

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 12 November 2025 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

**Committee
Members Present:**

Cllr S Penfold (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr P Bailey

Cllr C Cushing

Cllr M Hankins

Cllr V Holliday (Chairman)

Cllr M Gray

Cllr K Bayes

Cllr A Fletcher

Cllr P Heinrich

Cllr N Housden

Cllr C Rouse

**Members also
attending:**

**Officers in
Attendance:**

Assistant Director for Environment & Leisure, S151 Officer and
Director of Resources and Elisa Pendered

**Also in
attendance:**

1 SUBSTITUTES

None

2 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th October were approved as a correct record.

4 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

6 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

7 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

The Committee considered a request submitted by Cllr Bailey, following the petition submitted regarding access to Pretty Corner Woods in Sheringham. He felt that the matter had highlighted some issues regarding engagement between the local community and the Countryside Team and proposed that arrangements for future

engagement were put into place. He added that the proposal had been agreed with the Countryside team and the Portfolio Holder for Community, Leisure and Outreach. Local Members for Sheringham also supported this approach.

RESOLVED to support the following:

- **For the Countryside Team to proactively communicate with the public, in a timely fashion, regarding the way in which NNDC sites are managed, why they are managed in certain ways and what plans are in place when upcoming works on those sites are likely to cause disruption or a significant change going forward.**

8 RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CABINET TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

None received.

9 DELEGATED DECISIONS - NOVEMBER 2025

Using the construction of Happisburgh car park as an example, Cllr Cushing queried through which Committees the delegated decisions passed, both for transparency purposes, and as decisions he felt should be accompanied by a substantial business case. The DSGM explained that some of the delegated decisions had been to Cabinet but she would review the table layout and cross reference to ensure it was clear if those decisions had been made by Cabinet or a particular officer. The DSGM said she would also provide confirmation in writing that the construction of the Happisburgh Road car park decision was made by Cabinet.

The Committee agreed to receive and note the report and the register of decisions taken under delegated powers.

10 BUDGET MONITORING P6

Cllr Shires explained that NNDC was looking at a surplus at year end but warned the Committee to be mindful of the 'unknowns' that lay ahead, such as what was the Government funding settlement.

Cllr Penfold asked if the Council had an idea of the impact food waste collections would have on the budget and was the Council trying to mitigate any additional costs by looking to phase in the scheme. Cllr Shires explained that Central Government had vastly underestimated what it would cost to implement food waste collections. The Council was investigating the exact costs involved and seeking ways that would have the minimal impact on budget, but it would be an additional revenue cost.

Cllr Cushing asked what capital funded projects was the Council borrowing. Cllr Shires explained, when setting out the Capital Programme, they always indicated the intention to borrow but they were not currently borrowing. Cllr Shires said that to fund any project the Council would always look for best value for money so if they had the fluid funds available and didn't have to pay the interest on borrowing, then the choice would always be not to externally borrow. Cllr Shires confirmed Cllr Cushing's thinking was correct in that the figure £6.175m was just what could be borrowed but wasn't currently being borrowed. The DFR explained in terms of funding capital expenditure there were three sources that could be used, capital receipts, grants or other forms of external income, or borrowing. Borrowing could be internal or external. The Council hadn't needed to use external borrowing yet as it

had used its own working capital, classing it as internal borrowing until such time the Council needed to borrow externally.

Cllr Cushing then queried the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) and how that fitted in with borrowing. The DFR explained that was the element of internal and external borrowing that the Council hadn't yet funded.

Cllr Hankins commended the finance team on the savings made but queried why the savings in business growth staffing had not been met. Cllr Shires explained the saving of £55k was put forward but at that stage they were not sure if they were going to get the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) money or any other grants. However, the Council received those grants but provided the Council didn't get them next year the efficiency would be made. If it did receive the grant money the Council would retain the staff members necessary to enable those schemes to run properly.

The Chair had a query about restructuring and how much was coming out of revenue and how much out of reserve. The DFR did not have a precise split but advised that where restructuring savings were made by deleting temporary posts there was very little in terms of restructuring costs; where those posts were from the establishment or where compensation was due to individuals it was then that the Council would seek to use reserves, if it had them. Some areas of the Council used a lot of interim resource and had been trying to build up reserves for such occasions. The DFR agreed to try and find a breakdown for that split.

