (and also help meet our Net Zero target). More decisions could be taken under delegation..	S	P	4,000	4,000	On target to achieve.
Legal and Governance	Democratic Services	Member Training	Reduction in Member Training budget (providing there is capacity to increase in an election year).	S	P	6,000	5,000	Peer review highlighted need for training, will achieve £5k of target.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Revenues	Various	Improvements in service delivery	S/I	P	12,500	10,500	Still paying Capita, may get money back as in house form developed but not yet live.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Revenues	Council Tax Support Cases	The current benefits scheme awards only 91.5% of Council Tax Support in some cases. It is proposed that 100% is awarded in all cases to remove the unnecessary administration and associated costs. The change to the scheme will need to be consulted upon so the savings may not be achieved in 24/25, but if this is the case other savings will looked for within the service to achieve these still.	S	P	5,000	5,000	Member working party still working on this with the benefits managers, the revenue manager will review other income generated schemes to cover the £5k if the 100% CTS scheme is not adopted.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Estates	Various expenditure Savings	- Catfield Industrial Estates - Fakenham Connect Marketing budget reduction - Chalets and beach huts: Equipment and Marketing - Other lettings: Marketing - Estates -Professional fees, Subscriptions.	S	O	33,272	33,112	Water on target to achieve, providing no vacant units in the future.
								On target to achieve.
								On target to achieve.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Estates	Various Income Generation	- Fakenham Connect: - Other Lettings: Electricity recharge. - Shared Equity Insurance Recharges..	I	P	4,700	4,700	On target to achieve.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Estates	New Ideas - Income generation	QR codes income donation on pier & other assets in Cromer. Advertising on car parks Concessions/Click and Collect.	I	P	20,000	0	Had planned to do this at beginning of the year, but this has turned into a bigger project (Tina S aware) - Advertising policy has also changed.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Estates	Employee Savings	Deletion of fixed term strategic surveyor post along other efficiencies within the team.	S	O/P	50,755	50,755	£50,755 taken at Budget Setting, staffing budget underspent.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Estates	Mileage Claims	Reduction in Mileage Claims	S	P	1,000	1,000	On target to achieve.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Property Services	Reduction in generic training	Reduction in generic training	S	P	5,000	5,000	On target to achieve.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Property Services	Travel allowances	Remove the travel allowance general budget.	S	P	3,000	3,000	On target to achieve.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Property Services	Sale of additional unused temporary facility	Unit purchased for temporary use was not installed.	S	O	8,000	3,117	Woo Woo toilet sold for less than expected.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Property Services	Extension of The Meadow Car Park	Extension of the Car Park into the grassed area in the vacant pitch and putt area. This car park is always busy all year round.	I	P	79,000	79,000	This extension has not been done, so the additional income will not be generated as anitcipated form this. However car parking income is still forecast to exceed the budget for 2024/25 by £133k so the saving has effectively been achieved.
Finance,Assets & Revenues	Property Services	Stop support for non-NNDC events	Stop the support for non NNDC Events by PS Team. This includes Cromer Carnival / New Years Fire Works and Openwide events	S	P	11,500	11,500	On target to achieve.
SUB TOTAL RESOURCES						318,603	288,560	
						974,864	873,396	

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Reserve	Purpose and Use of Reserve	Balance 01/04/22	Outturn Movement 2022/23	Balance 01/04/23	Outturn Movement 2023/24	Balance 01/04/24	Budgeted Movement 2024/25	Forecast Movement P10	Forecast Balance 01/04/25	Budgeted Movement 2025/26	Balance 01/04/26	Budgeted Movement 2026/27	Balance 01/04/27	Budgeted Movement 2027/28	Balance 01/04/28
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
General Fund - General Reserve	A working balance and contingency, current recommended balance is £2.1 million.	3,276,687	(161,864)	3,114,823	(891,501)	2,223,322	(4,043)	(4,043)	2,219,279	(14,706)	2,204,573	0	2,204,573	0	2,204,573
Earmarked Reserves:															
Capital Projects	To provide funding for capital developments and purchase of major assets.	555,618	0	555,618	(70,910)	484,708	(484,708)	(555,618)	(70,910)	0	(70,910)	0	(70,910)	0	(70,910)
Asset Management	To support improvements to our existing assets as identified through the Asset Management Plan.	882,030	(35,923)	846,107	(243,732)	602,375	(310,033)	(248,186)	354,189	0	354,189	0	354,189	0	354,189
Benefits	To be used to mitigate any claw back by the Department of Works and Pensions following final subsidy determination. Timing of the use will depend on audited subsidy claims. Also included in this allocation are service specific grants for service improvements that have not yet been offset by expenditure.	749,248	(23,426)	725,822	2,000	727,822	(46,622)	(46,622)	681,200	(51,567)	629,633	0	629,633	0	629,633
Building Control	Building Control surplus ring-fenced to cover any future deficits in the service.	224,115	0	224,115	(78,316)	145,799	(122,542)	(108,020)	37,779	(19,874)	17,905	0	17,905	0	17,905
Business Rates	To be used for the support of local businesses and to mitigate impact of final claims and appeals in relation to business rates retention scheme.	3,516,233	(1,687,078)	1,829,155	122,845	1,952,000	(18,000)	(18,000)	1,934,000	(18,000)	1,916,000	(18,000)	1,898,000	(18,000)	1,880,000
Coast Protection	To support the ongoing coast protection maintenance programme and carry forward funding between financial years.	299,889	166,400	466,288	(224,754)	241,534	(265,738)	(265,738)	(24,204)	0	(24,204)	0	(24,204)	0	(24,204)
Communities	To support projects that communities identify where they will make a difference to the economic and social wellbeing of the area.	569,776	(163,226)	406,550	(106,059)	300,491	(131,550)	(131,550)	168,941	0	168,941	0	168,941	0	168,941
Delivery Plan	To help achieve the outputs from the Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan.	4,326,421	(1,202,392)	3,124,029	(902,928)	2,221,101	(1,961,768)	(1,670,025)	551,076	(80,000)	471,076	0	471,076	0	471,076
Economic Development and Regeneration	Earmarked from previous underspends within Economic Development and Regeneration Budgets.	197,621	34,800	232,421	(54,095)	178,326	(10,000)	(10,000)	168,326	0	168,326	0	168,326	0	168,326
Election Reserve	Established to meet costs associated with district council elections, to smooth the impact between financial years.	103,000	83,015	186,015	(123,015)	63,000	60,000	60,000	123,000	60,000	183,000	60,000	243,000	60,000	303,000
Enforcement Works	Established to meet costs associated with district council enforcement works including buildings at risk .	90,125	(29,635)	60,490	(14,528)	45,962	0	0	45,962	0	45,962	0	45,962	0	45,962
Environmental Health	Earmarking of previous underspends and additional income to meet Environmental Health initiatives.	311,193	183,283	494,476	(18,372)	476,104	0	(572,426)	(96,322)	0	(96,322)	0	(96,322)	0	(96,322)
Environment Reserve	To fund expenditure relating to the Council's Green Agenda.	150,000	0	150,000	0	150,000	0	0	150,000	0	150,000	0	150,000	0	150,000
Grants	Revenue Grants received and due to timing issues not used in the year.	2,357,656	262,700	2,620,356	66,340	2,686,696	(77,969)	(5,646)	2,681,050	(85,159)	2,595,891	0	2,595,891	0	2,595,891
Housing	Previously earmarked for stock condition survey and housing needs assessment. Also now contains the balance of the Housing Community Grant funding received in 2016/17.	2,107,358	166,678	2,274,036	(851,588)	1,422,448	(356,479)	(356,479)	1,065,969	(56,299)	1,009,670	(57,406)	952,264	(58,535)	893,729

Reserve	Purpose and Use of Reserve	Balance 01/04/22 £	Outturn Movement 2022/23 £	Balance 01/04/23 £	Outturn Movement 2023/24 £	Balance 01/04/24 £	Budgeted Movement 2024/25 £	Forecast Movement P10 £	Forecast Balance 01/04/25 £	Budgeted Movement 2025/26 £	Balance 01/04/26 £	Budgeted Movement 2026/27 £	Balance 01/04/27 £	Budgeted Movement 2027/28 £	Balance 01/04/28 £
Innovation Fund	Contract default payments earmarked to fund service improvement projects.	0	0	0	539,170	539,170	0	532,426	1,071,596	0	1,071,596	0	1,071,596	0	1,071,596
Land Charges	To mitigate the impact of potential income reductions.	339,152	0	339,152	0	339,152	(89,100)	(105,250)	233,902	0	233,902	0	233,902	0	233,902
Legal	One off funding for Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) work and East Law Surplus.	124,323	(30,871)	93,452	(4,538)	88,914	(36,000)	(36,000)	52,914	0	52,914	0	52,914	0	52,914
Major Repairs Reserve	To provide provision for the repair and maintenance of the councils asset portfolio.	329,207	258,772	587,979	(130,000)	457,979	(55,600)	(55,600)	402,379	0	402,379	0	402,379	0	402,379
Net Zero Initiatives	to support the Councils Net Zero programme	0	500,000	500,000	(28,143)	471,857	(22,000)	(19,400)	452,457	0	452,457	0	452,457	0	452,457
New Homes Bonus (NHB)	Established for supporting communities with future growth and development and Plan review*	222,543	0	222,543	(76,394)	146,149	(150,000)	(64,000)	82,149	(83,763)	(1,614)	0	(1,614)	0	(1,614)
Organisational Development	To provide funding for organisation development to create capacity within the organisation, including the provision and support for apprenticeships and internships.	173,097	(17,873)	155,224	(43,003)	112,221	(26,123)	(26,123)	86,098	0	86,098	0	86,098	0	86,098
Pathfinder	To help Coastal Communities adapt to coastal changes.	89,566	0	89,566	0	89,566	0	0	89,566	0	89,566	0	89,566	0	89,566
Planning	Additional Planning income earmarked for Planning initiatives including Plan Review.	217,926	198,965	416,891	(128,965)	287,926	(37,300)	(37,300)	250,626	46,763	297,389	50,000	347,389	50,000	397,389
Restructuring & Invest to Save Proposals	To fund one-off redundancy and pension strain costs and invest to save initiatives. Transfers from this reserve will be allocated against business cases as they are approved. Timing of the use of this reserve will depend on when business cases are approved.	898,995	(234,987)	664,008	53,043	717,051	(45,456)	(45,456)	671,595	0	671,595	0	671,595	0	671,595
Treasury	To smooth impacts on the Revenue account of movement in fair value changes of the Councils holdings in Pooled Funds	500,000	0	500,000	(200,000)	300,000	(300,000)	(300,000)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Reserves		22,611,779	(1,732,663)	20,879,116	(3,407,443)	17,471,673	(4,491,031)	(4,089,056)	13,382,618	(302,605)	13,080,013	34,594	13,114,607	33,465	13,148,072

Capital Programme - Budget Monitoring 2024/25

Scheme	Scheme Total Approval	Pre 2024/25 Expenditure	Updated Budget		Remaining Budget (Forecasted YE Spend)	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
			2024/25	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Our Greener Future										
Cromer Offices LED Lighting Programme	172,000	62,879	109,121	104,352	4,769	0	0	0	0	0
Cromer Coast Protection Scheme	18,469,916	8,220,258	10,249,658	9,936,782	312,877	0	0	0	0	0
Coastal Erosion Assistance (Grants)	90,000	62,069	27,931	14,595	13,336	0	0	0	0	0
Coastal Adaptations (Cliff Protection)	247,493	2,503	244,990	0	244,990	0	0	0	0	0
Mundesley Coastal Management Scheme	9,881,227	2,080,964	7,637,263	4,709,820	2,927,443	163,000	0	0	0	0
Coastal Management Fund	950,000	108,250	341,750	0	341,750	250,000	250,000	0	0	0
Coastwise	14,609,914	176,834	2,702,403	527,737	2,174,666	5,583,051	6,147,712	0	0	0
Purchase of Bins	600,000	Annual Programme	146,285	48,450	97,835	150,000	150,000	150,000	0	0
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	248,600	215,283	33,317	0	33,317	0	0	0	0	0
The Reef Solar Carport	596,000	530,820	65,180	0	65,180	0	0	0	0	0
Holt Country Park Electricity Improvements	400,000	0	400,000	139,354	260,646	0	0	0	0	0
Solar PV Panels at Victory Swim and Fitness Centre	200,000	6,713	193,288	172,883	20,404	0	0	0	0	0
Public Conveniences Energy Efficiencies	150,000	0	150,000	1,281	148,719	0	0	0	0	0
Coastal Defences	600,000	0	150,000	131,058	18,942	150,000	150,000	150,000	0	0
			22,451,187	15,786,313	6,664,874	6,296,051	6,697,712	300,000	0	0

Capital Programme - Budget Monitoring 2024/25

Scheme	Scheme Total Approval £	Pre 2024/25 Expenditure £	Updated Budget	Actual Expenditure	Remaining Budget (Forecasted YE Spend)	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
			2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	2029/30 £
Developing Our Communities										
Public Conveniences (Fakenham & Wells)	986,963	966,963	20,000	1,508	18,492	0	0	0	0	0
Public Conveniences (Sheringham & North Walsham)	545,514	439,772	105,742	83,493	22,250	0	0	0	0	0
Public Conveniences - Albert Street, Holt	332,552	11,572	320,979	225,994	94,986	0	0	0	0	0
Countryside Machinery	38,465	36,508	1,957	0	1,957	0	0	0	0	0
Cromer Pier - Steelworks and Improvements to Pavilion Theatre	1,134,000	857,742	276,258	147,413	128,845	0	0	0	0	0
3G Facilities	860,000	12,432	847,568	0	847,568	0	0	0	0	0
Cromer 3G Football Facility	1,000,000	4,725	995,275	16,001	979,274	0	0	0	0	0
The Reef Leisure Centre	12,861,000	12,598,276	262,724	9,901	252,823	0	0	0	0	0
Green Road Football Facility (North Walsham)	60,000	9,777	50,223	0	50,223	0	0	0	0	0
New Play Area (Sheringham, The Lees)	65,000	0	65,000	48,571	16,429	0	0	0	0	0
Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub (FLASH)	10,910,000	87,362	2,553,638	366,157	2,187,481	8,269,000	0	0	0	0
Back Stage Refurbishment - Pier Pavilion Theatre	405,000	0	405,000	113,201	291,799	0	0	0	0	0
Holt Country Park Staff Facilities	93,500	0	93,500	77,576	15,924	0	0	0	0	0
Cromer Church Wall	50,000	0	50,000	0	50,000	0	0	0	0	0
Cabbell Park Clubhouse	237,000	0	237,000	0	237,000	0	0	0	0	0
			6,284,864	1,089,815	5,195,050	8,269,000	0	0	0	0

Capital Programme - Budget Monitoring 2024/25

Scheme	Scheme Total Approval	Pre 2024/25 Expenditure	Updated Budget		Remaining Budget (Forecasted YE Spend)	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
			2024/25	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Meeting Our Housing Needs										
Disabled Facilities Grants	2,079,040	Annual Programme	2,079,040	1,126,711	952,329	2,080,858	1,600,000	1,600,000	1,600,000	1,600,000
Compulsory Purchase of Long-Term Empty Properties	930,000	500,528	429,472	45,637	383,835	0	0	0	0	0
Community Housing Fund (Grants to Housing Providers)	1,653,373	1,425,212	228,161	0	228,161	0	0	0	0	0
Provision of Temporary Accommodation	4,846,584	4,268,277	578,307	490,045	88,262	0	0	0	0	0
Housing S106 Enabling	2,500,000	836,000	1,064,000	150,000	914,000	300,000	300,000	0	0	0
Loans to Housing Providers	600,000	260,000	340,000	0	340,000	0	0	0	0	0
Local Authority Housing Fund	1,040,000	728,000	312,000	312,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
			5,030,980	2,124,393	2,906,587	2,380,858	1,900,000	1,600,000	1,600,000	1,600,000

