

## **COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 17 December 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 C Cushing     | Cllr N Dixon         |
| Cllr P Fisher      | Cllr A Fitch-Tillett |
| Cllr T FitzPatrick | Cllr A Fletcher      |
| Cllr M Gray        | Cllr M Hankins       |
| Cllr C Heinink     | Cllr P Heinrich      |
| Cllr V Holliday    | Cllr K Leith         |
| Cllr P Neatherway  | Cllr S Penfold       |
| Cllr P Porter      | Cllr C Rouse         |
| Cllr L Shires      | Cllr M Taylor        |
| Cllr J Toye        | Cllr K Toye          |
| Cllr A Varley      | Cllr L Vickers       |
| Cllr L Withington  |                      |

**Also in attendance:**

### **77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr R Macdonald, Cllr G Mancini-Boyle, Cllr L Paterson, Cllr J Punchard, Cllr C Ringer, Cllr E Tooke and Cllr S Bütikofer

### **78 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 19th November 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

### **79 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS**

### **80 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

### **81 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair and Vice-Chair had attended the following civic events:

20<sup>th</sup> November- Commemoration of Hampden X3023, Templewood, Northrepps.

11<sup>th</sup> December- Priscilla Bacon Reflect and Remember Carol Service, Norwich Cathedral

The Chair spoke about the Chairman's Charity, The Norfolk Wheely boat (Poppy) and thanked Members for donations so far. He reminded them of the annual Christmas charity collection and urged them to give generously.

### **82 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader, Cllr T Adams, announced the appointment of Cllr L Shires as Deputy

Leader of the Council and thanked Cllr W Fredericks for her service in the role previously, recognising the support and energy she had brought to the position and her portfolio during a period of challenge and change.

He noted the delays in the Mayoral elections and expressed personal disappointment at the announcement believing that it undermined LGR and impacted local funding and influence. It remained unclear whether Devolution arrangements would be subject to any further review, but he believed that economic investment spending would be reduced by at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup> in the interim.

Cllr Adams welcomed the progress that had been made towards achieving a 7 day a week, hourly train service at West Runton and thanked both Members and the Bittern Line Community Rail Partnership for their efforts in this regard.

Cllr Adams thanked Members and staff for their service to the Council and local communities over the last year and took the opportunity to wish everyone an enjoyable and restful Christmas period.

### **83 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS**

None received.

### **84 PETITIONS**

The Chair invited Cllr Adams to speak regarding the petition received in connection with the Sheringham bus shelter. Cllr Adams noted that this matter was not the responsibility of NNDC with the issues being within the remit of Norfolk County Council and Sheringham Town Council, however, he confirmed NNDC's willingness to engage in discussions with the relevant parties and the community to resolve the issues and noted the importance of Sheringham obtaining the funding originally allocated to it. He stated that any proposals needed to ensure the preservation of the bus shelter.

### **85 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES**

Cllr Adams informed members that Cllr W Fredericks would replace Cllr J Boyle on the Governance Risk and Audit Committee.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr V Holliday, confirmed that the Committee had nominated her to be the representative on the Norfolk Health Overview Select Committee.

#### **Resolved unanimously**

To appoint Cllr V Holliday as the Council's representative on the Norfolk Health Overview Select Committee.

### **86 PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

The Chair invited members to ask questions. He reminded them that it was not a debate and that the session was limited to 30 minutes.

Cllr P Porter asked Cllr A Varley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Net Zero for details of the total sum spent to date on projects aimed at net zero objectives and

details of how much NNDC had saved in revenue costs to date and how many years it would take to recoup the investment. Cllr Varley confirmed he would provide the information in a written response, he noted that NNDC had invested its own funds but had also been able to leverage third party funding, most notably in connection with retro fitting at Fakenham leisure centre, solar panels at North Walsham and works at the Reef in Sheringham.

Cllr C Cushing asked the leader, Cllr Adams, whether NNDC media coverage (including information on the NNDC website and an event at the Norfolk show) of Local Government Reform was within the government guidelines, noting that the Publicity Code of Practice required content to be objective, balanced, factual and not to be used to unfairly influence opinion. Cllr Adams noted that some authorities had paid for material to be distributed by post which NNDC had not done. He stated he was entirely satisfied NNDC was within the guidelines and noted that Councils across Norfolk had broadly engaged with similar activities perhaps with the exception of the content of the NCC produced 'Your Norfolk' magazine which had focussed on promoting one option. Cllr Cushing expressed surprise with this position.