The Chair also queried the spending on software for Customer Services given the longevity of the organisation. The DFR explained the additional capital spend for the software was an oversight in the original budgeting of the project. The Officers had not realised the configuration of the software would be an additional charge by the supplier. As the funds for the project had already been committed before LGR, they had to spend the additional amount to get the full efficiency of the application.

The DFR confirmed any future investment that would outlive the projected life of the organisation was considered and the Council was mindful that some of its investments may have had a limited shelf-life.

Cllr Housden, asked about the increase in budget for Holt Country Park (HCP) and what the contribution was from the external Section 106 fund and if this was the £40k stated with the Council expected to find the additional £100k. Cllrs Shires believed it was, and that this had been put into the capital programme. Cllr Housden also queried what the £57k for supplies and services for travellers related to. Cllr Shires said that was most likely for utilities and other things needed to maintain the traveller's sites which was a statutory requirement, but she agreed to provide a breakdown to the Committee for exactly what those costs related to.

In response to a query from Cllr Bayes regarding the Net Zero budget, Cllr Shires said there was a reserve for Net Zero initiatives, but some funding was external. Cllr Bayes said he was happy to get a more substantial written explanation on the income from associated Net Zero initiatives but wished to clarify that zero pounds of NNDC money was being spent on advertising the Make My House Green scheme. Cllr Varley said NNDC had received a contribution for each installation, which he believed totalled around £250. That money was ringfenced for specific green projects.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council:

- a) **Note the contents of the report and the current forecast year end position.**
- b) **Seek approval of Full Council to increase the 2025/26 capital budget for the Holt Country Park Eco Learning Space to £140,000. This is to reflect the apportionment of £40,000 from external S106 contribution towards the scheme.**
- c) **To acknowledge the increased Customer Services C3 Software 2025/26 capital budget to a total of £32,600. This is following approval of an additional £9,200 towards the project from the Delivery Plan Reserve by the Director of Resources/S151 Officer.**

11 FEES AND CHARGES 2026/2027

Cllr Shires explained that this was an annual process to ensure the Council was charging correctly and appropriately. Some of the fees were set by Government, some the Council was only allowed to recover costs, and there were others where it had more discretion. Cllr Shires explained that the Licensing charges had changed quite significantly. The ADELS confirmed this was thanks to an extensive piece of work by the ELBSM to review the fees and charges to ensure it was now based on a cost recovery basis. In answer to a question from Cllr Bayes the ADELS explained the change to a true cost recovery basis sat within guidance as to how the Council should be setting their fees and charges, but this meant that some would go down. What that also meant was there would be an annual fluctuation of those fees as they considered the cost it took to issue each licence from the previous year. For example, some caravan licences had increased but animal licences had been split across two parts so appeared lower to the previous year's charges.

Cllr Shires noted that beach huts and chalets had been included incorrectly in the paper. The decision had been made to stop short term leases. Those figures would be removed.

The ADELS responded to a query from the Chair stating that other Environmental Health fees had been benchmarked where possible against neighbouring Councils. The ADELS explained to the Committee, after a question from Cllr Housden, that there was case law that the Council could not make a profit on licensing fees so there was no surplus to the fees charged.

Cllr Gray felt the cost for HCP parking seemed very cheap, and it was not performing as it should based on the investment the HCP had received. He wondered if any comparison had been done against similar country parks. The ADELS advised they had compared with other parks and found the cost comparable to similar sites. The ADELS acknowledged there had been investment but that was in staff and welfare and not something for which visitors would see the benefit.

Cllrs Shires said making HCP accessible for the public was important, as was making that asset sustainable beyond the life of the Council, so she would look to ensure the Council was getting best value and to investigate ways to possibly generate more income. Cllr Gray welcomed maintaining HCP as it was a valuable asset.

The Chair felt a little more explanation over the origin of the greater variance of fees, or why that was, as part of the report would have been helpful. Cllr Shires said that she was always happy to help the Committee and welcomed their feedback.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet and Full Council:

- **The fees and charges from 1st April 2026 as included in Appendix A.**

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).