Capital Programme - Budget Monitoring 2024/25

Scheme	Scheme Total Approval £	Pre 2024/25 Expenditure £	Updated Budget		Remaining Budget (Forecasted YE Spend) 2024/25	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Budget 2027/28	Budget 2028/29	Budget 2029/30
			2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Investing In Our Local Economy And Infrastructure										
Rocket House	1,077,085	62,691	1,014,394	50,220	964,174	0	0	0	0	0
Fakenham Connect/Crinkle Crinkle Wall	297,337	291,737	5,600	1,652	3,948	0	0	0	0	0
North Walsham Heritage Action Zone	4,034,457	3,879,303	155,154	5,721	149,433	0	0	0	0	0
Fakenham Urban Extension	1,800,000	218,538	1,581,462	1,581,462	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property Acquisitions	710,000	5,216	704,784	3,825	700,959	0	0	0	0	0
Chalet Refurbishment	125,000	72	124,928	0	124,928	0	0	0	0	0
Marrams Building Renovation	50,000	1,675	48,325	0	48,325	0	0	0	0	0
Car Parks Refurbishment	601,000	78,665	252,335	50,535	201,800	210,000	60,000	0	0	0
Marrams Footpath and Lighting	50,000	275	49,725	52,352	(2,627)	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Roof Replacements (Art Deco Block, Red Lion Retail Unit, Sheringham Chalet's)	175,000	37,887	137,113	37,251	99,862	0	0	0	0	0
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	404,459	165,826	238,633	234,841	3,792	74,793	0	0	0	0
Rural England Prosperity Fund	1,457,848	364,463	1,093,385	1,093,388	(3)	0	0	0	0	0
New Fire Alarm and Fire Doors in Cromer Offices	150,000	115,638	34,362	33,088	1,275	0	0	0	0	0
West Prom Sheringham, Lighting & Cliff Railings	55,000	0	55,000	0	55,000	0	0	0	0	0
The Lees Walkway and Structural Works	34,258	534	33,723	43,288	(9,564)	0	0	0	0	0
Collectors Cabin Roof	30,000	0	30,000	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0
			5,558,923	3,187,623	2,371,300	284,793	60,000	0	0	0

Capital Programme - Budget Monitoring 2024/25

Scheme	Scheme Total Approval £	Pre 2024/25 Expenditure £	Updated Budget	Actual Expenditure	Remaining Budget (Forecasted YE Spend)	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
			2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	2029/30 £
A Strong, Responsible And Accountable Council										
User IT Hardware Refresh	300,000	Annual Programme	82,138	1,873	80,264	60,000	60,000	0	0	0
Financial Management System	295,000	291,966	3,034	0	3,034	0	0	0	0	0
Server Replacement	100,000	43,673	56,327	0	56,327	0	0	0	0	0
New Revenues and Benefits System	200,720	0	98,720	0	98,720	102,000	0	0	0	0
Replacement Storage Hardware	150,000	0	150,000	131,159	18,841	0	0	0	0	0
Customer Services C3 Software	23,400	0	23,400	0	23,400	0	0	0	0	0
			413,619	133,032	280,587	162,000	60,000	0	0	0
Totals			39,739,573	22,321,176	17,418,398	17,392,702	8,717,712	1,900,000	1,600,000	1,600,000

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2024/25 Capital Programme Financing Table		Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Remaining Budget 2024/25	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Budget 2027/28	Budget 2028/29	Budget 2029/30
Grants		27,833,768	19,079,923	8,753,845	15,751,979	7,747,712	1,600,000	1,600,000	1,600,000
Other Contributions		2,127,014	901,265	1,225,749	718,723	300,000	0	0	0
Reserves		2,447,783	985,949	1,461,833	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital (RCCO)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts		3,302,190	645,191	2,656,999	712,000	610,000	300,000	0	0
Borrowing		4,028,818	708,848	3,319,971	210,000	60,000	0	0	0
Total		39,739,573	22,321,176	17,418,398	17,392,702	8,717,712	1,900,000	1,600,000	1,600,000

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Devolution – Government consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk – response by North Norfolk District Council	
Executive Summary	This report provides details of the Council’s proposed response to the Government consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk
Options considered	Detailed within the proposed response
Consultation(s)	NNDC member briefing – 11 th February 2025 Town and Parish Council briefings held on 18 th and 25 th February 2025
Recommendations	Council is asked to approve the Council’s response to the Government consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk as attached at Appendix 1 of this report and agree its submission to Government, such submission to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
Reasons for recommendations	To respond constructively to the Government’s proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk through providing responses which seek to promote and protect the interests of North Norfolk’s residents, communities and businesses.
Background papers	Details of the Government consultation can be accessed via the following link:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr T Adams, Leader of the Council
Contact Officer	Steve Blatch, Chief Executive, steve.blatch@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	A Strong, Responsible, & Accountable Council.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Not applicable
Council Policies & Strategies	Not applicable

Corporate Governance:

Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	No
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	None

1. Introduction & Background

- 1.1 On 16th December 2024, the Government published its [English Devolution White Paper](#) which set out plans to move power out of Westminster to local communities, and proposing that every part of England would be covered by a devolution agreement, with a strong preference for elected mayors operating through new Combined Mayoral Authorities.
- 1.2 Subsequently, through conversations with the Leaders of Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, the Government advised that it wanted to see proposals developed for a Mayoral Combined County Authority covering the geography of the two counties. This position has been agreed, in principle, by the Government which has included Norfolk and Suffolk in its Devolution Priority Programme, where proposals for new combined authorities will be developed and implemented in the coming months, with an election for a Norfolk and Suffolk mayor to be held in May 2026.
- 1.3 Before taking a decision on whether to proceed with the making of the necessary legislation, the Government is seeking views from interested parties, including those who live and work in the area. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has therefore recently announced a public consultation with residents, community organisations, businesses and other stakeholders inviting comments on these proposals details of which can be found at - <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lqgc/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation>.
- 1.4 This report, through the attached appendix, proposes North Norfolk District Council's response to the Government consultation – for which comments need to be submitted by 13th April 2025.

2. Proposals and Options

- 2.1 As a district council in Norfolk, with powers and responsibilities for a range of issues (planning, housing, economic growth, environmental management and protection) which support delivery of the Government's Plan for Change and future economic growth, it is considered important that the authority submits a response to this consultation.
- 2.2 A draft response to the consultation is therefore provided as an appendix to this covering report. Council is therefore invited to discuss the Council's draft response and indicate its approval as the basis of the Council's corporate response to the consultation.

3. Comments from the S151 Officer

There are no direct financial costs arising from the Council submitting a response to this consultation.

4. Comments from the Monitoring Officer

Following the Government's White Paper around Devolution, a consultation has been published by MHCLG for which a proposed response is attached on behalf of this Council. Whilst a response to a consultation has no specific legal implications in itself, such comments can be considered before any significant decision is made which would have a financial geographical and constitutional impact upon this and other councils in Norfolk and Suffolk.

5. Risks

- 5.1 The establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk will have some implications in the short-term for the way in which the District Council works, but the details of this are not known at present.
- 5.2 The English Devolution White Paper also proposes that in those areas of England which have a two-tier structure of County and District Councils, the Government wishes to see a move to a unitary form of local government. These issues are detailed in a separate report on this Council agenda.

6. Net Zero Target

- 7.1 Not applicable to this report.

7. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 7.1 Not applicable to this report

8. Community Safety issues

- 8.1 Not applicable to this report.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Council is asked to approve the Council's response to the Government consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority as attached at Appendix 1 of this report and agree its submission to Government, such submission to be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

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Appendix 1

Proposed Response to the Government Consultation on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk

Details of the Government consultation can be accessed via the following link:-

- <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/lggc/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation>

Seven questions are asked in the online consultation as detailed below and respondents are asked to indicate their position in support for or objection to the proposals through the following structured answers and with scope to provide written comments.

For each question, you can provide the following answers:

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree
- don't know
- prefer not to say

The District Council's proposed response to the consultation questions is as follows:-

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

Agree

North Norfolk District Council supports the broad principles of the Government's devolution proposals and specifically the proposal for Norfolk and Suffolk to have control over funds and powers devolved from the Government to meet the specific needs and priorities of our two counties through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority.

The District Council is concerned that at the present time the opportunities and challenges of the two counties are not well-understood within Government and that, compared to other areas of England where Devolution Deals have been agreed and Combined Authorities and Elected Mayors established, Norfolk and Suffolk and their businesses and communities run the risk of being "left behind", with the full potential of the region not being realised.

The proposals for a Mayoral Combined County Authority with an elected mayor will therefore allow this deficit in devolved funding and powers and having a strong voice into Government to be addressed.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

Strongly disagree

The Devolution Deal initially proposed for Norfolk and Suffolk suggests that only Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council would be constituent members of the new Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority; and North Norfolk District Council has significant concerns about the exclusion of the district, borough and city councils in this model given that many of the housing, planning and economic growth functions which are fundamental in supporting the delivery of the Government Plan for Change and economic growth agendas sit with district authorities.

The District Council understands that under the proposed governance model the two county councils will each have two seats on the proposed Combined County Authority as constituent members and that there will then be four non-constituent members whose voting rights is at the discretion of the MCCA. This means that decisions relating to Norfolk, with a population of approaching 1 million residents, will be taken by no more than four people with a direct connection to the county.

Whilst the District Council understands that this is an interim model, pending election of the Norfolk and Suffolk mayor and local government reorganisation, we believe that a more inclusive governance structure is needed which involves all borough, city, and district councils in the decision-making process. Such an approach would better utilise the expertise of all local leaders in the interim period, promoting understanding of the powers and functions of the MCCA, pending local government reorganisation, where a new and more direct relationship will be established between the mayor and the MCCA and local communities through any new unitary councils.

District Councils are the authorities with primary responsibility for housing, planning and economic growth and act as vital connectors between the tiers of local government, government agencies, and the communities they serve. The potential for district councils to therefore play a significant role in supporting the success of any new devolved structures across large geographies and communities of interest should not be under-estimated. The District Council recognises that in due course local government reorganisation might address these elements, but the District Council believes they need to be integrated at the design and setup phase of the new MCCA.

At present, the proposed number of non-constituent members of 2 per county, which is stated in the consultation proposals could be “representatives of an organisation; for example, a district council, local NHS trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner, or a local registered provider” and could therefore lead to a scenario where there is only 1 district representative per County (or even none). In Norfolk, the strength of our County is its diversity – from communities to demographics to the economy. North Norfolk District Council is therefore

concerned that the proposed model would simply ignore the importance of ensuring equal representation from our rural, urban and coastal areas.

North Norfolk District Council would therefore request that Government considers:

1. increasing the number of non-constituent members (per County) to ensure equal representation for our rural, urban and coastal areas; with a minimum of half the non-constituent members being from the borough, city, and district councils.
2. that non-constituent members be automatically given voting rights on issues which directly affect their area or require the use of their resources or capacity to deliver.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

Agree

The wider geography of Norfolk and Suffolk can bring together the economic strengths of both counties in a coordinated approach. This could help align key priorities like strategic infrastructure development, skills training, and business support across the two counties, fostering a more cohesive and efficient economic strategy.

Norfolk and Suffolk have coastal, urban and rural areas with varying levels of economic activity and prosperity. Devolution and a combined authority approach with the right partners around the table could help direct and target investment and resources into the more peripheral, rural or economically disadvantaged areas, creating a more inclusive and balanced approach to economic development across the entire region. This would reduce inequalities and support more sustainable growth in all areas.

Such an approach could enable the prioritisation and targeting of policy interventions in areas that will deliver local, regional and national strategic objectives including growth and regeneration benefits and, in places like North Norfolk, ensure that our local businesses and communities were better placed to realise benefits from major national infrastructure investment such as cable corridors associated with the export of offshore wind generation, from which there are almost no local benefits, as the district's local electricity infrastructure is severely constrained. This might include focussed interventions where markets are insufficiently coordinated, require infrastructure investments or have complex value chains.

This approach would need to take account of and consolidate local strengths, specialisms, clusters, places, and types of economic activity – especially in the cases of capital-intensive and inward investment-driven investments, where national and international visibility, as well as local capability/capacity, are critical success factors.

There are some risks, however, which would need to be managed by working across such a wide geography in terms of economy growth. While some parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, particularly urban areas like Norwich and Ipswich, may see significant economic benefits from an MCCA, smaller towns, rural areas and the coastal fringe such as North Norfolk might, as in the past, not receive the same level of focus or investment, and this could exacerbate regional inequalities, with some areas experiencing more rapid growth than others. Any MCCA would therefore need to be effective at balancing needs across the region, recognising the

strengths of the area, but also the investment required to support certain parts of the region to grow and ensure that all communities within the region benefit equitably from economic policies.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

Neither agree nor disagree

Whilst North Norfolk District Council can see the potential for devolution to help improve social outcomes across the region, there are also wider factors which need to be considered by Government across the wider public sector which could improve social outcomes for communities.

Working across Norfolk and Suffolk, we can see that further partnership working, building on already strong local partnership relationships, could lead to even greater coordination of services such as housing, growth and strategic planning and economic development, which have a direct effect on social outcomes.

However, there also needs to be a realistic assessment of what an MCCA might achieve, recognising the role of the principal local authorities in the area (currently the districts, city, borough and county councils, and probably unitary councils in the future), who work closest to local communities, families and individuals and deliver those services which have a direct and lasting impact on social outcomes (housing, education, early help and prevention, social care etc).

North Norfolk District Council therefore believes that there is a need to reach agreement over what local government structure is most appropriate as being the first pillar to drive better social outcomes locally. At the present time, North Norfolk District Council is concerned that local government reform in Norfolk proposes new councils of a size, geography and scale which would not be truly local: something which should be a driving factor in the process of local government reorganisation in support of a successful programme of devolution and in maximising the opportunities which might present themselves for the region through an MCCA.

Alongside this, we support the statements made by Government in the English Devolution White Paper with respect to wider public service reform, as public services such as public protection, DWP, local health and social care and education and training services are all interconnected and require a broader, more holistic and joined-up approach to effectively meet the social needs of communities and individuals. However, without a wider debate around the provision and reform of these services in a geography as large as Norfolk and Suffolk, and agreement over what is an appropriate scale of local government which is close enough to local communities to understand and respond to their needs, North Norfolk District Council would be concerned that the aspirations and opportunities presented by establishing an MCCA will not be realised for North Norfolk's small and dispersed communities and would not yield the scale and kind of change the Government is seeking.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

Neither agree nor disagree

North Norfolk District Council agrees that in order to see large scale economic benefit from a Devolution Deal, a broader geography is required. However, it is open to question over whether, and to what extent, an MCCA will improve local government services in Norfolk and Suffolk as this will depend on its design, leadership, and the specific local context. For Devolution to be successful, North Norfolk District Council believes that any new local authorities need to be of the right size and scale, across both counties, to be close enough to the communities they serve and ensure effective representation of their communities' views and needs, whilst working in collaboration with the MCCA to support the delivery of the devolution objectives around housing and economic growth, infrastructure, transport and education and training.

At this moment in time, with the separate discussions going on in Norfolk and Suffolk about the reorganisation of the current local government system, the District Council does not feel able to answer this question with any degree of certainty or confidence – hence our response that we neither agree nor disagree with the question.