Cllr K Leith asked Cllr Varley if there was anything Members could do to assist in promoting the Norfolk Warm Home Scheme. Cllr Varley thanked Officers for their work and suggested Members could be community champions sharing key information on this initiative. The scheme provided access to households who otherwise couldn't afford it, for insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, saving them money on future heating bills.

Cllr Holliday asked Cllr Boyle, Portfolio Holder for Housing & People Services to confirm that no one would be disadvantaged by the introduction of the new housing allocations scheme. She noted that to date, close to 1000 individuals who had been invited to reapply under the new scheme, had not done so. Cllr Boyle confirmed that individuals who had not reapplied were being contacted to confirm that they were not being missed off. She was comfortable that everything was being done to ensure no-one was disadvantaged. Cllr Holliday asked a supplementary question, asking for clarification as to why, when NNDC has 29 units for temporary accommodation (page 29 of report), 19 households were stated as housed in the report. Cllr Boyle confirmed she would clarify and provide a written response.

Cllr S Penfold asked Cllr Adams whether he agreed the announcement that the UK was to rejoin the ERASMUS programme was good news as it would open opportunities for students across North Norfolk. Cllr Adams welcomed the announcement and hoped that young North Norfolk residents would access this scheme, believing there would be personal as well as social and economic benefits.

Cllr K Bayes asked Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, to provide 'concrete' examples of achievements of the North Norfolk Skills Employment Forum. Cllr Toye explained that the Forum was within its first year and had undertaken workshops to identify workstreams and to bring relevant people on board, those activity strands were now being undertaken and noted the importance of the Forum delivering tangible benefits moving forward.

Cllr N Dixon asked Cllr Varley to advise whether NNDC had any evidence as to whether any hedging was planted under the 110,000 tree planting strategy, given that previous questions had indicated that no records were available in respect of trees planted and that hedging was an important way to improve bio-diversity. Cllr

Varley explained that NNDC facilitated residents, town and parish councils and local community groups whose responsibility it then was to maintain the trees and hedging, therefore he felt it would not be possible to obtain the data requested.

Cllr L Vickers asked a question of Cllr Adams in the absence of Cllr C Ringer, in connection with the new duties under the Renters Rights Act 2025, requesting information on the additional resources required to meet the obligations and confirmation whether the funding of £32,000 allocated by the Government would be sufficient. Cllr Adams stated that a written response would be provided, noting that work was ongoing to ascertain additional responsibilities.

Cllr T FitzPatrick asked a follow up question to that asked by Cllr Dixon, addressed to Cllr Varley. He noted the lack of data on the survival rate of trees planted under the 110,000 tree planting scheme and therefore asked for a policy position on the need to maintain clear accountable evidence in order to demonstrate the achievements and support of the declared climate emergency and the net zero corporate plan objective. Cllr Varley reiterated that the NNDC facilitated the project and then it was for the residents and community groups to maintain the trees and hedges and said once again that he therefore didn't feel it was appropriate to waste officer's time to obtain the data.

## **87 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 01 DECEMBER 2025**

### **1. Agenda item 9: Car Park Fees & Charges**

The Chair invited Cllr Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finances, Estates & Assets, to introduce this item.

Cllr Shires began by thanking the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their dedication in supporting the discussions.

Cllr Shires identified that Options 1 and 6 remained as the substantive proposal, however she wished to put forward a 3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation and apologised for the late inclusion. She reminded members that last year car parking charges had been introduced at the Hornbeam Rd car park in North Walsham and she suggested a new £3 per day flat rate fee, reviewing it at 6 and 12 months. She noted this was comparable to local NCP charges and may identify demand from local bus travellers.

It was proposed by Cllr Shires, seconded by Cllr P Heinrich and

### **Resolved unanimously**

To reduce the Hornbeam Rd car parking charges to £3 a day on a trial basis to be reviewed after 6 and 12 months.

Members then voted on the substantive proposal, as amended and

### **Resolved unanimously**

To approve:

- a) No increase to standard car parking up to and including 24 hour tariffs but increase car parking fees for resort and coastal car in line with CPI inflation of 3.8%.
- b) Increase season ticket fees by 3.8%

- c) To reduce the Hornbeam Rd car parking charges to £3 a day on a trial to be reviewed at 6 and 12 months
- d) For the Asset Management Officer, in consultation with the s151 Officer to proceed with the consultation in relation to the Off Street Parking Places Order.