12 CAR PARK FEES & CHARGES

Cllr Shires reminded the Committee that last year the Council had increased the car parking charges quite substantially and she was mindful that the Committee would have been more comfortable with no increase to the standard town car park charge this year. Therefore, the proposed 3.8% increase would only affect the Coastal and Resort tariffs. The Chair asked why it stated no increase to standard car park fees within the Fees and Charges papers when it wasn't mentioned within the Car Park Fees and Charges recommendation. Cllr Shires was happy that the recommendation within Option 1 be re-worded to reflect that the standard town car parks would not be included in the 3.8% increase.

Cllr Shires explained that officers had initially looked at reviewing charges for season tickets every 2 years, but the Committee had previously felt that it would be better if they were reviewed annually to make a smaller stepped increase. The current view was that, to minimise costs to local residents, the second part of the stepped increase was no longer required, so instead suggested an inflationary increase in Option 6.

Cllr Shires also confirmed, on the back of a query from Cllr Penfold, that the 7-day tickets were increasing by 3.8% across all car parks, as it was previously found that a reduced rate was available when purchasing a 7-day ticket inland. These tickets could still be used across all NNDC car parks.

Cllr Hankins believed residents who did not own a car were subsidising those who did through any proposed increase in Council Tax. He also asked what car parks across the district cost to maintain and which of those car park facilities were not recovering their costs. Cllr Shires signposted the Committee to Pg.39 of the Budget Monitoring report and the business cost it took to keep each car park running. She felt the benefit of parking fees was that they were not restricted as with licensing fees and the revenue generated helped support discretionary services, for example, public toilets and leisure assets. The standard inland car parks were there to support the market towns but were never going to be huge generators of income. Cllr Shires was not aware of any car park making a significant loss but was happy to bring back to the Committee another car parking review. Cllr Penfold believed the Committee was satisfied with the review and it did not have the appetite to look at it again so soon. However, Cllr Cushing thought this would be helpful as the Council headed towards LGR and questions were asked about what parts of the estate would go to any new unitary authority.

It was felt by the Committee that if it was to support the local economy it was essential to maintain the same prices for standard inland car parks and was not a case of rounding up because it was too difficult but a decision to protect those market towns. Cllr Heinrich welcomed this decision, but he queried the need to charge 5p when many people paid by cash, and he felt that people who did pay this

way, were unlikely to have that small change. Cllr Heinrich proposed rounding the charge in those instances up or down. Cllr Heinrich also believed that maintenance costs should be shared across all car parks but not as part of a formal recommendation.

The Committee were initially open to Cllr Heinrich's proposal. When Cllr Shires calculated that rounding up 5p charges to 10p would result in an increase much closer to 5.8% the Committee were less comfortable to vote in support. The Chair felt that this would unfairly impact those who paid by card or via mobile app as they would suffer an increase by a further 2%. Equally, Cllr Rouse was concerned about the negative headlines the Council would receive if they agreed to increase by 5.8%. Cllr Shires confirmed that the parking machines do take 5p coins. Upon reflection of the Committee's views, Cllr Heinrich withdrew his recommendation but wished it noted in any final recommendation that the Cabinet were mindful of those small change increases. The Chair and Cllr Bailey both proposed that 3.8% was a sufficient increase, when considering the cost of living, and the Committee agreed

Cllr Cushing felt that adding the monetary value as to what those recommendations equated to would be useful going forward. The DFR warned the Committee that would require an assumption as no guarantee that increasing by 3.8% would generate a certain amount of additional revenue and including that figure could raise expectations.

Cllrs Shires said she would welcome the support of the Committee in looking at what the estate would look like heading into LGR as the Council had a lot of other assets that would need to be protected for local people.

In response to a question from Cllr Housden on the forecast deficits for the three years beginning in 2026/27 and if any forward plan with inflation figures had been used in coming to those estimates, Cllr Shires explained that was what had been assumed back in February, when the Budget was set, based on what was known at that time and it was not possible to adjust those forecasts in year. Officers did not assume, in advance, an increase on car park charges as they could only forecast on what they knew to be certain. Cllr Shires reiterated that increasing car park fees in future years wouldn't cover all those forecasted deficits, although it would help.