The Council is pragmatic about participating in a debate on the need for local government reorganisation and is not closed to proposals for reform; however, the vast geography of Norfolk, and its diverse economic, demographic and community structures does not, in North Norfolk's view, support a single or even two unitary structure in the county moving forward. This is because the District Council does not believe the needs and interests of its rural and coastal communities will be well-served by such large and remote organisations. The extent to which local government services will be improved across the proposed geography of the MCCA will be dependent on how well-executed and designed any new councils might be. If they are at the right size and scale, North Norfolk District Council could see that improvements might be realised, but if poorly implemented, there could be an imbalance in strategy and service delivery.

We would therefore ask that Government recognises that local government should serve "local" communities and geographies and does not disadvantage our communities and residents by proposing a devolution model which some people might say just recreates a two-tier form of local government which is of a larger scale and further removed from our communities.

North Norfolk District Council supports the devolution of powers, functions and budgets from Whitehall to the region, but would be concerned that local government reorganisation is in fact the opposite of devolution at a local level. This is because much larger units of local government administration would see decisions which directly impact on peoples daily lives being taken further away by people who have little understanding of the places where the impact is most greatly felt; and would be seen in the interests of economy and efficiency rather than resident or customer need, with services centralised or removed to more distant locations again directly impacting on residents or place – the example of the loss of banks and financial services from market towns, undermining their historic role as service and retail centres through reduced footfall being a clear example of unintended consequences from what is a

commercial, economic decision. This would apply equally to some frontline public service provision to our most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents – such as those seeking housing support if services are centralised involving them in costly travel to a distant council office for support by infrequent public transport. Some residents of North Norfolk are also seeing this additional cost and time burden being passed to them in terms of accessing local GP services following the closure of a rural surgery and in visiting relatives in remote acute hospitals whilst community facilities, such as Benjamin Court in Cromer, remain unused. The District Council is therefore concerned that local government reorganisation will result in similar financial pressures impacting on service delivery models, meaning that the costs (and inconvenience) of accessing remote and distant services falls on residents.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

Agree

North Norfolk District Council does see the potential for the geography of the proposed MCCA to realise and deliver improvements to both the local and national natural environment through the more effective co-ordination of environmental initiatives, pooling of resources, and long-term and strategic environmental planning.

The North Norfolk District has significant areas of designated landscape and habitats – including large areas of the northern Broads, the Norfolk Coast Area of High Landscape Value, chalk rivers (Wensum, Glaven, Stiffkey) Special Areas of Conservation and internationally recognised coastal and marine environments – but, as a relatively sparsely populated area with significant tourism and day visitor pressures, is often challenged in being able to present the case for funding significant projects of environmental improvement, notwithstanding the extent and quality of the district's natural assets. The District Council believes that there would therefore be benefits to taking a more strategic approach which integrated approaches to the environment, with housing, economic development and transportation.

North Norfolk District Council also recognises that across the broader Norfolk and Suffolk geography, collectively and through strong public / private partnership working, the region has a leading UK role in terms of making a significant contribution to UK energy transition and national Net-Zero ambitions with major strengths offshore wind, North Sea hydrocarbon transition, Carbon Capture and storage, hydrogen, solar and nuclear new builds. These all present opportunities to drive local growth, economic and social regeneration, aligning with national policy objectives to 'identify and support clean energy industrial sectors with the greatest growth potential' and 'consider where sectors and relevant capabilities are located to identify clusters that can drive growth'.

However, the District Council considers that the extent to which the region might be successful in this space will be dependent on ensuring that local environmental needs are appropriately considered and that policies are implemented equitably across the entire region. It is accepted that there may be disparities in the focus needed at a local level and that across Norfolk and Suffolk the environmental challenges are vastly different, therefore requiring both a strategic and more localised focus. Achieving the right size and scale of local government which is

close to the communities they serve is essential in delivering the strategic ambitions of the MCCA.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

Disagree

Please see comments we have made above in response to Questions 4 and 5 above.

While the MCCA could have the potential to support the needs of local communities and reflect local identities through coordinated efforts and stronger regional advocacy, it depends on how well the balance is struck between the high-level MCCA regional priorities and planning and local identity as North Norfolk District Council believes that the MCCA will not have the resources or capacity to do everything. The relationship between the MCCA and any new unitary councils established and their relationships with their communities will therefore be critical in terms of the extent to which the MCCA will be able to support the interests of local communities and reflect local identities.

As outlined in our response to Question 1, North Norfolk District Council recognises that an MCCA working across the geography of Norfolk and Suffolk could amplify the region's voice, allowing for more resources and political influence to be directed towards shared regional needs. This could create a unified approach to regional issues like transportation, housing, and economic development, which could be beneficial for local communities. The wider geography may also support common issues that affect multiple communities more effectively and with a more holistic view.

However, North Norfolk District Council believes that it needs to be recognised that a good balance needs to be achieved between the strategic MCCA and any new unitary councils in order to avoid any sense of loss of local control and dilution of local representation in respect of key decisions taken and services provided to local communities.

Smaller communities within the Norfolk and Suffolk, such as those across North Norfolk might feel that their unique needs and identities are overlooked in favour of broader regional priorities. This may become even more so, if the MCCA's focus becomes too dominated by larger, more populous, and urban areas. There is also a risk that local communities may feel disconnected from decision-making processes, particularly if they do not share the same concerns as the regional Mayor and decision-making board. This could further undermine the sense of local identity and understanding of individual community needs. It is therefore essential that these issues are given very careful thought and consideration in proposing and agreeing the population and geographic "size" of any new unitary councils so that they are seen to have support of their residents, businesses and communities by being close to and responsive to the needs, concerns, aspirations and ambitions of the communities they serve.

Without clarity over the number, scale, size and geographies of any new unitary councils, North Norfolk District Council feels it is unable to answer this question with a positive response at this time.

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Proposed Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk	
Executive Summary	<p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) wrote to all Norfolk Leaders on 5 February 2025 inviting them to work with other council leaders in the area to develop a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation.</p> <p>The letter sets out the criteria for new unitary councils and what is expected to be received in the interim plan to be submitted by 21st March 2025.</p> <p>This report sets out the interim plan and requests Council to indicate a preference order for the options outlined moving forward.</p>
Options considered	<p>The preparation of the interim plan prepared by the district councils in Norfolk considered one, two or three possible unitary authority models for the County and concluded that a three unitary model would best meet the criteria moving forward.</p>
Consultation(s)	<p>NNDC member briefing – 11th February 2025 Town and Parish Council briefings held on 18th and 25th February 2025</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council expresses its view that it disagrees with the Government’s proposals to introduce a unitary local government structure in Norfolk; as it is not convinced that such an arrangement will best meet the needs of the district’s rural communities and residents or deliver the savings and efficiencies anticipated. 2. Accepting, however, that this is the position of Government as detailed in the English Devolution White Paper, the Council strongly objects to proposals being suggested for a single unitary authority covering the whole of Norfolk in that it will be of a very large scale in terms of area and population served, will not be able to reflect the distinct communities of place and interest which exist across the county, and not meet the definition of “local” government in understanding local places or in providing services tailored to meet local needs. 3. The Council therefore strongly supports proposals for a three unitary council model for Norfolk in the future as the basis of the interim plan to be submitted to Government. The Council believes that such an arrangement would best meet the six key criteria laid out by Government and would see one authority based on the urban area of Norwich; an authority covering the West of the county with a strong agricultural and agri-tech economy and an East authority with a key focus on clean energy and tourism. 4. Council therefore agrees that its response to

	Government regarding local government reorganisation in Norfolk to be submitted by 21st March 2025 makes reference to an Interim Plan proposing three unitary councils in Norfolk as detailed at Appendix 3 with the submission of the response to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
Reasons for recommendations	To respond constructively to the Government's invitation to local authorities in Norfolk to put forward proposals for a unitary council local government structure which seeks to promote and protect the interests of North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses in the context of new council structures and complements proposals for a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined Authority.
Background papers	Appendix A – MHCLG letter of 5 th February 2025 Appendix B – Deloitte report Appendix C – draft Interim Plan prepared by the Norfolk district councils.

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr T Adams, Leader of the Council
Contact Officer	Steve Blatch, Chief Executive, steve.blatch@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	A Strong, Responsible, & Accountable Council.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Not applicable
Council Policies & Strategies	Not applicable

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	No
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	

1. Introduction & Background

- 1.1 On 16th December 2024, the Government published its [English Devolution White Paper](#) which set out plans to move power out of Westminster to local

communities, and proposing that every part of England would be covered by a devolution agreement with a strong preference for elected mayors operating through new Combined Mayoral Authorities. The White Paper also stated that in areas of the country with a two-tier local government structure of county and district, borough and city councils there would be a move towards establishing a unitary structure of local government for the future.

- 1.2 The Government confirmed that they would facilitate a programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) for the 21 remaining two-tier county areas, creating larger unitary authorities. The expectation set out by the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution stated that all areas should develop locally-led proposals for reorganisation with existing councils working together to identify the best option for their area. These plans should complement devolution, rather than delay it, whilst avoiding scenarios where competing proposals are developed within a given geography.
- 1.3 As the Government announced on 5th February that Norfolk and Suffolk were to be included on the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), the timelines for LGR are as follows:
 - 21 March 2025 – the interim plan contained within this report is to be submitted to MHCLG
 - 26 September 2025 - final proposals need to be submitted in the form of a full business case for the preferred solution(s)
 - January to April 2026 – during this period Government will make a decision on the proposal(s) and confirm what this means for Norfolk
 - May to August 2026 – LGR legislation is prepared and laid before Parliament
 - May 2027 Shadow Unitary Elections
 - May to December 2027 – any transitional legislation is prepared and laid before Parliament
 - April 2028 – New Unitary(s) vested in Norfolk

2. Government guidance / criteria for new unitary councils

- 2.1 The letter received from MHCLG on 5 February 2025 (Appendix A) sets out the criteria that need to be considered for the full submission and that the interim plan needs to be mindful of. The letter also sets out what needs to be included / considered in the interim plan.
- 2.2 Criteria – high level,(with detail available at Appendix A)
 1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government
 2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks
 3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public service to citizens

4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views
 5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements
 6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment
- 2.3 The letter is also clear that boundary changes and engagement / consultation also need to be considered when formulating the proposal.

3. Interim Plan

- 3.1 The Government has stated that interim plans should set out the progress made to date by local partners in developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The Government recognises that that the level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place, but lays out its expectation that the interim plan is submitted jointly by all councils in an area. However, it is also recognised that interim plans might describe more than one potential proposal for the area, if there is more than one option under consideration.
- 3.2 Recognising the very limited time available between the 5th February and the date of 21st March by which interim plans needed to be submitted to Government, the seven district, city and borough councils in Norfolk jointly commissioned through a tender process consultants, Deloitte, to prepare an evidence-based report evaluating possible unitary council models for Norfolk which could be used to inform the development of the interim plan to be submitted to Government. The Deloitte report is attached for members reference at Appendix B.
- 3.3 Government guidance advised that interim plans should consider the following issues:-
- a) Identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful
 - b) Identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities
 - c) Include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities
 - d) Include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance
 - e) Include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions
 - f) Include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals

- g) Set out indicative costs of preparing and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area
 - h) Set out voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forwards and to help balance the decisions needed how to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area
- 3.4 The Deloitte report has considered a one, two or three unitary council structure for Norfolk against the key criteria laid out by the Government and concluded that a three unitary model scores most strongly across all six criteria.
- 3.5 The Deloitte paper is an independent and objective piece of work which has informed the drafting of an interim plan detailing the position of six of the seven district councils in Norfolk which support a three-unitary council model. This interim plan is attached as Appendix C to this report and would form the submission to Government by 21st March.

4. Comments from the S151 Officer

There are no direct costs involved in the submission of the Interim Plan to Government; but there might be significant costs incurred by the Council in the future as it considers the detail of any formal proposals for local government reorganisation alongside business as usual. A further report will be presented to Council as and when such details are known.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Government has issued the invitation for proposals for a single tier of local government, under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This invitation is issued to all principal authorities in Norfolk (i.e. the districts, city, borough and county council). Although there is no legal requirement to respond to the invitation, it would not be in the best interests of North Norfolk's residents or communities to not respond to the invitation. The interim plan does not pre-determine any formal decision the Council may take in the future when a full business case on any preferred option or solution is prepared.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

This report follows the Devolution White Paper and the Government's move towards a unitary structure. The process is moving at pace with a tight timeline for key steps. Following the MHCLG letter, this Council, along with leaders of other Norfolk Councils were invited to work together to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation. Six of the seven district councils in Norfolk support a three-unitary council model. This council is not legally required to respond to the invitation to submit an interim plan, but doing so provides an opportunity to participate in the decision as to structures and to represent the interests of the district, its residents and those connect to the area.

6. Risks

- 3.4** There is no legal requirement upon the Council to submit a proposal to Government. However, the risk of not doing so means that the Council would not take the opportunity to influence any interim plan or preferred solution and local government reorganisation might be taken forward in Norfolk by the Government regardless of the Council's concerns or position.

7. Net Zero Target

- 7.1 Not applicable to this report.

8. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 8.1 Not applicable to this report

9. Community Safety issues

- 9.1 Not applicable to this report.

10 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 1. Council expresses its view that it disagrees with the Government's proposals to introduce a unitary local government structure in Norfolk; as it is not convinced that such an arrangement will best meet the needs of the district's rural communities and residents or deliver the savings and efficiencies anticipated.**
- 2. Accepting, however, that this is the position of Government as detailed in the English Devolution White Paper, the Council strongly objects to proposals being suggested for a single unitary authority covering the whole of Norfolk in that it will be of a very large scale in terms of area and population served, will not be able to reflect the distinct communities of place and interest which exist across the county, and not meet the definition of "local" government in understanding local places or in providing services tailored to meet local needs.**
- 3. The Council therefore strongly supports proposals for a three unitary council model for Norfolk in the future as the basis of the interim plan to be submitted to Government. The Council believes that such an arrangement would best meet the six key criteria laid out by Government and would see one authority based on the urban area of Norwich; an authority covering the West of the county with a strong agricultural and agri-tech economy and an East authority with a key focus on clean energy and tourism.**
- 4. Council therefore agrees that its response to Government regarding local government reorganisation in Norfolk to be submitted by 21st March 2025 makes reference to an Interim Plan proposing three unitary councils in Norfolk as detailed at Appendix 3 with the**

submission of the response to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

To: Leaders of two-tier councils in Norfolk
Breckland District Council
Broadland District Council
Great Yarmouth Borough Council
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough
Council
Norfolk County Council
North Norfolk District Council
Norwich City Council
South Norfolk District Council

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders

This Government has been clear on our vision for simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution. We know that councils of all political stripes are in crisis after a decade of decline and instability. Indeed, a record number of councils asked the government for support this year to help them set their budgets.

This new government will not waste this opportunity to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers. Local leaders are central to our mission to deliver change for hard-working people in every corner of the country through our Plan for Change, and our councils are doing everything they can to stay afloat and provide for their communities day in, day out. The Government will work closely with you to deliver these aims to the most ambitious timeline.

I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process. A formal invitation with guidance for the development of your proposals is attached at Annex A. This invitation sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

Developing proposals for reorganisation

We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers' interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities.

The public will rightly expect us to deliver on our shared responsibility to design and implement the best local government structures for efficient and high-quality public service delivery. We therefore expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary local government across the whole of your area. The proposal that is developed for the whole of your area may be for one or more new unitary councils and should be complementary to devolution plans. It is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in this invitation, particularly where this helps those councils to address concerns about their sustainability or limitations arising from their size or boundaries or where you are working together across a wider geography within a strategic authority.

I understand there will be some cases when it is not possible for all councils in an area to jointly develop and submit a proposal, despite their best efforts. This will not be a barrier to progress, and the Government will consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities.