The Chair proposed that the next two recommendations from Cabinet were taken en bloc:

It was therefore **RESOLVED**

#### Agenda Item 10: Fees & Charges 2026-2027

To approve:

- a) The fees and charges from 1st April 2026 as included in Appendix A.
- b) That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and relevant Directors/Assistant Director to agree the fees and charges not included within Appendix A as required (outlined within the report).

#### Agenda Item 11: Council Tax Discounts & Premiums Determinations 2026 -2-27

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 2026-27 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 2026-27 for eligible cases of hardship under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and that the Revenues Manager has delegated authority to make Discretionary Reductions under the Hardship Policy up to the value of £4k as indicated in 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 2026-27 (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 2026-27 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) continues to be applied in 2026-27

The Chair invited Cllr Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Enforcement, to introduce the following Cabinet recommendation:

## Cabinet 01 December - Agenda Item 12: Adoption of the North Norfolk Local Plan

Cllr Brown thanked Officers, the Planning Inspector, members of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party and Members generally for their efforts over the past years to get the Local Plan to this point.

He suggested that this report provided an opportunity to control and influence development in the district to 2040. He identified that it had been a consistent part of the Corporate Plan to have a policy led (as opposed to a developer driven) planning system and cited the nationally recognised record of NNDC defending planning appeals to support that approach.

Given the many changes imposed on NNDC, he suggested it was now an appropriate time to adopt the new Plan which was the result of 10 years of work by officers and members, noting that the Plan had been through 5 rounds of consultations, 2 examination sessions, numerous Working Party discussions as well as Cabinet and Full Council reviews.

He commented on the general cross-party support during this process and the Council approval of the draft plan submission in April 2023 which gained 39 votes for approval with one 1 abstention. This Plan now included the 68 modifications the Inspector required to ensure the Plan was sound and legal.

Cllr Brown noted that the Plan would be particularly challenging for some Members, most notably in wards where village expansion was to be permitted. He believed that NNDC had both a legal and moral responsibility to the district as a whole to manage development within the constraints and requirements placed on NNDC by central Government.

He reminded Members that if the Plan was adopted prior to March 2026, the district would be bound to deliver lower levels of new housing numbers (15 year average of 557 new homes per year) as opposed to a higher average (932 new homes on average over a 15 year period) if it did not adopt the Plan. In addition, Cllr Brown identified other risks if the Plan was not adopted, namely additional financial costs, Local Government Reform uncertainties, planning measures in the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Act and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

He suggested that a Local Plan would never satisfy everyone and would always be a compromise however he believed that approval would leave a legacy and proposed the recommendation to adopt the Plan and requested a recorded vote.

Cllr Adams recognised the significant achievement in delivering the Plan and thanked all those involved in its development. He expressed disappointment in some of the determinations of the Inspector, including at the land to the west of Clifton Park, resulting in the loss of established bio-diversity, coastal erosion and potential odour issues. He feared that due to Government pursuit of housing numbers the price could be paid for years to come. Cllr Adams recognised the need for strategic consideration given the risk of a higher housing allocation. Cllr Adams also spoke on behalf of Cllr R Macdonald, and expressed his concern at the impact to Roughton, in terms of development on farmland and the potential for major development on the parish boundary edge and itself being a small growth village. Cllr Adams recognised that despite his concern over local sites within the Plan, should the Plan not be adopted, the impact would be significant, he therefore

supported and seconded the recommendation.

Cllr N Dixon applauded the tremendous efforts of everyone involved in the development of the Plan. He wished to note a factual error in the small growth village section of the report. He stated that Tunstead did not meet the listed criteria of small growth villages. He added that this issue had been raised but not resolved. He noted that Tunstead was in the advanced stage of development of a Neighbourhood plan at which point the Parish Council was open to discussing a signification allocation in the Parish, but that until that was in place it was appropriate to freeze the 42 unit housing allocation until the error was addressed. On that basis he would then be fully supportive of adopting the Local Plan.

The Chair invited Officer Withington to assist on this matter, he explained that the options were to adopt the Local Plan as modified by the Inspector or not to adopt it. The main modification made by the Inspector related to the addition of a further 11 small growth villages including Tunstead and the Inspector had concluded that Tunstead did meet the criteria. Therefore, its inclusion was not an error. The Officer noted the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and was expecting the first version early in the New Year.

Cllr P Heinrich thanked all those involved in developing the Plan over many years, recognising that whilst not perfect it protected the unique environment of the area against what he felt was the unnecessary additional housing requirement. He expressed that he did not believe the 2 large developments at NW16 (North Walsham) and Cromer/Roughton made sense and didn't offer the much needed affordable or social housing. However, he felt a flawed Local Plan was better than a developers' free for all which he believed to be the alternative and therefore on that basis he supported the adoption of the Plan

Cllr Holliday thanked the Planning Policy team for their work and understood the imperative for adopting the Plan. On behalf of her residents she wished to express concern and reservations at an allocation included in Blakeney and its status as a growth village.