When reflecting on a suggestion by Cllr Gray, who felt that adding a column to the report that showed an actual percentage increase might add some clarity when considering charges with the odd 5p, Cllr Shires said officers had calculated those percentages, and she would share them with the Committee, and when rounded up some were slightly higher than 3.8% whilst some calculated as lower than 2%. The Chair fed back that showing the financial gain from those increases would be useful. Cllr Shires explained a table showing this was in the report but was happy to link together, so it became clearer.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet:

- ***Option 1 overall car parking total increase in line with CPI inflation of 3.8% and apportioned so there is no increase to standard town car parks. Cabinet to be mindful of the inconvenience for cash users caused by using small change such as 5p coins.***
- **Option 6 increase season ticket fees by 3.8%.**

13 NET ZERO STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Net Zero, Cllr A Varley, introduced the

report, highlighting the key points.

The Chair invited members to speak:

Cllr Penfold wished to know what control the Council had over contractors, when delivering projects, in terms of their emissions, and was there a process in place that ensured they weren't just giving a contract to the cheapest option but were considering the environmental impact. Cllr Varley said the Council could exert some influence as it went out to tender for projects and it was keen to work with contractors with good eco credentials. The CEPM said that thanks to new procurement rules they could consider contractors on more than just price, such as the sustainability offer. The CEPM noted that the Climate Literacy training that staff undertook was very important as everyone across the organisation understood the importance of taking that into due consideration when awarding a contract.

An example was raised by Cllr Fitch-Tillett of coastal works being undertaken in the Cromer area where the contractors had been taking the environmental impact of works into consideration and were looking to do all they could to offset carbon emissions.

Cllr Cushing wished to express that he supported reducing emissions but raised concerns that, when looking at the report, the emissions had barely reduced since a climate emergency was announced in 2019 and felt that any reductions the Council made were of minimal impact when considering the emissions on a global scale.

In response Cllr Varley agreed that in context the Council's carbon emissions only amounted to 1% of emissions across North Norfolk but he felt strongly that it was important to influence and showcase what the Council did as a way forward in reducing emissions. Highlighting the benefit of working in a particular way that could save money for homes or businesses was very important. Cllr Varley felt the Council could facilitate change by supporting households and businesses and pushing the Net Zero agenda.

Cllr Varley said that many of the Council's schemes were externally funded and did not cost the taxpayer any money. Cllr Cushing disagreed as the external funding came from central Government out of the taxes that everyone paid.

Cllr Heinrich felt that the Council might only be making small gains but lots of small gains added up, and everyone had a responsibility to tackle climate change. He felt it was important to encourage solar panels on more of the districts business and industrial buildings.

The CEPM answered a query from Cllr Heinrich in relation to properly vetting homes when insulating them to ensure no future problems, such as mould, and she assured him that the Council administered most of their grants through the Norfolk Warm Homes scheme which was very experienced. They had concentrated on floor and loft insulation and solar panels. They only worked with two long-established contractors who were very trusted, and they carried out inspections after each installation and had case studies going back several years that they had revisited after retro fitting many years ago. Norfolk Warm Homes was often held up as an exemplar by Government as to how other similar schemes should be run.

Cllr Penfold agreed that it was both an individual and collective responsibility to help reduce carbon emissions and urged Members to promote the grants that were available, like the £500 for the Make My House Green scheme, to their local

constituents and parishes. At the request of Cllr Hankins, the CEPM agreed to update all Members on the grants available.

In response to a query from Cllr Penfold, regarding HCP, the CEPM outlined some of the options that were being explored for replacing the diesel generators explaining there was an ongoing project to get electricity to that site. There were also renewable sources being investigated with contractors, including fitting solar panels or wind turbines, but the tree canopy could interfere with those operations. As a last resort, using a form of biofuel for the generators was an option or it could be a combination of all those. Cllr Shires highlighted that UK Power Networks had a huge part to play to de-carbonise the Council's assets and reduce emissions.

The CEPM asked if she could take away a query by the Chair when asked if the carbon footprint of tourism was included in industry, but as they were central Government figures that were provided for the district, it was agreed this would be reported back on in writing after the meeting.

Cllr Bayes felt that there was a lack of infrastructure surrounding public transport when considering an area such as Stalham, and surrounding parishes, where most people would have to transport themselves to work or post 16 education. He was pleased to see within the report that people were being encouraged to buy and source goods locally and wished to see local businesses and suppliers supported rather than outsourcing to contractors who were based out of area and who would have to travel to install and be less inclined to return if any issues were discovered.