Supporting places through change

It is essential that councils continue to deliver their business-as-usual services and duties, which remain unchanged until reorganisation is complete. This includes progress towards the Government's ambition of universal coverage of up-to-date local plans as quickly as possible. To support with capacity, I intend to provide some funds for preparing to take forward any proposal, and I will share further information later in the process.

Considering the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils, but we acknowledge that there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices. Where that is the case, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation, and Commissioners should be engaged in these discussions. We will continue to discuss the approach that is proposed with the area.

I welcome the partnership approach that is being taken across the sector to respond to the ambitious plans set out in the White Paper. My department will continue to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Councils Network, the County Councils Network and other local government partners to plan how best to support councils through this process. We envisage that practical support will be needed to understand and address the key thematic issues that will arise through reorganisation, including managing service impacts and opportunities for the workforce, digital and IT systems, and leadership support.

Timelines and next steps for interim plans and full proposals

We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals.

As your area has been successful in joining the Devolution Priority Programme, we will be working with you toward an election for the Mayor of the Strategic Authority in May 2026. To help manage these demands, I have decided to make legislation to postpone the local elections in your area from May 2025 to May 2026. My department will work with your area to take forward both devolution and reorganisation to the most ambitious timeline possible. Government will be consulting across your area in February and March on the benefits that devolution will bring, and to allow sufficient time for you to also carry out engagement necessary to develop robust and evidenced unitary proposals, I will expect any full proposal to be submitted **by 26 September**. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation.

Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. My officials are available throughout to discuss how your reorganisation and devolution aspirations might work together and what support you think you might need to proceed.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government in your area on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures for your area that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve. As set out in the White Paper, my commitment is that clear leadership locally will be met with an active partner nationally.

I am copying this letter to council Chief Executives. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament, and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim McMahon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Norfolk, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **26 September 2025**.
2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.
3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.



F KIRWAN

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025

SCHEDULE

Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

1. **A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.**
 - a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.
 - b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.
 - c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.
 - d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

2. **Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.**
 - a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
 - b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.
 - c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.
 - d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.
 - e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.
 - f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.,

3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

- a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.
- b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.
- c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.
- b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.
- c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.
- b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.
- c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

- a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.
- b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

- a) Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.
- b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

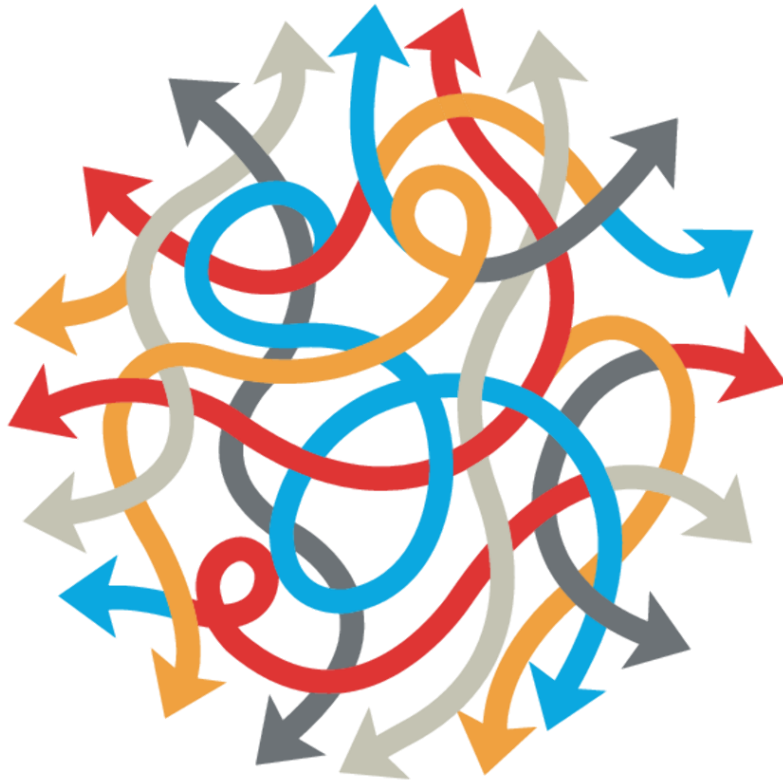
Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

- a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.
- b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.
- c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.
- d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.
- e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.
- f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on mayoral devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation.

Interim plans

An interim plan should be provided to Government on or before **21 March 2025**. This should set out your progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one interim plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the interim plan describes more than one potential proposal for your area, if there is more than one option under consideration. The interim plan should:

- a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.
- b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.
- c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.
- d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.
- e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.
- f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.
- g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.
- h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.



Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk

DRAFT - March 2025

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Deloitte LLP
March 2025

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The interim plan

The purpose of this paper

In December 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released the English Devolution White Paper. The White Paper sets out the Government's ambitions around local government reorganisation in that they are seeking to establish Unitary Councils in existing two-tier areas. Subsequently, on 5th February 2025, a formal call for unitary solutions was made by Government, with a March 21st deadline for initial plans. Each Council in Norfolk was invited to work with the other council leaders in the area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation. In this context, the District Councils wished to undertake a piece of work to review all of the options for local government reorganisation and select the option with the most benefits for the people of Norfolk. Therefore, the District Councils commissioned Deloitte to undertake an appraisal of the options and prepare a submission for Government on this basis.

This paper represents the output of this work. It provides the information requested by Government in initial plans by March 21st, including an appraisal of three key options for the future of local government in Norfolk, barriers and challenges faced so far, and early views on costs and councillor numbers.

1. Context and Approach

This report represents the culmination of collaborative efforts by Norfolk's District Councils, driven by a shared commitment to securing the best possible outcomes for the citizens of Norfolk. Recognising the Government's call for unitary solutions in the English Devolution White Paper, council leaders and chief executives have dedicated significant time and resources to appraising options for local government reorganisation. This collaborative spirit, deeply ingrained in Norfolk's ethos, is exemplified by existing successful partnerships like the Norfolk Waste Partnership. These initiatives demonstrate the District Councils' proven ability to work together effectively, leveraging shared expertise and resources to deliver high-quality services that meet the diverse needs of Norfolk's residents.

Norfolk, a county rich in history and natural beauty, presents a unique tapestry of vibrant communities, each with its own distinct identity and economic profile. From the bustling urban centre of Norwich, a recognised economic powerhouse, to the coastal communities of Great Yarmouth and North Norfolk, and the rural heartlands of Breckland and King's Lynn & West Norfolk, the county offers a diverse landscape of opportunities and challenges.

This report acknowledges the unique nuances of Norfolk, recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach to local government reorganisation would fail to capture and address the specific needs and aspirations of its diverse communities. The options appraisal process has been guided by a deep understanding of these local contexts, ensuring that the chosen model not only delivers administrative efficiencies, but also empowers communities, fosters local ownership, and celebrates the distinct identities that make Norfolk so unique.

2. Barriers and Challenges

Firstly, please note that the options appraisal is work in progress and an evolving document. Meaningful engagement with broader key stakeholders, in particular with local communities, is currently being planned and will have a key impact in finalising the options appraisal. This will also play a key role in finalising the specific boundaries for the proposed unitaries in each option: the Districts would like to hear and take into account local views on the identities of individual communities.

Therefore, the findings in this paper should be considered transitional and interim until further discussions and, in particular, public engagement can be undertaken.

Second, Norfolk District Council Leaders and Senior District Council Officers have engaged positively and collaboratively in discussions and exploratory working sessions to discuss and appraise suitable options. This has taken time and resource to collate data, discuss the options, and undertake engagement. Much further work will be required to build on this positive start. Therefore, securing funding to further develop the full plan and supporting business case will be essential. This is costed below.

Third, the Districts would welcome further clarity from Government on their position regarding the future of urban areas in two-tier areas. The White Paper highlights the crucial role of cities as economic drivers and their unique needs in terms of housing, infrastructure, and service delivery. However, specific guidance on how these considerations should be factored into local government reorganisation proposals would be beneficial. In particular, the issues involved in defining the boundaries around the city of Norwich to create a unitary are complicated. Further clarity on what the Government perceives as key considerations here would be welcome, enabling the Districts to assess the options and ensure the chosen model best serves the needs of all Norfolk's citizens, including those in urban areas.

3. Option Appraisal

An initial longlist of options was developed based on a review of previous work around local government reorganisation in Norfolk, inputs from Deloitte, discussions with Leaders and Chief Executives, and a review of population numbers and the Government's criteria.

This longlist was then reviewed and the following notable options were eliminated:

- The 'doughnut' option (carving out Norwich as a single unitary with the rest of the county forming a separate unitary) was eliminated as the 'worst of all worlds' with the breadth of places that would be covered by the 'ring', including significant travel times from one end of the unitary to the other, whilst not having the scale and efficiency advantages of the single county unitary model. The shortlisted two-unitary model outlined below was preferred.
- Cross-county boundary changes (i.e. forming unitaries that span across the Norfolk – Suffolk border) were ruled out as this would mean changes to both District and County boundaries. The potential arguments for this level of change did not justify the added complexity, in particular given Government indicated they wished for minimal change to existing broader public service boundaries (e.g. the Police).
- A three-unitary model focusing on extended Norwich boundaries (i.e. including the whole of South Norfolk and Broadland in a single unitary with Norwich) was rejected on the basis that it would leave behind an unsustainably small local authority in population terms in a combination of North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth.

A shortlist of three options was created. The three shortlisted options for local government reorganisation have been examined as outlined below.

Option 1 – Single County Unitary

Option 2 – Two Unitary Option

- Unitary 1: Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, Breckland, and a part of North Norfolk
- Unitary 2: Broadland, Great Yarmouth, Norwich, South Norfolk, and the remainder of North Norfolk

Option 3 – Three Unitary Option

- Unitary 1: Greater Norwich on Extended Boundaries
- Unitary 2: Breckland, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, and a part of North Norfolk
- Unitary 3: Great Yarmouth, the remainder of Broadland and South Norfolk, and the remainder of North Norfolk

Please note that the specific boundaries under option 2 and option 3 are currently being defined with the support of community engagement. It would be helpful to receive a steer from the Government on the criteria for changing current District boundaries, as described above.

The Criteria

The three options have been assessed against the following criteria, as set by the Government in the letter dated 5th February 2025:

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Ranking the options against the criteria

Each of the three options have been given a forced ranking against each of the six criteria, as indicated in the table below. The forced ranking approach means that each option is scored either one, two or three against the criteria with no tied rankings, in order to establish each option's merits against each criteria in a relative fashion, allowing conclusion to be reached on which option is best (and worst).

This process has been undertaken objectively by assessing the relative merits of the evidence provided by the seven Districts, as well as the theoretical benefits and disbenefits of each option against each criteria. Please note that a score of 3 is best and a score of 1 is worst. The rankings for each option have then been added together and ranked with the highest score being selected as the preferred option.

Table 1: Rankings of each option against the six criteria.

Criteria	Option 1: Single Unitary	Option 2: Two-Unitary	Option 3: Three-Unitary
1. Establishment of a single tier of local government	1	2	3
2. Right size to achieve efficiencies, and withstand financial shocks	3	2	1
3. Public service delivery	1	3	2
4. Councils working together and local place identity	1	2	3
5. Support devolution arrangements	1	2	3
6. Stronger community engagement	1	2	3
Overall Ranking	Third (Score: 8)	Second (Score: 13)	First (Score: 15)

When considering the scoring above, it is important to note a couple of things:

1. **This assessment has not applied any weighting to the individual criteria.** Each criterion has been appraised and ranked on an equal footing, recognising the importance of each, and given that Government has given no formal steer on the most important factors. **Therefore individual councils may wish to decide which of the criteria are most important to them – and prioritise the scores in those areas, which may lead to a different overall assessment.**

The Districts would **welcome clarification from the Government on whether this assumption of equal weighting across all criteria is correct.** If specific criteria are considered more critical than others, receiving this steer would be beneficial in refining the assessment and ensuring alignment with the Government's priorities.

2. As mentioned above, **each unitary model in Norfolk presents distinct advantages and disadvantages and a set of trade-offs and competing arguments.** The analysis of the key metrics across the county within this report, which support the Government's preferred criteria, do not create a robust picture of the perfect configuration of unitaries moving forward. For example, metrics indicate a range of places with differing demographics, different economies, different housing markets, and different needs. Therefore, the selection of the preferred option becomes a balancing act of competing arguments based on the evidence.

Three further key things should be noted:

First and foremost, **the single county unitary scored significantly lower than the other two options.** It was the best option identified against only one of the six criteria – the financial and demographic assessment in criteria 2. **Therefore, despite the complexity outlined above and potential trade offs, a clear conclusion does emerge from this assessment that the single county unitary option should be rejected.**

Second, it should be noted that for several of the criteria, there were small differences between the **two-unitary and three-unitary models.**

Third, the **three unitary model did score the best overall against the Government's criteria and therefore has been selected as the preferred option.**

Summary of scoring against the criteria

The appendix to this report contains the detailed evidence and rationale for each ranking against the criteria. A summary has been provided below.

Criteria one: Establishment of a single tier of local government.

The two and three-unitary models **create more opportunity for delivering economic growth** by acknowledging that different areas of the county have extremely different economies, and allowing for local plans to address the local needs of each area, based on a real understanding of place and the local economy. For example, Norwich will focus on knowledge and innovation, professional and technology services; the coastal areas will focus on becoming an energy hub, and the rural areas will focus on market towns, agri-tech and manufacturing.

The three unitary model has been ranked as best because of the evidence of the unique nature of the Norwich economy. Norwich requires its own solutions to economic and housing issues and the creation of integrated growth, unlocking the potential of the Norwich economy as the powerhouse of the region. The UK's economic future hangs on the success of its cities, which generate the majority of national GVA. Option 3 (three unitary model) is the only option that gives due weight and focus to the City of Norwich in this regard, supporting its delivery of economic growth.

Furthermore, the three unitary model creates two distinct other unitaries rooted in place. Each would have an urban focus in Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn. There is also evidence of some economic, travel to work, and housing market similarities across the two potential new unitaries built around the West Norfolk / Breckland and South Norfolk / Broadland areas, which builds the relative case for the three unitary model: the new unitaries can develop plans to tackle the shared needs in these areas and deliver economic growth.

The possible shortcoming of the three unitary model is that **it breaks the Norwich travel to work area**: a very large geographic area from which residents commute into Norwich, and therefore potentially isolates some communities outside of their most suitable economic zone. This will have to be managed carefully if this option is implemented. Overall, this concern is counterbalanced by the unique position of Norwich and the creation of three new unitaries, each with an urban focus and a set of shared economic issues, but it must be acknowledged that this is a trade-off between reasonable arguments.

Finally, **the single county unitary creates a footprint that is too big** covering the whole 2000+ square miles of Norfolk and has less chance of creating economic growth due to its lack of focus on place. The data is very clear that different areas of the county have extremely different economies, with different sectoral focuses, and different economic challenges, such as high housing prices in some areas, or a lack of skills in other areas. For one local authority to develop individualised plans to address these needs would be very difficult. Instead, local plans are required to address these local needs, based on a real understanding of place and local economy, which is best provided by a greater number of smaller unitaries dedicated to place. Therefore the single county unitary has been ranked as worst against this criterion.

Criteria two: Right size to achieve efficiencies, and withstand financial shocks

A rapid financial assessment has been undertaken as part of this work and it indicates that **option one – the single county unitary – may achieve the greatest net financial benefits** due to its scale and ability to make savings from exploiting economies of scale.

Option three – a three-unitary model – may achieve the lowest savings due to the need to create three councils with separate structures and services, and smaller economies of scale.

Option two (two-unitary model) represents a compromise between options one and three.