Cllr J Toye expressed the importance of adopting the Plan and recognised that despite there being allocations he didn't support, it was better to have the Plan than not and thanked Cllr Brown for his efforts and supported the adoption.

Cllr Bayes referred to the village of Catfield and asked for clarification as to whether the development at Milestone contributed to the allocation in the new Plan. Officer Withington confirmed that if planning permission had already been granted then that development would not contribute towards the indicative allocation as that would come into place on adoption.

Cllr Shires thanked Members as well as Officers. She expressed concern at the proposed NW16 development given the pressures already on the town of North Walsham. She noted that the issues of concern could be considered and addressed during the planning application process. She did, however, understand the significance of the Local Plan and therefore would be supporting its adoption.

Cllr C Rouse expressed his reservation particularly with regard to the land north of Valley Lane in Holt and the biodiversity impact but recognised the need for the Plan and said he would be supporting its adoption.

The Chair thanked Officers present and past and said he believed that the Plan

reflected the best option possible.

**RESOLVED unanimously**

- 1) To note the outcome of the Inspector's Report into the examination of the North Norfolk Local Plan, dated 31 October 2025 (Appendix 1 & 2);
- 2) To adopt the modified Local Plan which incorporates the Main Modifications as the appropriate basis for the future planning of the whole District (Appendix 3);
- 3) To notes that all policies of the North Norfolk Core Strategy 2008 and the Site Allocations; Development Plan Document 2011 (the current Local Plan) will be superseded by the new Local Plan upon adoption. This is subject to the provisions of paragraph 9.3 of this report that: 'Upon adoption there is a six-week window under section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 during which an aggrieved party can challenge the decision to adopt a Local Plan on legal and procedural grounds'
- 4) To note that Cabinet has delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Planning to publish the Adoption Statement and accompanying documents, making the North Norfolk Local Plan part of the Adopted Development Plan for North Norfolk;
- 5) To note that Cabinet has delegated authority to the Planning Policy Manager to make any further necessary non-material modifications and any further updates to the Policies Map as required.

**88 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 10 DECEMBER 2025**

Cllr V Holliday, Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, provided an update. She confirmed that the Committee had supported the Cabinet recommendations before the Council at this meeting, except the Local Plan which the Committee didn't see. On those recommendations she raised 2 issues discussed by the Committee, specifically the importance of consistent hourly parking fees in local market towns and the need to ensure that the use of cash was not made too inconvenient for those who continued to use cash.

**89 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2026-2027**

Cllr Adams proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr J Toye

**Resolved unanimously**

That Full Council approved the Programme of Meetings for 2026-2027

**90 PIER SUBSTRUCTURE WORKS**

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services introduced this item. She noted that discussions surrounding the Pier were often contentious and reminded Members that the Pier was a Grade 2 listed structure which would be 125 years old next year. The report highlighted that, whilst the Pier remained safe, it needed some remedial works which were identified after the budget had been set and therefore weren't included in the capital programme and pushing the work into the capital programme for next year would be costly. Therefore, bringing this matter to the Council before the next budget ensured that those additional costs would not be incurred.



Cllr FitzPatrick noted that regular costs for maintenance were identified and suggested it would be appropriate to undertake a full structural survey and put in place a programme of maintenance that would preserve the structure in a better way than ad hoc repairs. Cllr Adams confirmed that a full structural survey had highlighted the need for this work and these were undertaken as a matter of course and then informed the work planned, together with the regular staff inspections of the structure.

Cllr Bayes asked whether the work had undertaken procurement. The Chief Executive confirmed the Officers advice regarding procurement at paragraph 7.1 of the report.

Cllr Penfold referred to page 219 noting the works would be undertaken in January 2025, and clarified that this should, of course, refer to 2026.

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

**RESOLVED unanimously**

To approve a budget of £250k to be added to the 2025/26 capital programme, funded by borrowing, to allow the commencement of urgent high-priority substructure works to Cromer Pier.

That delegated authority is granted to the Assets and Property Programme Manager, in consultation with the S151 Officer, to award a contract for the delivery of the works up to the approved budget.

**91 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS**

**92 OPPOSITION BUSINESS**

**93 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION**

**94 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**95 PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm.

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Chairman