Cllr Varley noted that feedback and explained that the Council did always try and use local contractors where possible and although the company running the Make My House Green scheme was a national company they used local contractors to do the installation works. Indeed, one local contractor was using that platform to promote their business as they had no website themselves and Cllr Varley felt this was a positive story in supporting those small local businesses within North Norfolk.

Cllr Varley thought it would be worthwhile the Committee considering calling in the Norfolk County Council Transport department to review the difficulties residents have with public transport as he also noted similar issues raised by Cllr Fitch-Tillett for those with disabilities in travelling to the Council Offices when having to rely on buses or trains.

Cllr Varley wished to note, in response to a query by Cllr Fitch-Tillett, that it was very important to strike a balance and stop relying on fossil fuels which harmed the rainforests and although there were carbon emissions in producing electric vehicles the batteries would last 20-25 years.

The Chair enquired why did it need to be an Environmental Charter. Cllr Shires said the Council did have a Customer Services Charter, acting as a pledge of the Council's intention to do something. Cllr Varley said they'd had the Environmental Charter since 2019, and this was to update that. Cllr Penfold asked if the Council was set to meet the targets set out by 2030. Cllr Varley explained that sadly the Council would not be in existence by then, so it was more important to showcase the benefits of net zero. He highlighted that coastal erosion and flooding would continue to be an issue, so it was important the Council kept trying to meet those internal targets regardless. He confirmed the trajectory of meeting those targets was heading in the right direction, the Council just need to keep channelling good carbon reduction projects.

The CEPM explained, in response to Cllr Cushing, that how much the Council plan to reduce carbon emissions by each year was a step-by-step plan that was looked at every year and, as Cllr Varley said in his introduction of the report, there would be 'bumps along the road'. Cllr Varley stated this was a combined journey and any ideas Members had in helping the Council to meet its targets would be welcomed.

The Chair said that a third of the actions had no carbon footprint reduction and wondered if there were reductions that had not been included on the Action Plan that would help the Council reach its target. The CEPM said the Action Plan could be more ambitious, if the Council had infinite money and resources, but admitted the Council would need to find more carbon savings if it was to be zero carbon. If the target had not been reached by the end of the administration there was room to buy carbon off setting, but this came at a high cost.

As the Action Plan only went up to 2027 there was scope to look beyond that with new ways of carbon savings but as Cllr Shires pointed out with LGR looming, it was about having a shared goal, across the new local government structure, of moving to Net Zero. Cllr Varley discussed making the Council's waste vehicles run off HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil), but more research was needed on HVO, and it did come at a higher cost so was mindful of budget constraints but a project like that would cut the Council's carbon emissions dramatically.

Cllr Varley confirmed to Cllr Housden that the £384k put aside to support net zero initiatives was part of the £500K in reserve for the Council's Net Zero programme. Cllr Varley was delighted to hear from Cllr Bayes that Stalham Town Council had installed two non-flushable urinals in refurbishing public conveniences and noted this was aided by Norfolk Wide Net Zero Communities project. He recognised both Cllr Bayes and Cllr Taylor's dedication to those Net Zero projects.

The Committee noted the contents of the carbon footprint report for 24/25 and RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council:

- **Adopts the revisions to the Environmental Charter**
- **Adopts the Decarbonisation Strategy and associated action plan.**

14 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

No comments

15 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE & SCOPING SESSION

The Committee agreed to see a review on the spend by Housing on temporary accommodation to ensure the Council was getting best value for money.

Cllr Penfold proposed the Committee invite the portfolio holder for Transport and Highways, at Norfolk County Council (NCC), to come and discuss public transport with the difficulties highlighted. The Committee also agreed to Cllr Housden's proposal they could combine this alongside a discussion over speed limits in the district. Cllr Gray noted it was vital to focus on what the Committee wanted to ask and have evidence to support that focus beforehand if they were going to call in NCC.

The Chair and Cllr Heinrich proposed the Committee revisit health, with ambulance response times, closure of community facilities and to review access to local dentists a focus, of which the Committee agreed to adding to the Work Programme.

16 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 11.58 am.

Chairman