However, it should be noted that the financial assessment has only looked at transactional savings from bringing services together. Smaller unitaries may be able to deliver more transformational change through better understanding and management of local demand and by creating more locally designed preventative services by working with the voluntary and community sector. Investing in these preventative measures can generate long-term cost savings. Moreover, the unitaries could create some shared services across the Norfolk footprint to achieve economies of scale where required, for example in corporate services. Existing examples of collaboration and shared services between the Districts prove this can be done successfully. These two points could bridge the savings gap to the single unitary model.

Furthermore, diseconomies of scale are also possible when organisations get bigger. Organisational structures and processes can become too complicated and cumbersome. Many Town and Parish councils would describe the County Council in these terms. Further public and stakeholder engagement will be important on this point.

This has been a purely theoretical exercise to look at costs and benefits. Savings delivery from this kind of programme is much more difficult in reality. There are certainly examples of county unitaries that have been formed which have struggled to deliver financial savings, and then struggled financially subsequently, particularly in rural areas. Size alone is not an answer to financial sustainability.

On the population size question, option one is the only option that meets the Government's criteria for a minimum population size of 500,000. However, this would create the second largest authority by population in England, covering a very large geography and therefore diluting community identity and place-making and shaping. Both the proposed two councils and three councils under options two and three would cover a significant population size and geography and compare favourably to other unitary councils that currently exist in England.

Criteria three: Public service delivery

A two or three-unitary model has more chance of improving services due to the potential focus on local need. Residents have different needs in different places across the county. Evidence makes this clear in areas such as skills and education, unemployment rates, ageing population and social care needs, and health and wellbeing indicators. **A two or three-unitary model can take into account these different local needs, and deliver services that are responsive to them**, being more agile and more easily moving resources to where they are needed most.

However, there is the risk of disaggregation of services as existing county level services may be divided up into two unitaries or three unitaries. This could be expensive as it will need to recreate staffing structures. To mitigate this, for services where scale is important, and local need less so, the two or three unitaries could collaborate and create shared services. For example, a Children's Trust model could be set up for Children's Social Care. Elements of commissioning and market management could be conducted on the county footprint (or Strategic Authority footprint) as a shared service where appropriate, whilst local teams in the individual unitaries focus on assessment and prevention. This could achieve a balance between the benefits of economies of scale, and locally tailored services. All the District Councils are keen to explore this as part of the next detailed analysis stage.

On the other hand, the single county unitary could in theory create more economies of scale, and potentially deliver greater performance consistency across the county. However, the County Council has not been able to achieve this at the current time. For example, 28% of Norfolk's 320 care homes need improvement. A more locally driven approach may be able to generate more improvement.

As noted above, a number of smaller unitaries may be able to deliver more transformational change by creating more locally designed preventative services, rooted in local communities and new relationships with residents and the voluntary sector, and built around concepts of social prescribing.

A three unitary model would be effectively aligned to existing public service delivery infrastructure, including the three Public Protection Divisions of the Police, the three principal Further Education colleges, and the three acute hospitals in Norfolk. Similarly, the three-unitary model would mean that the highest crime areas of Norwich, Great Yarmouth, and King's Lynn and West Norfolk each fall under a separate unitary authority. This could facilitate dedicated police attention and resources to reduce crime levels and implement prevention strategies.

Overall, option two – a two-unitary model – has been scored best as is it minimises the disaggregation risk (which grows with the greater number of unitaries) and improves economies of scale, whilst being able to better take into account local needs than the single county unitary.

The three unitary model has the best chance of improving services due to the potential focus on local need, and is aligned to existing public service delivery infrastructure, but this model will require a greater level of disaggregation than the two unitary model.

Criteria four: Councils working together and local place identity

The two and three-unitary models build on the Districts' track record of collaborative working. There is much evidence in this regard. Existing collaboration shows that shared services between councils in Norfolk can be highly effective, and new unitaries can build on this base. The two and three unitary models also clearly create brand new entities, removing any sense of 'takeover', which may cause cultural problems.

Perhaps most importantly, **smaller unitaries are more likely to develop and maintain a sense of real place, community and identity.** The three-unitary model acknowledges Norwich's historic and cultural identity as the major city of the region. It also makes it possible for the unitary to focus on tackling Norwich's urban issues, which are different to the rest of the county. It also creates **two distinct other unitaries rooted in place.** Each would have a single historic centre and urban focus, one with King's Lynn in the West, and one with Great Yarmouth in the East. It also ensures that other areas (including North Norfolk, the Broads, Brecks and Fens, and market towns) **will have appropriate place identities** as far as possible.

Again, here, the differences between a two and three unitary model are not huge. A three unitary model places a clearer focus on the Norwich identity, but would remove certain South Norfolk and Broadland communities from their natural place connection to Norwich, and instead puts these communities in a new unitary council with Great Yarmouth and parts of North Norfolk. There is also a risk that a Norwich unitary on extended boundaries results in the inclusions in the unitary of geographically separate, distinct settlements, with natural boundaries between them and Norwich. This could create a swamping effect that would be more diluted in the two unitary model.

This is a trade-off that must be acknowledged: some communities unfortunately will lose out whichever model is selected. Resident consultation and engagement will support further work on this area as the full plan is developed. On the basis that a two unitary model creates an authority that would have to serve a greater number of distinct places that encompasses all of Great Yarmouth, Norwich, South Norfolk, Broadland, and part of North Norfolk – the three unitary model has been ranked best.

The single county unitary scores lowest against this criteria. The current county council area of Norfolk is not a coherent single place. There is so much variation within the county that any solution must take into account the unique challenges and priorities of each place. For example, the significant size of Norfolk means that is likely to be too big to be managed by one council. Travel times and mileage from one end of the county to another are significant (with a one hour, twenty five minute drive from Great Yarmouth to King's Lynn). In some parts of the county, populations are dispersed over enormous areas – for example, King's Lynn and West Norfolk covers an area of 552 square miles. Breckland covers 500 square miles.

Criteria five: Support devolution arrangements

The two and three-unitary models can achieve the potential economic benefits of operating strategically at scale if the Norfolk and Suffolk Strategic Authority is created. It is easy to envisage an approach that combines multiple unitaries across Norfolk and Suffolk with the Strategic Authority, therefore providing an ideal combination of strategic thinking on issues such as planning and transport, and local focus on the specific challenges that need to be faced in the individual places within the two counties.

The three unitary model has been ranked as best on the basis of the arguments above, in that it creates a more balanced power dynamic within the Strategic Authority. Each unitary would represent a distinct community of interest with a comparable population size, ensuring that no single authority dominates the partnership. Three unitaries would also provide a stronger platform for local voices to be heard within the Strategic Authority.

A single county unitary would be too similar in size to the Strategic Authority for it to make sense. It would create a power imbalance between the county and the Strategic Authority given the size difference would not be large. The three unitary model creates a clear size differential.

Criteria six: Stronger community engagement

The two or three-unitary models better maintain effective local engagement. There is a **significant danger that a county unitary could become too remote** from citizens and communities, reduce local decision making, and even perhaps damage the interests of the individual places. Bigger local authorities may be more inclined to give more focus to factors such as value for money at the expense of local need and have to trade off the different needs of different places, simply due to their size. This can mean that local places lose out.

By contrast, a **two or three-unitary model could create a very different culture**, building on the strengths of the districts in working with their local residents and communities of place and interest. There is lots of evidence of the effectiveness of the local engagement programmes of the District Councils in Norfolk.

The three unitary option has been ranked as best on the basis that it creates councils of a more relatable scale that are therefore closer to their communities: smaller is better for local engagement.

Summary of the scoring against the criteria

This methodology results in the following conclusion:

- The three-unitary model (option 3) has received the highest ranking.
- The two-unitary model (option 2) has received the second overall ranking.
- The single county unitary model (option 1) has received the lowest overall ranking.

Fundamentally the three-unitary option scored the best because it:

- Is firmly rooted in an understanding of the places of Norfolk, in that **it reflects and prioritises the three main historic urban centres (Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn)** which act as the main civic and economic hubs for Norfolk. Each of these places has its own distinct characteristics and opportunities which can be exploited under a unitary structure based around these three urban centres.
- Will drive the **delivery of improved outcomes for the people of Norfolk**, including focusing on attracting globally renowned companies investing in the UK driving both local

and national economic growth, reducing worklessness in deprived areas, contributing to building social cohesion, and driving a strong prevention agenda for health and wellbeing.

- Creates a **singular focus for Norwich as the economic driving force and powerhouse of Norfolk**, creating opportunity for significant growth around the urban fringe in an integrated way, therefore promoting future economic and housing growth.
- Creates **more opportunity for delivering economic growth** by acknowledging that different areas of the county have extremely different economies, and allowing for local plans to address the local needs of each area, based on a real understanding of place and the local economy. For example, Norwich will focus on knowledge and innovation, professional and technology services; the coastal areas will focus on becoming an energy hub and strong tourist economy, and the rural areas will focus on market towns, agri-tech and manufacturing.
- Ensures that **areas will have appropriate place identities** as far as possible, given the more relatable scale of the authorities and therefore greater focus on individual place, in particular giving greater focus to Norwich, and reflecting the identities, economic, travel to work, and housing market similarities across the West Norfolk / Breckland and South Norfolk / Broadland areas.
- Is based on local relationships between existing Districts with **a track record of successful collaboration and delivering highly effective, cost effective services**. For example, each unitary can work closely alongside its acute hospital, and with new build replacement hospitals proposed at Great Yarmouth (Gorleston) and Kings Lynn and an ageing population, the integration between social care and health to accelerate prevention and healthy ageing programmes can be more rapidly achieved.
- Provides a **strong base for devolution alongside a Norfolk and Suffolk Strategic Authority** due to the balanced nature of the population sizes of the proposed unitaries, allowing equal representation; the differential between the proposed unitaries and the potential Strategic Authority (as the Government has requested), and the ability to create economic growth through focus on delivering local plans for local places, and in particular unleashing the potential of Norwich, working with the new Strategic Authority which will be critical in creating the strategic infrastructure and roadmap.
- Better maintains effective **local engagement due to the number of smaller authorities**, which can build on highly successful methods of community and stakeholder engagement employed by each of the Districts.

4. Indicative costs and arrangements

An initial estimate of costs has been made at £1.2m for developing the full plan up to September 2024, as per the table below.

These costs include the officer implementation team required to develop the full plan.

Table 5: Estimation of direct process costs.

Area	Description	Estimated Cost
	Officer time within Councils to support project management, policy development and subject matter expert input.	£0.3m
Capacity Funding: Proposal Development, Financial Modelling, and Implementation planning.	External advisory spend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support with preparation of full plan. Advice on development of Target Operating Model, workforce integration, estates rationalization, business case, financial modelling, as required. 	£0.7m
Stakeholder Communications and Engagement	Appointing external advisors to help manage overall communications and engagement process.	£0.2m
Total		£1.2m

An estimate has also been made of the costs of implementation of the three unitary model at £14.4m. Again, a breakdown is provided below.

This is early work. The assumptions made so far are based on previous experience of undertaking similar exercises. Therefore these figures cannot be relied upon at this stage by the local authorities concerned as accurate estimates.

Table 6: Estimation of enabling restructuring costs.

Area	Description	Estimated Cost
Redundancies	Redundancies to facilitate restructuring, to reduce long term management costs.	£5.1m
Programme Integration (PMO)	Costs of an integrated programme office to drive rapid and effective integration of services needed to deliver benefits.	£1.6m
Digital/IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Centre and data migration IT Networks Telephony Financial Ledgers Payroll systems Procurement systems 	£7m
Estates	Costs to consolidate the estate as part of restructure.	£0.7m
Total		£14.4m

Further work will have to be undertaken on how these costs will be funded, but it is assumed at the current time that they could be funded from the potential savings delivered from creating the new unitaries, as per the financial assessment.

The costs could be phased over a period of time depending on the pace of implementation plans and the degree of change that the new authorities wish to implement.

5. Councillor numbers

The following councillor numbers have been estimated at this stage, based on a ratio of 5000 electors to one councillor. This ratio is based on potentially similar councils such as North Yorkshire and Cornwall.

Three-Unitary Model	Indicative Councillor Numbers
Unitary 1	43
Unitary 2	48
Unitary 3	50

6. Structures to support devolution

The three-unitary model for Norfolk presents a promising approach to supporting devolution arrangements and fostering a balanced and effective partnership within a two-county (Norfolk and Suffolk) Strategic Authority.

Enhanced balance and representation

- **More equitable power dynamics:** Dividing Norfolk into three unitaries, as proposed, creates a more balanced power dynamic within the Strategic Authority. Each unitary would represent a distinct community of interest, ensuring that no single entity dominates the partnership. This aligns with the Devolution White Paper's emphasis on "partnerships that bring more than one Local Authority together over a large geography" and avoids the risk of a single dominant authority overshadowing others.
- **Amplifying local voices:** Three unitaries would provide a stronger platform for local voices to be heard within the Strategic Authority. Each unitary would be more directly accountable to its residents, fostering greater responsiveness to local needs and priorities. This structure promotes the White Paper's principle of "ensuring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level," empowering communities to have a greater say in shaping their future.

Strengthening collaboration and local focus

- **Facilitating strategic alignment:** The three unitary model can facilitate better alignment between strategic priorities and local needs. Each unitary, with its more focused geographical area, can develop a deeper understanding of its communities' specific challenges and opportunities. This local expertise can then be brought to the Strategic Authority, ensuring that decisions are grounded in local realities and reflect the diverse needs of the region.
- **Promoting integrated solutions:** While some issues require a county-wide approach, many challenges are best addressed at a more localised level. Three unitaries would empower local leaders to develop tailored solutions, fostering innovation and responsiveness. For example, Unitary 3, encompassing Great Yarmouth, part of Broadland and South Norfolk, and part of North Norfolk, could develop specialised strategies for coastal management and tourism, while Unitary 2, comprising Breckland, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, and the North Norfolk County divisions of Fakenham & The Raynams, Holt and Wells, could focus on rural transport and economic development initiatives tailored to their specific needs.

Unlocking devolution's full potential

- **Nurturing strong local leadership:** Three unitaries would foster the development of strong local leadership, empowering communities to take ownership of their future. This aligns with the White Paper's vision of "a strong foundation of capable and responsive local governance" as a prerequisite for successful devolution. By distributing power and decision-making across

three entities, this model encourages greater accountability and responsiveness to local needs.

- **Building blocks for an established Mayoral Strategic Authority:** The White Paper envisions a future where all parts of England have an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, unlocking further devolution and an Integrated Settlement. This three-unitary model for Norfolk provides the necessary building blocks for achieving this ambition. By establishing a balanced and collaborative framework at the local level, this structure paves the way for a smooth transition to an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, ensuring that Norfolk is well-positioned to benefit from further devolution.

The three-unitary option for Norfolk aligns strongly with the principles and objectives of devolution as outlined in the White Paper. It promotes a balanced and representative Strategic Authority, enhances collaboration and local focus, and fosters the development of strong local leadership. This model offers a promising pathway for unlocking the full potential of devolution, ensuring that all communities in Norfolk and Suffolk have a meaningful voice in shaping their future and benefitting from a more prosperous and equitable region.

7. Local engagement

As noted above, the tight deadlines for creating the proposal have thus far precluded the opportunity for meaningful engagement with key stakeholders, town and parish councils and Norfolk's residents.

The District Councils are keen to inform and involve residents, businesses, and staff, the opportunities for which have been severely constrained in this early phase of work.

To do this the districts will utilise existing community networks, working closely with existing community groups, parish and town councils, and other local organisations to reach residents through established channels. Briefings are already taking place with parish and town councils across Norfolk.

The districts will also employ a variety of communication channels: using a mix of online and offline communication channels, including social media, local newspapers, public meetings, and focus groups, to ensure that information is accessible to all. Recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach is not always effective, and local communities and demographic groups have different preference towards routes of engagement, each districts tailor engagement strategies to the audience, topic or outcome being sought.

The districts have written to a range of key stakeholders including the Integrated Care Board, Acute Hospital Trusts, Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector. They will seek meetings to explore the preferred option of these stakeholders for local government reorganisation.

8. Voluntary arrangements

A range of regular meetings have been set up to enable the councils involved to keep working on these proposals. These meetings are supported by a programme team with membership taken from all the districts. The meetings are as follows:

- The Programme Team meet every Tuesday afternoon
- Council Leaders meet every week on a Monday
- Council Chief Executives meet every week on a Friday
- There are regular touchpoints between the districts and the County Council.

Conclusion

This paper has identified **a three unitary model** as the preferred option for the future structure of local government in Norfolk (please see the 'Summary of the scoring against the criteria' section above for details).

In arriving at this conclusion, Norfolk District Council Elected Leaders and Senior District Council Officers have engaged positively and collaboratively in discussions and exploratory working sessions to discuss and appraise suitable options.

Initial thoughts have already been provided on potential costs, councillor numbers and devolution arrangements.

The District Councils would now like to continue to work together to develop this option further for final submission in September 2025, including a full business case and fully worked up boundaries.

In this regard, a steer from Government on the criteria for determining whether changes are required to existing District boundaries would be very helpful. The issues involved in defining the boundaries around the city of Norwich to create a unitary are complicated. Further clarity on what the Government perceives as key considerations here would be welcome.

Examples of the evidence used for the options appraisal

The following sections provide a summary of evidence supporting the conclusions outlined above.

Criteria one: Establishment of a single tier of local government.

Economy

Norfolk's local economies share several key similarities and potential synergies that could be leveraged for collective growth and prosperity as part of a potential multi-unitary model:

- **Economic powerhouse:** Norwich City stands out as the urban centre, dominated by public administration, education, and retail, reflecting its role as a regional hub. Norwich's growth in sectors like digital technology, financial services, and healthcare creates potential employment opportunities for residents of surrounding areas like South Norfolk and Broadland. Improving transport links and promoting skills development aligned with these sectors could enhance access to these opportunities.
- **Coastal Tourism:** Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk, and King's Lynn & West Norfolk all benefit significantly from coastal tourism, attracting visitors to their beaches, seaside towns, and natural beauty. This shared strength presents opportunities for collaboration, particularly in attracting a wider visitor demographic, extending the tourism season and invest in maritime related industries.
- **Agriculture and Agri-Tech:** Agriculture remains a significant sector in North Norfolk, Breckland, and South Norfolk. Collaboration on initiatives to promote agri-tech innovation, support rural businesses, and enhance agricultural productivity could benefit all three regions.
- **Manufacturing:** King's Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland both have a long history of manufacturing, forming a significant part of their economic identity and employment base. Collaboration on initiatives to support manufacturing businesses, attract investment in the sector, and develop a skilled workforce to meet industry needs would enhance the growth of this market area. This could involve joint skills training programs, shared resources for business support, and promoting the region as a hub for manufacturing excellence.
- **Professional and Technical Sectors:** Norwich and the surrounding urban areas have key economies in financial and professional services. This continued growth could see a spill over affect to wider areas, accelerating innovation and growth across the wider county.
- **Market Town Revitalisation:** With a network of market towns that serve as vital economic and social hubs for their communities, King's Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland face similar challenges from the rise of online shopping, changing consumer habits, and the need to attract new businesses and investment. Collaboration on initiatives to revitalise market town centres, promote local businesses, and create attractive public spaces could benefit both districts.
- **Access to Knowledge and Innovation:** South Norfolk and Broadland benefit from their proximity to Norwich, with its world-leading research institutes, universities, and thriving business clusters. This proximity provides opportunities for collaboration on research and development, knowledge transfer, and skills development, potentially benefiting businesses in both regions.

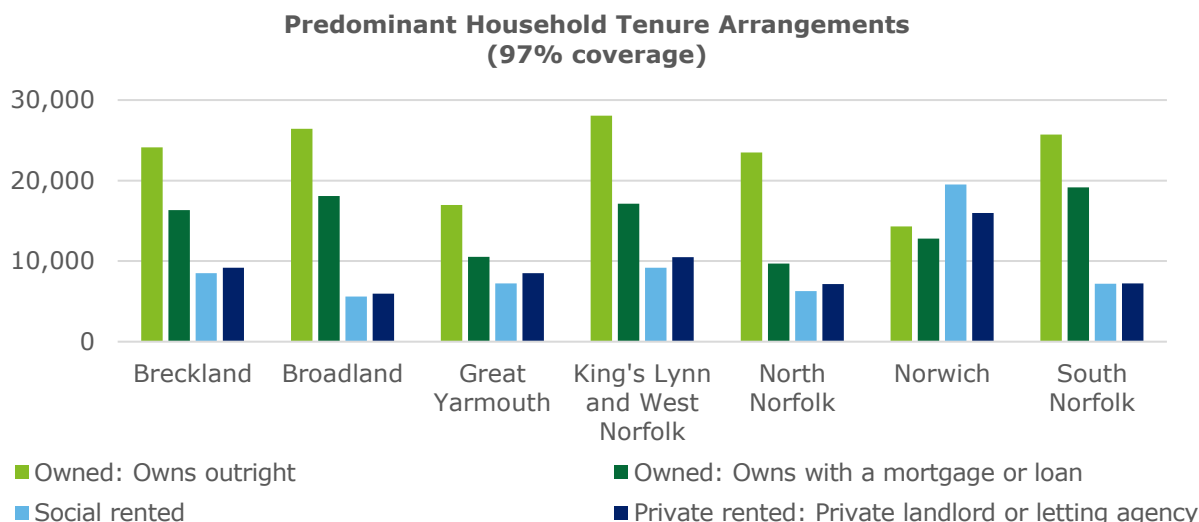
This analysis indicates that the two and three-unitary models create more opportunity for delivering economic growth by acknowledging that different areas of the county have extremely different

economies, and allowing for local plans to address the local needs of each area, based on a real understanding of place and the local economy.

For example, Norwich will focus on knowledge and innovation, professional and technology services; the coastal areas will focus on becoming an energy hub, and the rural areas will focus on market towns, agri-tech and manufacturing.

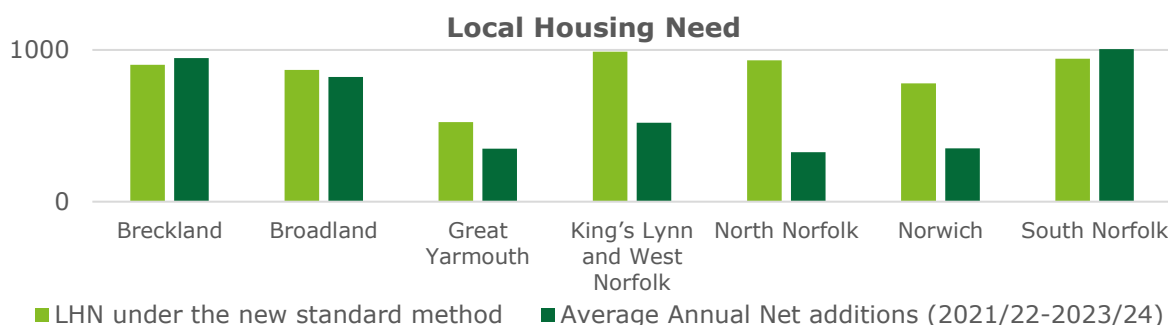
Housing

Analysis of housing tenure patterns across Norfolk districts reveals distinct variations that highlight the varied market dynamics within the county.



These variations in housing tenure patterns have implications for the proposed unitary models. The concentration of private and social renting in Norwich highlights the need for a greater focus on resources and support services related to tenant rights, housing affordability, and homelessness prevention in the city. Conversely, the high levels of homeownership in King's Lynn & West Norfolk, South Norfolk and Broadland might influence planning strategies under the three unitary model focusing on supporting sustainable development that meets the needs of homeowners, while also ensuring a sufficient supply of affordable housing options.

The annual net additions to the housing stock across the Norfolk districts illustrate some notable gaps between housing delivery and projected needs.

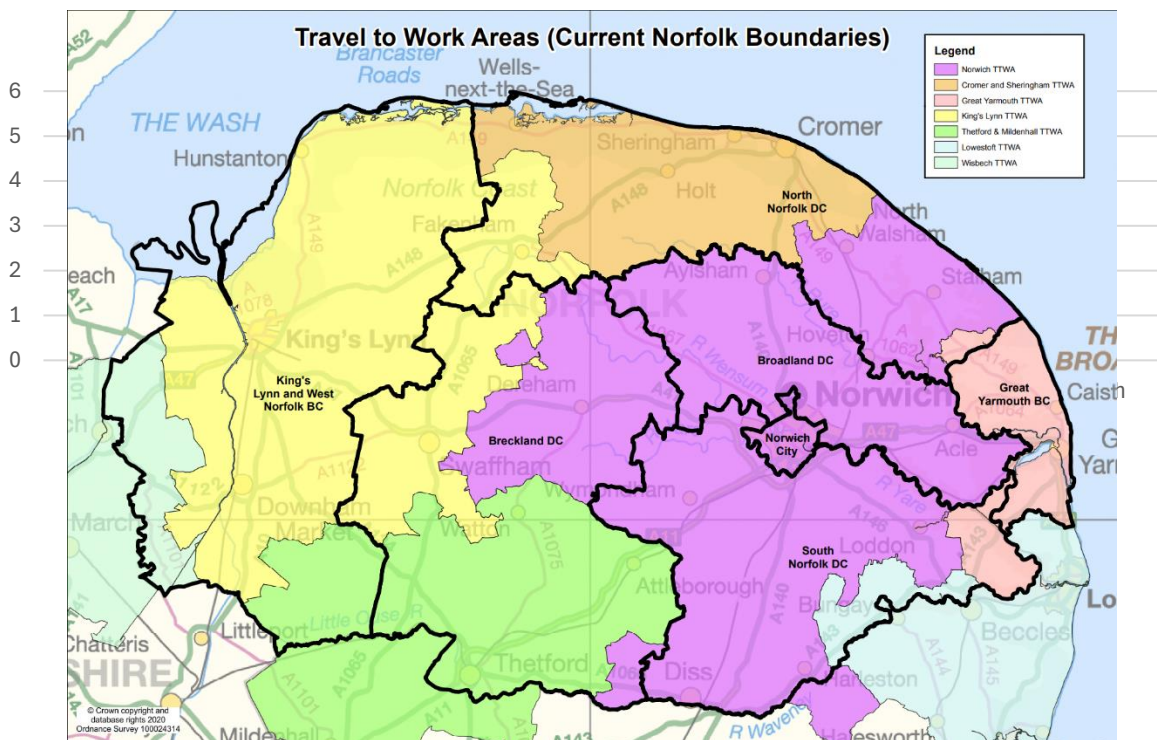


Across Norfolk, the average annual net additions of housing (dark green bars) generally fall short of the Local Housing Need targets (light green bars) set by the new standard method. This shortfall is particularly pronounced in North Norfolk, King's Lynn & West Norfolk, and Norwich. This suggests these areas face a greater challenge in meeting their housing needs, and working across three unitaries may be helpful in the future. For example, an integrated approach on a bigger footprint may help Norwich to deliver more housing. However, this must be done carefully. It must be

acknowledged that South Norfolk and Broadland have excellent track records of housing delivery, and a three unitary model could disrupt this, when compared to a two unitary model. Issues such as the strategic gap between communities around the fringe of Norwich must be maintained.

Considering economic inactivity, five of the seven Districts exhibit similar rates of residents receiving unemployment-related benefits. By contrast, the needs in Great Yarmouth (5%) and Norwich (4.1%) are significantly different. A three unitary model could ensure focused on attention on these issues as Great Yarmouth and Norwich will be in different local authorities.

Travel to work

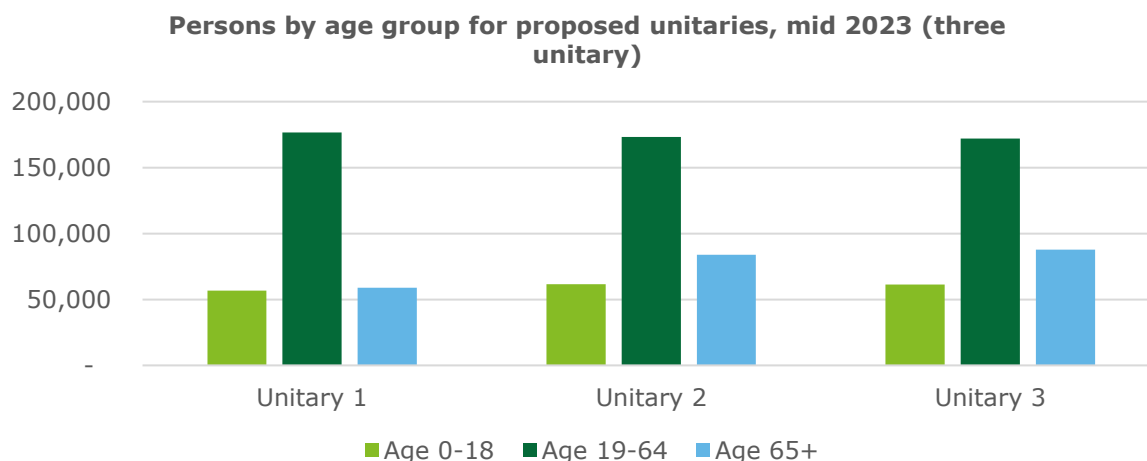


The disadvantage of the three unitary model is that it breaks the travel to work area across South Norfolk and Broadland where residents commute into Norwich and potentially isolates some communities outside of their most suitable economic zone. This will have to be managed carefully if this option is implemented, which should be helped by the economic similarities between South Norfolk and Broadland, which will put these interests at the heart of the potential new unitary. This focus is already evident through the existing Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) which brings together Norwich City, South Norfolk, and Broadland, in conjunction with the wider county, to accelerate infrastructure development and access into the area.

Please note that the travel to work data above is from 2014 and before the Covid pandemic – but it is the latest available data on this subject.

Demography

A two or three-unitary model could also be built on similarities in population demographics. For example, King's Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland, both share a comparable split of their population aged 0-18 (c.20%) and working aged adults (c.55%). Similarly, Great Yarmouth, Broadland and South Norfolk all demonstrate a similar population size of older-aged adults (c.35,000). These similarities indicate a good basis for the two or three unitary model.



Criteria two: Right size to achieve efficiencies, and withstand financial shocks

A rapid financial assessment has been undertaken as part of this work, considering both estimated costs and savings across the proposed models. The results of this work are shown in the table below.

Area		Option 1: Single-Unitary	Option 2: Two-Unitary	Option 3: Three-Unitary
Costs	Redundancy Costs	£7.3m	£6.3m	£5.1m
	Integration PMO	£1.1m	£1.3m	£1.6m
	Digital/IT	£5m	£6m	£7m
	Estates	£0.9m	£0.8m	£0.7m
	Council tax harmonisation	£9.8m	£8.2m	£5.5m
	Total Costs	£24.1m	£22.6m	£19.9m
Savings	Leadership savings	£5.5m	£4.6m	£3.7m
	Corporate Services	£15.9m	£14.3m	£12.9m
	Property Rationalisation	£2.7m	£2.4m	£2.2m
	Service Optimisation	£10m	£9m	£8.1m
	Democratic Savings	£1.3m	£0.8m	£0.6m
	Total Savings	£35.4m	£31.1m	£27.5m
Net Saving		£11.3m	£8.5m	£7.6m

Please note that an exercise of this type is by its nature very driven by the assumptions made. The assumptions made so far are based on previous experience of undertaking similar exercises. Therefore these figures cannot be relied upon at this stage by the local authorities concerned as accurate estimates. This is an exercise to show relative costs and benefits, which can then give an indication of which option may be the most financially advantageous.

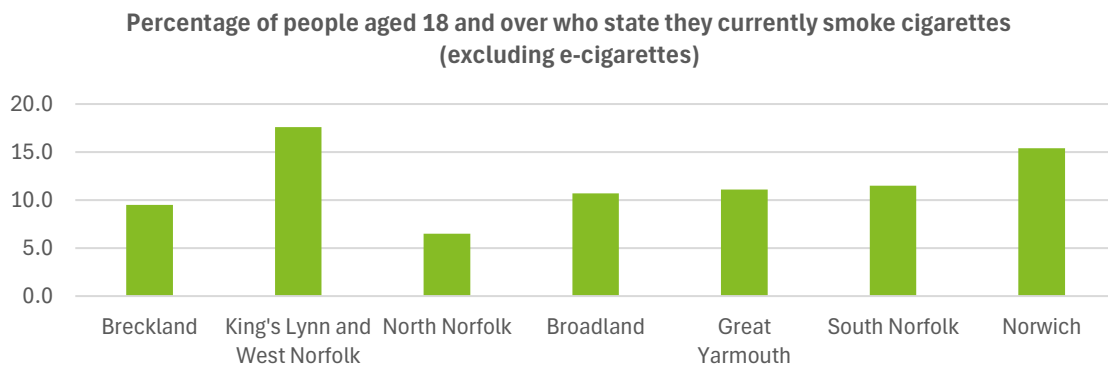
Please also note that further areas would be looked at where savings could be made as part of the move towards a final plan and supporting business case. These might include service transformation opportunities, or potentially looking at issues such as the costs of creating and manging new parish councils, or any potential savings from possibly merging the Broads Authority into the new unitaries.

Criteria three: Public service delivery

A two or three-unitary model has more chance of improving services due to the potential focus on local need. Residents have different needs in different places across the county. Evidence makes this clear in areas such as skills and education, unemployment rates, ageing population and social care needs, and health and wellbeing indicators.

Health and wellbeing

For example, health and wellbeing indicators indicate different challenges in different places, as indicated by the graph below showing smoking prevalence.



Smaller unitaries may be able to deliver more transformational change by creating more locally designed preventative services, rooted in local communities and new relationships with residents and the voluntary sector, and built around concepts of social prescribing. Investing in these preventative measures promises not only to reduce homelessness but also to generate long-term cost savings.

Deprivation

Area	Number of communities in 20% most deprived in England	% of population in 20% most deprived in England
Breckland	6	10.4%
Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	7	15.4%
North Norfolk	2	2.6%
South Norfolk	0	0.0%
Broadland	0	0.0%
Great Yarmouth	9	40.0%
Norwich	12	39.0%

Norwich faces a unique challenge with regards to deprivation, with 20 communities classified within the most deprived 20% in England. While Great Yarmouth follows with nine communities in the same category, the concentration in Norwich highlights a specific need for targeted intervention. A three-unitary model, where Norwich is addressed in the context of the immediate greater Norwich area, allows for a bespoke approach to tackling these deeply rooted issues. This focused strategy can

better address the complex interplay of socio-economic factors contributing to deprivation in Norwich.

Criteria four: Councils working together and local place identity

The two and three-unitary models build on the Districts' track record of collaborative working. There is much evidence in this regard, with examples provided below.

Parking Operations

Parking Operations is a service department of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk (BCKLWN), providing parking related services to a number of local authority partners. Those included in the partnership are Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Breckland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk & Broadland.

The partnership behind Parking Operations exemplifies the collaborative spirit already present amongst Norfolk's District Councils. This joint venture, responsible for managing on-street parking operations, demonstrates the tangible benefits of shared services and regional cooperation.

Parking Operations provides a comprehensive range of services, including: **enforcement of parking regulations, management of parking permits, and operation of pay and display machines**: Parking Operations manages and maintains pay and display machines in both districts, ensuring a consistent and user-friendly experience for motorists.

Key aspects of this collaboration that highlight its effectiveness:

- **Pooling resources, increasing efficiency:** By joining forces, the councils have streamlined their parking operations, achieving cost savings and increased efficiency. This partnership allows for the sharing of expertise, technology, and resources, ultimately benefiting both councils and Norfolk's residents.
- **Seamless service delivery across boundaries:** Parking Operations provides a seamless experience for residents and visitors, regardless of which district they are in. This joined-up approach simplifies parking regulations and enforcement, enhancing convenience and promoting a more positive image for both areas.
- **A model for future collaboration:** The success of Parking Operations serves as a blueprint for future collaborations between Norfolk's District Councils. It demonstrates the potential for shared services to deliver tangible benefits, paving the way for a more integrated and efficient approach to local governance.

The existence of Parking Operations directly challenges the notion that a single, large unitary authority is necessary for effective service delivery in Norfolk. This partnership showcases the ability of District Councils to collaborate successfully, leveraging their combined strengths to provide efficient and cost-effective services for their residents.

The volume and diversity of collaborations across Norfolk demonstrate that:

- **Partnership is ingrained within the county:** Collaboration is deeply ingrained in the ethos of local governance in Norfolk. It is not a reactive response to specific funding opportunities or government mandates, but a proactive and enduring commitment to working together for the greater good.
- **District councils are not siloed entities:** The widespread collaboration across Norfolk demonstrates that District Councils are not operating in isolation. They are actively engaged in partnerships, both as leaders and participants, demonstrating their commitment to working across boundaries for the benefit of the wider community.

- **Effective collaboration can exist independently of structural change:** The success of existing partnerships, operating within the current District Council framework, challenges the assumption that a single unitary authority is a prerequisite for effective collaboration and service delivery.

The evidence overwhelmingly points to a local governance landscape in Norfolk where collaboration is not just an aspiration, but a lived reality. This collaborative spirit, evident in the breadth and depth of partnerships across the county, provides a strong foundation for future devolution and local empowerment, regardless of structural changes to local government.

Criteria five: Support devolution arrangements

The UK Government's Devolution White Paper outlines a clear vision for empowering local areas through Strategic Authorities. In the context of Norfolk, a two-county Strategic Authority encompassing both Norfolk and Suffolk presents a compelling opportunity. However, the success of this model hinges on establishing a strong foundation at the unitary level.

A two-unitary model for Norfolk, while a step towards a more balanced structure, still presents challenges to the effective implementation and long-term success of devolution arrangements within a proposed two-county Strategic Authority with Suffolk.

Addressing imbalance

- **Mitigating dominance:** Dividing Norfolk into two unitaries, as proposed, would partially address the issue of a single, dominant entity within the Strategic Authority. However, Unitary 2, encompassing the more populous and economically powerful areas of Broadland, Great Yarmouth, Norwich, and South Norfolk, would still hold a significant advantage over both Unitary 1 and Suffolk. This could lead to an uneven playing field within the Strategic Authority, potentially hindering equitable decision-making and resource allocation.
- **Population disparity persists:** Unitary 2 would have a much bigger population than unitary 1, potentially creating a democratic deficit and undermining the principle of "one person, one vote".

Challenges to collaboration and local focus

- **Strategic alignment and local needs:** The Devolution White Paper emphasizes the importance of aligning strategic priorities with the nuanced understanding of local needs. While two unitaries offer a degree of local focus, the proposed division could create challenges in addressing issues that require a more integrated approach. For example, transport infrastructure planning, economic development strategies, and environmental management often transcend unitary boundaries, necessitating strong collaboration and a shared vision.
- **Risk of a two-tier system:** Dividing Norfolk into two unitaries, with one encompassing the more urbanised and economically powerful areas, could inadvertently create a two-tier system within the county. Unitary 1, with its predominantly rural character, might struggle to compete for resources and influence within the Strategic Authority, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities and hindering its ability to effectively address the needs of its communities.

Unlocking devolution's potential

- **Fostering local leadership:** Two unitaries would provide a platform for stronger local leadership compared to a single unitary model. However, the potential for an imbalance between the two unitaries could hinder the development of truly equitable and

representative local governance. The Devolution White Paper's vision of empowered local authorities working in partnership within a Strategic Authority might be compromised by this uneven power dynamic.

In contrast, the three-unitary model for Norfolk presents a more promising approach to supporting devolution arrangements and fostering a balanced and effective partnership within a two-county Strategic Authority with Suffolk.

Enhanced balance and representation

- **More equitable power dynamics:** Dividing Norfolk into three unitaries creates a more balanced power dynamic within the Strategic Authority. Each unitary would represent a distinct community of interest with a more comparable population size to Suffolk, ensuring that no single entity dominates the partnership. This aligns with the Devolution White Paper's emphasis on "partnerships that bring more than one Local Authority together over a large geography" and avoids the risk of a single dominant authority overshadowing others.
- **Amplifying local voices:** Three unitaries would provide a stronger platform for local voices to be heard within the Strategic Authority. Each unitary would be more directly accountable to its residents, fostering greater responsiveness to local needs and priorities. This structure promotes the White Paper's principle of "ensuring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level," empowering communities to have a greater say in shaping their future.

Strengthening collaboration and local focus

- **Facilitating strategic alignment:** While three unitaries might require more coordination, this structure can actually facilitate better alignment between strategic priorities and local needs. Each unitary, with its more focused geographical area, can develop a deeper understanding of its communities' specific challenges and opportunities. This local expertise can then be brought to the Strategic Authority, ensuring that decisions are grounded in local realities and reflect the diverse needs of the region.
- **Promoting integrated solutions:** While some issues require a county-wide approach, many challenges are best addressed at a more localised level. Three unitaries would empower local leaders to develop tailored solutions, fostering innovation and responsiveness. For example, Unitary 3, encompassing Great Yarmouth, part of Broadland and South Norfolk, and part of North Norfolk, could develop specialised strategies for coastal management and tourism, while Unitary 2, comprising Breckland, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, and the North Norfolk County divisions of Fakenham & The Raynhams, Holt and Wells, could focus on rural transport and economic development initiatives tailored to their specific needs.

Unlocking devolution's full potential

- **Nurturing strong local leadership:** Three unitaries would foster the development of strong local leadership, empowering communities to take ownership of their future. This aligns with the White Paper's vision of "a strong foundation of capable and responsive local governance" as a prerequisite for successful devolution. By distributing power and decision-making across three entities, this model encourages greater accountability and responsiveness to local needs.
- **Building blocks for an established Mayoral Strategic Authority:** The White Paper envisions a future where all parts of England have an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, unlocking further devolution and an Integrated Settlement. This three-unitary model for Norfolk provides the necessary building blocks for achieving this ambition. By establishing a balanced and collaborative framework at the local level, this structure paves the way for a smooth transition to an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, ensuring that Norfolk is well-positioned to benefit from further devolution.

Imbalance and ineffective representation

- **Dominating the Strategic Authority:** A single Norfolk unitary, with its significantly larger population compared to Suffolk, would create an inherent imbalance within the Strategic Authority. This dominance risks sidelining Suffolk's needs and priorities, hindering equitable decision-making and potentially leading to a "Norfolk-centric" approach to strategic planning. The Devolution White Paper explicitly cautions against such imbalances, emphasising the importance of "partnerships that bring more than one Local Authority together over a large geography." In addition, having a single county unitary in Norfolk and Suffolk would create an imbalanced dynamic with the Strategic Authority potentially blurring the lines between their accountabilities due to the similar scales to which they operate.
- **Diluting Local Voices:** A single unitary for Norfolk would encompass a vast and diverse area, potentially diluting the voices of individual communities within the Strategic Authority. This could lead to reduced accountability and responsiveness, as decision-making becomes more centralised and removed from the specific needs and concerns of local communities. The White Paper stresses the importance of "ensuring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level," which a single, dominant unitary for Norfolk would fail to achieve.

Hindered collaboration and local input

- **Struggling with strategic priorities:** The Devolution White Paper outlines key areas of competence for Strategic Authorities, including transport, skills, housing, economic development, environment, health, and public safety. These areas require a nuanced understanding of local needs and effective collaboration between the Strategic Authority and its constituent unitaries. A single unitary for Norfolk, with its vast and diverse geography, would struggle to provide the necessary local insight and collaborative spirit. This is particularly crucial for areas like health and social care, where effective communication and collaboration are essential for delivering integrated services.
- **Stifling local leadership:** The White Paper envisions a future where all parts of England have an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, unlocking further devolution and an Integrated Settlement. However, achieving this ambition requires a strong foundation of capable and responsive local governance. A single unitary for Norfolk could stifle local leadership, concentrating power and decision-making in a single entity, rather than fostering the "multiple Local Authorities" model that the White Paper advocates for.

Population ratio and democratic deficit

- **Disproportionate representation:** A single unitary for Norfolk would create a stark population imbalance within the Strategic Authority. This disproportionate representation could lead to Suffolk's needs being overlooked and a democratic deficit within the partnership. The White Paper highlights the importance of "a sensible population size ratio" between local authorities and the Strategic Authority, which a single Norfolk unitary would fail to achieve.
- **Reduced accountability:** A large, single unitary might be less responsive to the needs of individual communities, as decision-making becomes more centralised and removed from those directly affected. This reduced accountability could undermine trust in the devolution process and hinder the long-term success of the Strategic Authority.

Criteria six: Stronger community engagement

The two or three-unitary models better maintain effective local engagement. A single unitary authority for Norfolk, while potentially offering administrative efficiencies, presents a significant risk

of centralising power and decision-making, potentially diminishing neighbourhood empowerment. A single, county-wide authority could:

- **Increase distance between decision-makers and communities:** A larger, more remote authority could lead to a disconnect between residents and those making decisions that affect their lives. This distance can encourage a loss of civil pride and reduce opportunities for meaningful community input.
- **Prioritise county-wide agendas over local needs:** A single unitary might focus on strategic priorities at the county level, potentially overlooking the specific needs and aspirations of individual neighbourhoods. This could result in a "one-size-fits-all" approach that fails to address the unique challenges and opportunities of diverse communities. Broader, county-wide, and regional priorities should be picked up by the Strategic Authority.
- **Undermine existing hyperlocal structures:** Norfolk already has a network of parish and town councils that play a vital role in representing local interests and engaging residents at the neighbourhood level. A single unitary could inadvertently diminish the role of these hyperlocal structures, as decision-making power shifts to a more centralised authority.

Furthermore, a single unitary structure faces the challenge of effectively engaging communities across a vast and diverse county. A centralised structure could:

- **Limit opportunities for meaningful participation:** A single authority might struggle to create sufficient opportunities for residents across the county to participate in consultations and decision-making processes. This could lead to a sense of disenfranchisement, particularly in more remote or less populous areas.
- **Struggle to reach diverse communities:** Norfolk is home to a wide range of communities, each with its own unique characteristics and communication preferences. A single unitary might struggle to develop tailored engagement strategies that effectively reach and resonate with all these diverse groups.
- **Create a perception of "top-down" decision-making:** A centralised structure could foster a perception that decisions are being made remotely, without sufficient consideration of local perspectives. This could erode trust in the new authority and hinder community buy-in.
- **Prompt the recreation of multiple tiers:** The potential disconnect between a single unitary and local communities could be mitigated through the creation of forums at a local level which would add additional complexity and potential fragmentation across the county.

By contrast, a **two or three-unitary model could create a very different culture**, building on the strengths of the districts in working with local people. There is lots of evidence of the effectiveness of the local engagement programmes of the District Councils in Norfolk.

Norfolk boasts a diverse network of partnerships that exemplify a proactive and inclusive approach to community engagement. These partnerships provide valuable insights into how a new unitary structure can effectively involve residents in decision-making processes and ensure that local government is truly responsive to their needs.

- **Collaborative service delivery:** Partnerships like CNC Building Control (detailed in previous responses) demonstrate how collaborative service delivery models can enhance community engagement. By bringing together multiple authorities and stakeholders, these partnerships create more accessible points of contact for residents, foster a more joined-up approach to service provision, and encourage community input into service design and delivery.

- **Addressing community needs:** Numerous partnerships in Norfolk focus on addressing specific community needs, demonstrating a commitment to involving residents in finding solutions to local challenges. For example, the Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) Strategic Partnership brings together a wide range of organisations to provide advice and support services, ensuring that residents have access to the help they need. Similarly, the Greater Norwich Homelessness Forum and the Norfolk Housing Alliance demonstrate a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness, involving both statutory and voluntary sector partners in developing and implementing solutions.
- **Promoting health and wellbeing:** Partnerships like Active Norfolk and the Norwich Health and Wellbeing Partnership highlight the importance of community engagement in promoting health and wellbeing. These partnerships involve a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, the NHS, and community groups, in developing and delivering initiatives that address local health needs and promote healthy lifestyles.
- **Safeguarding vulnerable individuals:** Norfolk's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable individuals is evident in partnerships like the District Councils Safeguarding Group and the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership Group. These partnerships bring together statutory and voluntary sector organisations to develop and implement safeguarding strategies, ensuring that the voices of vulnerable individuals and their families are heard, and their needs are met.
- **Valuing resident's views:** Councils currently employ various methods to engage residents and incorporate their feedback into decision-making. For instance, Norwich City Council's "Get Talking Norwich" initiative demonstrates a proactive approach to gathering resident opinions on key issues. Additionally, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council employ the use of targeted pulse surveys to gauge public satisfaction with services. These surveys provide valuable insight into resident experiences.
- **Shaping growth:** Community partnerships have been shaped through initiatives such as the "Future Breckland" initiative, which was designed to prioritise community involvement in shaping the district's growth. Through extensive engagement with over 22,000 stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and community groups, the project identified six key objectives for each market town in the region, ranging from economic growth to sustainability and wellbeing. This collaborative approach, involving workshops, interviews, and data analysis, resulted in documents outlining tailored strategies for each town, addressing unique challenges and leveraging opportunities to enhance the lives of residents and businesses.
- **Local government outreach:** Norfolk demonstrates its commitment to resident involvement through local government engagement. North Norfolk District Council actively engaged town and parish councils to receive their input on reorganisation criteria and potential challenges, as part of a consultation on English Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. Processes such as this ensure that town and parish council perspectives are considered when shaping the new unitary structure. Additionally, Breckland Council is establishing new avenues for community engagement and building upon existing partnerships. This includes briefing council members on devolution and Local Government Reorganisation plans, engaging with towns and parishes through online briefings and press releases, and collaborating with local MPs. An independent consultation has also taken place to gather resident feedback, ensuring local perspectives shape the council's approach.

The success of these existing partnerships provides a strong foundation for ensuring community engagement within a new unitary structure. By learning from these examples, Norfolk can:

- **Build on established networks and relationships:** New unitary authorities can leverage the existing networks and relationships established through these partnerships, ensuring continuity of engagement and building trust with communities.

- **Adapt successful engagement methods:** The diverse range of engagement methods employed by these partnerships, including public meetings, focus groups, online consultations, and collaborative workshops, can be adapted and implemented by new unitary authorities to suit the specific needs of their communities.
- **Embed a culture of collaboration and co-production:** The collaborative ethos that underpins these partnerships should be embedded within the culture of new unitary authorities, ensuring that community engagement is not just a one-off event but an ongoing process that informs decision-making at all levels.

Norfolk's existing collaborative arrangements provide a wealth of experience and best practice in community engagement. By building on these strengths, a new unitary structure can ensure that residents are actively involved in shaping their communities, that local government is truly responsive to their needs, and that the transition to a new system is smooth, inclusive, and successful.

Based on the successful track record outlined above, multiple unitary authorities for Norfolk, with their smaller, more focused geographical areas, offer a more promising framework for ensuring effective community engagement. This model can:

- **Create more accessible points of contact:** Smaller unitaries, with their closer proximity to communities, can provide more accessible points of contact for residents seeking information or wishing to share their views. This could involve:
 - Decentralised offices and service points: Establishing local offices and service points in each unitary area, making it easier for residents to engage with their local authority.
 - Dedicated locality teams: Creating dedicated teams within each unitary authority responsible for developing and implementing community engagement strategies.
- **Tailor engagement methods to local contexts:** Multiple unitaries can develop tailored engagement methods that are appropriate for the specific characteristics of their communities. This could involve:
 - Utilising existing community networks: Working closely with existing community groups, parish and town councils, and other local organisations to reach residents through established channels.
 - Employing a variety of communication channels: Using a mix of online and offline communication channels, including social media, local newspapers, public meetings, and focus groups, to ensure that information is accessible to all.
- **Foster a culture of collaboration and co-production:** Multiple unitaries can foster a culture of collaboration and co-production, actively involving residents in the design and delivery of services.

Ensuring community engagement is not just a box to be ticked; it is a fundamental principle that must underpin Norfolk's transition to a new unitary structure. Multiple unitary authorities, with their emphasis on local focus, accessibility, and tailored engagement strategies, offer a more promising framework for achieving this goal than a single, centralised authority. By actively seeking and incorporating community input throughout the process, Norfolk can create a new system of local governance that is truly representative, responsive, and accountable to its residents.

The three unitary option has been ranked as best on the basis that it creates councils of a more relatable scale that are therefore closer to their communities: smaller is better for local engagement.



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Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk: Interim Report

1. Introduction

As set out in Appendix 1, our position has been developed based upon an objective and independent analysis of the options for Norfolk, using the Government's criteria and independent evidence gathering. We have been able to assemble a comprehensive view – which has benefitted from the dispassionate appraisal by our appointed Strategic Partner. A partner with considerable experience and track-record in the field.

More work is of course required – critically to enable the voice of residents and secure considered feedback from the Government – but we believe we have identified the most viable and effective way forward. Our interim plan, therefore, is based upon our analysis of this evidence assessment and subsequent development of a single preferred way forward.

2. A clear way forward: stronger communities, more effective services

Based on the work to date, our foundational vision for the future of public service excellence in Norfolk is via three strong independent, but interlinked, unitary authorities each commanding place leadership over the distinct 'real' geographies which mean something to the way people experience life in Norfolk:

- East of Norfolk – The Country's clean energy capital, one of UK's epicentres for tourism, and containing the internationally renowned Broads National Park and the historic port of Great Yarmouth. Covering what we currently know as Great Yarmouth, Broadland and South Norfolk (with the potential exclusion of areas of 'Urban Norwich'), and majority of North Norfolk.
- Urban Norwich – An economic driving force and powerhouse of Norfolk, home to the region's largest functioning clusters in life sciences (including Norwich Research Park), finance, digital and education. Covering what we currently know the existing 'City' boundaries with some potential redrawing of boundaries to incorporate the City's urban hinterland (NB – the final boundaries for which are still being developed)
- West of Norfolk – The 'Royal' heartland of Norfolk, gateway to the County, and home to the regions manufacturing and agricultural heartlands as well as the Cambridge Norwich tech corridor of growth. Covering what we currently known as Breckland, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, and the North Norfolk County divisions of Fakenham & The Raynhams, Holt and Wells.

The evidence in Appendix 1 sets out the case in more detail, but the substantive foundations for our Norfolk three-unitary model are that it represents:

A model which retains and celebrates local distinctiveness and accountability

We believe one of the most important success factors for new authorities will be the connection they create with the communities they serve. Local authorities need to be

local: with local representation, local accessibility, local accountability and resonance. Our model protects and enhances this for Norfolk residents by:

- Building boundaries aligned to historic and cultural identification with place and championing the unique identities of our three largest urban centres. Creating authorities which will truly mean something to local residents.
- Ensuring, even with the large distances within the region, residents have close access to their democratic centre and identification with a local 'capital'. Keeping democracy as close as possible to local communities.
- Ensuring new authorities are of a size and scale to still be relatable and referenceable locally, with all local representatives able to effectively serve local community need.

A model which puts public service delivery on the front foot

We feel that in embracing LGR, we should do so only where we are most confident it could secure long-term positive benefit. We see that as being significantly more likely under our three-unitary model wherein:

- The size and boundaries of our authorities will keep them close enough to communities to deliver more transformational change through better understanding and management of local demand and by creating more locally designed preventative services by working with the voluntary and community sector. We believe this could have profound implications across services, but particularly in priority areas like housing, health and social care, striking the optimum balance between size and scale whilst being place based, and providing an appropriate scale to support a vibrant Strategic Authority and mayor.
- Our unitary design would see a close alignment to models used by existing core public sector partners including (but not limited to); police operational units, acute hospital geographies, ICB 'place' team boundaries, FE networks and regional care teams. In effect, following the natural service geographies which have developed outside of the constraints of the 1972 Local Government Act.
- Through design we would be able to make the most judicious decision based on over which geographies we could collaborate and share over a wider footprint, with a presumption that certain areas like Children's Services would lend themselves effectively to a cross-boundary trust (as effectively demonstrated elsewhere in county) and others better suited to local configuration. The strength of our model being it provides the foundational footprint to achieve efficiency through scale guaranteed, with the option to aggregate where the benefits can be identified.

A model which blends short-term efficiencies, with long-term effectiveness

Indicative modelling has demonstrated a strong potential for real achievable savings, estimated initially around £7.6m. By design, we would also be able to avoid

diseconomies of scale through organisations getting “too” big and structures and processes becoming too complicated and cumbersome.

Critically, our long-term expectations of the total benefit to the public sector would be substantially greater – particularly through the preventative and localised benefits identified above. We see that long-term structural change in cost of public services has to be through a more radical reimagining of services, and a more holistic approach to whole place investment and long-term prevention. We see this becoming substantially more achievable with authorities which are designed around real place geographies – and of a manageable scale to tackle the issues that present.

A model which would underpin successful devolution Norfolk and Suffolk

There is a celebrated blueprint for devolution in England, through the trailblazing successes of areas like Greater Manchester. Almost without exception these areas work to a blueprint of a core set of 5 – 10 strong unitary authorities, often delivering services to populations of c. 300,000 residents. In alignment with similar proposals in Suffolk, this model represents the nearest alignment possible locally.

Furthermore, a key benefit of designing unitary boundaries around real economic geographies, is the ability for our new authorities to be single minded in supporting local growth ambitions. In alignment to the orchestration possible through the new Strategic Authority, our model would supercharge place’s ability to take a fully holistic approach to local economic need – and look at all the levers (health, housing, jobs, skills) in collaboration when it comes to tackling economic need.

Finally, under our vision for devolution, the current White Paper only scratches the surface of what we think is possible. We believe there is a strong argument for a more radical approach to new public service delivery and accountability – something which is made far easier through unitaries aligned to local place. Truly locality based public services, centred on the communities they serve and removing significant waste and overlap.

A model that reflects the sectors recent experiences:

We have not developed our thinking in isolation. There has been significant recent experience to draw from through the creation of new unitary authorities over the last ten years. From which we have observed: size is certainly not the only thing that matters and has to be proportionate to communities. Savings are, by their nature, ephemeral and should not be the foundations we build upon – we should build upon what’s right and makes the most difference for local people.

A model which will command the widest range of support across Norfolk (and Suffolk)

Finally, and critically, we think if LGR is to be successful it needs to be owned and supported as far and wide as possible across all corners of Norfolk life. Clearly, in the timescales allowed, we have not been able to test our propositions in detail but at this interim stage take significant comfort from the fact that:

- This recommendation is being shared unequivocally via Chambers across Norfolk, and will have the biggest single democratic mandate of any plans being submitted for the Government's March 21st deadline
- There is a golden thread in our approach which has been carried across Councils throughout Norfolk and Suffolk, underlining a much broader consensus across boundaries and across the new Strategic Authority boundaries
- Strong initial feedback from local public engagement indicates we are substantively on the right track, with a strong support for local accountability, local relevance, and service delivery

3. Weaknesses into strengths: risk mitigation and our vision

As is highlighted in Appendix A, our approach has been objectively scored as the best way forward for Norfolk. However, no solution is perfect, and there are challenges to overcome and, particularly working on the Government's pre-set criteria, important risks to mitigate. We believe they are eminently solvable, but acknowledge specifically:

Our approach will require collaboration with the LGBCE, and the redrawing of some lines on maps to create new boundaries

The Government has indicated a preference to work with existing boundaries, unless under exceptional circumstances. We believe it is impossible to deliver the best for Norfolk whilst being constrained to existing boundaries, and a strong exceptional case exists to be bold when it comes to the future of our area.

We would seek to minimise unnecessary disruption but believe fundamentally that if we're delivering the biggest change to service delivery in over 50-years we should not be driven by administrative convenience. We have, collectively, significant experience of collaboration with the LGBCE and are confident that, with support, we can seize the opportunity to align boundaries to communities and service delivery.

Our approach may not yield the largest savings up-front

As detailed above, we are confident our model is affordable, sustainable, and capable of yielding the likely near-term savings required to support reinvestment of almost £10m immediately. However, on a desktop basis other models could claim more in the short term – particularly through redundancies.

From observing this debate in other areas affected, it is our strong reflection that it is not in the best interests of residents and businesses to see LGR as a race to the bottom in terms of what model sustains the biggest short-term cuts. Indeed, we would further observe that it is weak logic (and fundamentally counter to the role of 'local government') to presume bigger is always better and always cheaper.

As set out above, and in Appendix A, we believe our proposed model represents the best achievable short-term savings, whilst putting authorities on the best long-term

footing to deliver more transformational changes to public spending through genuinely innovative public service reform.

Our vision for three new Norfolk unitaries will, initially, see Local Government serving populations of under 500,000

The Government has indicated an initial preference that new unitaries should cover a population of 500,000 unless an alternative case can be made.

The case is strong in Norfolk for a lower population size for each unitary, reflecting distinct identities and economies across the county.

Enabling us to acknowledge and build on those identities is key to unlocking the benefits of Local Government Reform and devolution in Norfolk, enabling:

- each area to unlock growth in the right way for its economy,
- the transformation of public services to serve the particular needs of each community, improving outcomes and delivering better value for money,
- Providing a stronger platform for local voices and democratic representation, and
- Supporting effective devolution with the right balance within the MCA and a clear focus from each unitary on the tools needed to unlock growth

Some services will need to be aggregated, some will need to be disaggregated

There is no way of avoiding changes to services under Local Government Reorganisation. It is a reality of the policy. Local Government currently delivers around 140 different essential public services in Norfolk, of which around 100 may be required to be 'aggregated' (or scaled up) and the remainder could either be 'disaggregated' (scaled down) or kept as is.

Under our model, a fundamental detailed design consideration would be the protection of service, and the identification of delivery at the scale which makes most sense for service users. As above, in some instances we anticipate by design there will be a preference to delivering at a geographic scale beyond unitaries – looking at best practice in the sector, a Children's Trust model could be set up for Children's Social Care, for example. Fundamentally, we see no material disaggregation risk in our model but would introduce a more localised commissioning and challenge to the delivery and cost of quality services.

4. More to do, but a solid foundations to build from

As set out in the above summary, we have worked with partners to develop what we believe is a compelling and comprehensive foundational vision for the future of services in Norfolk. Meeting, and exceeding, the Government's initial ask.

At this important juncture we have selected our proposals as a clear, and unambiguous, single way forward as we believe the best thing for residents and services users will be to move as quickly as possible to design and development.

As set out in Appendix A, we think there are some critical future steps in terms of public engagement, and detailed coproduction with Government and partners, but will be seeking investment support from the Government to turn our vision into a Full Business Case for the future of Norfolk.

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